FROM MOTHER GOOSE TO THE MODERN WORLD:

CONTEXTUALIZING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S POETRY

by

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From Mother Goose to the Modern World:

Contextualizing the Development of Children's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

Children's poetry, like all types of children's literature, is difficult to categorise within traditional classification systems of genre. Conventional taxonomies tend to define texts according to certain formal language properties. Since similar language constructs appear in both adult and children's texts, established genres generally minimize, or disregard, the functional reality of children's literature. Context-oriented genre theory offers an alternative way of defining genre. The idea that social context, both situational and cultural, determines the features of individual texts and textual types (or genres) suggests that children's literature -- and therefore children's poetry -- develops in response to changing social structures.

The evolution of children's poetry illustrates how alterations in social context have influenced children's position within the community, and thereby the textual constructs which shape their interactions. Children's poetry acquires the status of a genre during the seventeenth century, when the move toward universal literacy transformed societal communication structures. The cognitive differences separating adults and children are foregrounded within a literate community: because of their intellectual and psychological immaturity, children must wait longer to gain access to adult texts. These limitations structure the social and communicative context of childhood. The classification of children as an oral enclave leads to the creation of textual types designed to accommodate their unique position.

This renegotiation of children's textual space begins with nursery rhyme. Adapted from communal folk verse, its dense language patterns derive from the oral community's need to structure knowledge in memorable forms. As this need shrank, the form developed closer associations with certain contexts. Since heavily patterned language continued to prove an effective vehicle for entertainment and education in the nursery, folk verse was reconfigured to suit the remodelled communicative contexts.

Children's orality ensures the foregrounding of oral (mnemonic) patterns in children's poetry. Yet, the communal perception of childhood has evolved, altering the genre's composition. Popular children's poetry, from classic texts to a modern anthology, demonstrate the continuing efforts of authors and editors to represent the child's unique place. Combined, their efforts suggest that the ongoing renegotiation of children's position within society continues to shape both the form and substance of children's poetry.

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CONTEXTUALIZING CHILDREN'S POETRY

Introduction

Among Western European (and more specifically British) cultures and their descendents, children's literature, as a distinct category of text, did not exist before the seventeenth century. Although there is no question works aimed at children have always had a place within the community, it is not until the early seventeenth century that such texts were consciously divided from other forms of literature and discourse. The development of literature aimed primarily at the young parallels a growing sense of childhood as a time distinguishable in more than simply physical ways from adulthood. Children's minds grow as well as their bodies and the most obvious physical growth from infancy to adolescence is paralleled by equal stages of development in both cognitive and linguistic abilities. It is as this psychological and social immaturity has developed increasing importance to the community, as the sensitivity to distinctions between child and adult escalates, that children's literature -- a body of text devoted to communicating with children as a distinct group -- has acquired discernible form.

As general levels of literacy have increased over the past several centuries, the ability to read and write has become an expected attribute of adults in our society. Because the mastery of reading and writing requires a level of physical and mental dexterity that is beyond most children, the period during which individuals remain

functionally "immature" within the community lengthens. Prior to the seventeenth century, when orality, not literacy, tended to dominate cultural patterns of communication, the development of verbal fluency (normally by around ages six or seven) usually marked the achievement of cognitive, if not physical, maturity. Such is not the case in a literate society; it normally takes an individual several more years, until around ages nine or ten, to master literate forms of communication to the same degree.[1] In order to help the young develop the skills they need to survive as adults in this environment, the community must make space for children's education within the social structure.

In physical terms, this space occurs as specialized "child places," such as schools and nurseries. In textual terms, the space takes the form of children's literature. Thus, the origins of children's literature lie explicitly in a comprehensive process of social restructuring: the genre develops *because* the social environment has evolved. According to genre theory, particularly the approach taken by Carolyn R. Miller in "Genre as Social Action," new texts and new types of texts emerge to support the social order and its changing communicative needs. This means that children's literature, as a genre, is defined by social use, rather than being structured

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[1] I reserve the term "child" for those nine years of age and below. Generally, by the time children turn ten, their cognitive and linguistic development approaches that of an adult and distinctions become difficult to quantify. Instead, I shall refer to those ten and over as "pre-adolescents" (10-12), "adolescents" (13-18), and "adults" (19 and above). While I recognise these distinctions are overly proscriptive, they do seem to reflect the general social definitions of maturation within this society.

around the pragmatic and syntactic distinctions that have tended until recently to act as the defining characteristics of genre.[2]

Poetry is only one part of the larger body of children's literature, yet it may well provide one of the most potentially revealing areas of study in this genre. With the foregrounding of language that tends to occur in poetic structures, children's poetry, perhaps even more visibly than children's stories, makes the unique functional relationship between orality, literacy and children's literature apparent. Children's poetry tends to bridge the gap between orality and literacy, its contents appearing both in purely oral constructs and in fundamentally literary forms. Thus, it allows the possibility of tracing not only the development, but also the functional structure of the genre. The structures of children's poetry shape, in some ways significantly, the interactions of adults and children within this community, and in doing so both reflect and illuminate the complex social interactions that have developed around children and the unique environment they inhabit within this community.

"Genre as Social Action": A Model for Analyzing Children's Literature

As a genre, children's literature seems to have few if any definitive boundaries. The debates that have simmered in journals devoted to the study of children's literature suggest that the inclusion or exclusion of particular texts is largely a matter of personal opinion. So porous is the genre that any definition of it,

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[2] It is for this reason that children's literature tends to overlap traditional categorizations of texts -- the genre is made up of works that also fit into the categories of "novel," "poetry," and "drama" for instance.

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or its poetic subset, initially seems both foolhardy and impossible. However, the fact that most people recognise "children's literature" and "children's poetry" as valid and meaningful terms (whatever principle they might use to determine the texts included in the categories) suggests that such labels do have a functional reality within this society; it further indicates that children's literature and children's poetry are more than simply idiosyncratic lists of texts.

Yet, it seems abundantly clear that conventional taxonomies, based as they are in formal language structures, do not describe this genre very effectively. Since it is possible to find almost every syntactic and semantic structure available in "adult" literature in children's literature as well, classifying the genre around these formal structural differences inevitably leaves the definition open to challenges. Definitions of genre based upon formal theoretical principles tend to construct "closed systems" -- texts are included or excluded on the basis of formal criteria rather than by function. As a result, such systems do not necessarily reflect either the common practice or the everyday experience of those who use and create the texts.

This is the reason formal models of genre cannot seem to locate the meaningful differences between "children's" literature and "adult" literature; the differences between the two, rather than being located in any formal properties of the texts, are centred in the social context of communication. Because children's literature is grounded in social rather than formal structures, an approach reflecting the impact of social environment provides a much more accurate and persuasive means of establishing the parameters of the genre. Based in pragmatic, rather than

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syntactic or semantic forms, the model of genre definition presented by Carolyn R. Miller in "Genre as Social Action" offers just such an approach.

Miller points out that "[i]n the fields of literature and composition, classifications are commonly based upon formal rather than pragmatic elements" (154). While acknowledging the benefits of such classifications, she argues that in rhetorical terms genre is more than simply a collection of syntactically or semantically linked texts. Miller suggests that instead "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (151) and that "[a] useful principle of classification . . . should have some basis in the conventions of rhetorical practice, including the ways actual rhetors and audiences have of comprehending the discourse they use" (152). In order to accurately define genre, she argues, we must look not so much to the characteristics of the language as the social environment surrounding the creation and use of the texts. In other words, a genre should be classified not only through text, but also its real-world context.

In this proposal, Miller is supported by linguist M. A. K. Halliday. Halliday's explicit declaration that "contexts precede texts" (*Language* 5) seems to be echoed by Miller's assertion that "[genre] acquires meaning from situation and from the social context in which that situation arose" (163). Halliday sets out the basic relationship of textual form and situational function with particular clarity in *Language, Text, and Context*: "The text . . . is an instance of the process and product of social meaning in a particular context of situation. Now the context of

situation, the context in which the text unfolds, is encapsulated in the text, not in a

kind of piecemeal fashion, nor at the other extreme in any mechanical way, but

through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand,

and the functional organization of language on the other" (11). According to Halliday,

because language is organized around the individual's need to achieve rhetorical and

communicative goals within a particular set of circumstances, the social environment,

or immediate context of situation, is *systematically* (and thus recognizably) embodied

in the substance and form of a text.

Every text is surrounded by two levels of social context: the immediate

situational context, and the cultural context.   The context of situation is the

immediate environment affecting the discourse. Situational contexts act as the most

direct influence on textual or discourse structures. Surrounding the situational context

is the context of culture, the broader system of behaviours and language that the

community agrees upon as meaningful. It is this level of context which provides

individual community members with the information they need to interpret situational

contexts appropriately. No text can develop without being influenced by the two

interrelated levels of context which surround communicative events.

Although Halliday proposes a model of discourse structures focused around

single communicative acts (as opposed to the more generalized textual sets found in

Miller's study of genre), his identification of the structuring influences of individual

texts suggests a basis for establishing the more general environmental patterns which

affect genres.   Miller offers a glimpse of these general social structures in her

discussion of genre as social action. She rightly points out that although each situational context possesses its own unique characteristics, "Situations are social constructs that are the result, not of 'perception,' but of 'definition.' Because human action is based on and guided by meaning, not by material causes, at the center of action is a process of interpretation" (156). Texts do not develop in a vacuum, or occur as part of a random series of unrepeatable encounters. Human beings are patterning creatures, and in structuring our communications we actively seek out similarities with experiences we have already had. The result is that we recognize not only the unique features of various encounters, but also perceive interactions in terms of a familiar set of situational "types": immediate context not only is experienced as an individual event, but as well is constructed as a member of a continuing set of experiences.

Miller argues her case with convincing simplicity: "inaugurals, eulogies, courtroom speeches, and the like have conventional forms because they arise in situations with similar structures and elements and because rhetors respond in similar ways, having learned from precedent what is appropriate and what effects their actions are likely to have on other people" (152). With this description, Miller explains the basic relationship between situation (or context) and genre, suggesting that "situations," and the texts which are typically associated with them, are defined not so much by their differences as by their recurring similarities. "[G]enre can be said to represent typified rhetorical action" (151), according to Miller: it encapsulates

in linguistic forms the structural patterns governing situational types. Genre, in sum, acts as the linguistic representation of the typified situational context.

If, as it seems, genre develops out of functional social repetitions, then its place in the structure of discourse naturally falls outside the level of immediate situational context. At the same time, genre must also, because it is so closely tied to situational context, remain an influential aspect of individual encounters. "Genre," then, acts as an intermediate structure between the unique and the universal aspects of context: as one of the structural influences of text, it resides on the boundary dividing the immediate situational context from the broader levels of cultural context.

Although both Miller and Halliday tend to consider the linguistic implications of context in terms of prose texts, the connection they draw between form and function applies equally well to poetic constructs. The creation of texts, and therefore genres, is motivated by the need to achieve rhetorical goals. The resulting text -- whether it be structured as conversation, prose fiction, or, as in this study, poetry -- derives its form from the communicative function it is designed to serve within the environment.

Even the most cursory of examinations reveals the usefulness of situation-based models of categorization in structuring the analysis of children's literature, especially in comparison to more structurally dependent taxonomies. Like all children's literature, the term "children's poetry" accommodates a broad variety of textual types. Not only does it refer, most obviously, to popular nursery rhymes and

classical children's poetry (such as that of Robert Louis Stevenson, A. A. Milne, Walter de la Mare, and others), it also appears quite comfortable incorporating poetry not exclusively or even necessarily written for children.[3] Children's poetry seems to incorporate not only verses written for children, but also poetry written about children, poetry written by children, and (a troublingly indeterminate category) poetry that children enjoy.

Although such variety at first appears to militate against the construction of children's poetry as a distinct category of text, this apparent discontinuity has little to do with the functional structure of the genre and much more to do with a preoccupation with textual features which do not necessarily embody definitive features of the communicative context. While each of these definitions seems to reflect the audience-defined nature of the genre, none (except the last, and that only superficially) describe the genre in terms of *use*.

In each of the first three cases, "children's poetry" is defined through source and content. The first assertion indicates a belief that the author determines the categorization of the text: if a poem is written for children, then it is children's poetry. The second proposal considers subject a primary requirement for inclusion: a poem about children is children's poetry. If the source of the poem, the author's identity, is considered a defining feature, the third category is justified: children's poetry is poetry children compose. While each of these cases might well result in a

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[3] Consider the regular inclusion in anthologies of children's poetry works from authors such as T.S. Eliot, e.e. cummings, Emily Dickinson, William Wordsworth, William Blake, and other nominally "adult-oriented" authors.

viable list of texts, they are all vulnerable to counter-examples (that is to say, examples of verse which fit the categorization but do not, in practical terms, act as children's poetry). This inherent weakness indicates that even though these definitions seem appropriate, they do not and cannot accurately account for the functional structure of children's poetry.

While in many ways the final description, as the most inclusive of the four proposed, seems to account for the inadequacies of its fellows, and is the closest to recognizing the social grounding of children's poetry, it nevertheless does not define the situational context surrounding the genre with any degree of precision. The contention that children's poetry is "any poetry children enjoy" does prioritize the audience above all other factors -- if children read or listen to it, this thinking goes, then it is children's poetry. However, the definition does possess one striking weakness: how is it possible to define what will interest, amuse, or affect children as a group? How is it possible to positively establish what children will "enjoy?" Since children, just like adults, do not necessarily read, hear or enjoy the same material, the definition of children's poetry as simply "poetry children enjoy," in the end leaves us right where we began -- faced with the unsatisfying assertion that the genre is an ad hoc list, uniquely determined by each individual in the community.

Having already dismissed this definition of the genre as both uninformative and unconvincing, it only remains to apply a situation-based model to the problem. By looking at the contexts in which children's literature is used, and by understanding that "the set of genres is an open class, with new members evolving, old ones

decaying" (Miller 153), it becomes readily apparent that children's literature has evolved because there has developed a need for it; and that so far from being an arbitrary and idiosyncratic list of texts, children's literature -- and by implication, children's poetry as well -- possesses reasonably clear and relatively precise social functions and forms.

The Social Basis of Children's Literature

In "Genre as Social Action," Miller sets out the functional process of genre development. She says:

> [O]ur stock of knowledge is useful only insofar as it can
>
> be brought to bear upon new experience: the new is
>
> made familiar through the recognition of relevant
>
> similarities; those similarities become constituted as a
>
> type. A new type is formed from typifications already
>
> on hand when they are not adequate to determine a new
>
> situation. If a new typification proves continually useful
>
> for mastering states of affairs, it enters the stock of
>
> knowledge and its application becomes routine . . .
>
> because types are created and shared through
>
> communication, they come to reside in language. (156-
>
> 157)

In other words, as new situations arise and claim a position within the social structure, new language types, or genres, develop to support the situation's communicative requirements. Children's literature is formed out of just such a societal change.

In the seventeenth century, the spread of literacy within European and European-based cultures helped to transform aspects of the social environment, including the cultural perception and treatment of children. While literacy by no means acts as the only cultural development influencing the relationship between adults and children, its impact upon both methods of communication and the nature of communication profoundly affects the structure of these relationships.[4]

The visual, permanent representation of words that writing allows knowledge and language to attain an autonomy unthinkable in an oral society. In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter J. Ong argues that oral cultures perceive words as "occurrences, events" (31) rather than as objects, and because of this communication within an oral society cannot be isolated from the context in which it is created. Within oral cultures the origin of the text, the meaning of the text, and the text itself are fundamentally indivisible, and cannot be separated from the interpersonal relationships which drive and structure linguistic interaction. In a literate society, however, the act

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[4] Although in this thesis I have chosen to focus attention on the influence of orality and literacy on the nursery and the texts associated with childhood, there is no question that political and economic reforms, technological developments, demographic trends, and shifts in religious and philosophic thought also shape ideas of childhood. Among other books, Phillipe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood*, Barbara A. Hanawalt's *Growing Up in Medieval London*, and Viviana A. Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child* provide some insight into these other influences on the concept of childhood and the structure of the nursery.

of writing permits, even encourages, the division of author, text, and context. Language acquires the qualities of thing rather than event, and so results in the fragmentation of the communally-based, context-based perception of communication found in oral societies.

This evolution of communication helps to reconfigure many of the contextual paradigms, the situational types, that invariably surround human interactions: because individuals, both rhetor and audience, can be separated from the text -- in other words, because language has become a thing rather than an event -- relationships between community members must alter to accommodate new communicative patterns. The use of "permanent language" to record what was once only available through direct personal interaction modifies the nature of interaction and therefore has a comprehensive, and inevitable, impact upon the structure of relationships. Among the most drastically affected of these relationships is the one shared by adults and children.

In *Centuries of Childhood*, Phillipe Aries argues that the idea of a "specialized childhood" only begins to develop in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Through the analysis of pictoral and textual records, he traces a pattern of increasing segregation and regulation of the child's world in the publich, scholastic, and familial spheres. Although a number of Aries' specific claims might well be considered suspect,[5] he provides ample evidence that the relationship between adult

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[5] Among other things, Aries' belief that "In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (128) has been largely undermined by such researchers as Barbara A. Hanawalt, whose *Growing up in Medieval London* suggests that "childhood" as a socially meaningful

and child, and the very idea of childhood, undergoes a profound transformation during the seventeeth and eighteenth centuries. He describes this transformation as the "gentling" of childhood, a movement away from the medieval perception of children as immodest and in some ways amoral, toward one which recognizes children as innocent. He notes that this restructuring of perception had a significant impact upon the relationship between adults and children: "[t]he idea of childish innocence resulted in two kinds of attitude and behaviour toward childhood: firstly, safeguarding it against pollution by life, and particularl by the sexuality tolerated if not approved of among adults; and secondly, strengthening it by developing character and reason" (119). According to Aries, such ideas led to the development of "the concept of the well-bred child" (327) and the belief that "it [was] important -- at least in the middle class -- to shut childhood off in a world apart" (285).

Neil Postman attributes this concept of "segregated childhood" to the need to teach children the complex communicative skills associated with literacy. Tracing the influence of literacy in the development of the idea of childhood, he states:

> From print onward, adulthood had to be earned. It
>
> became a symbolic, not a biological, achievement. From
>
> print onward, the young would have to *become* adults,
>
> and they would have to do it by learning to read, by
>
> entering the world of typography. And in order to
>
> accomplish that they would require education.

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concept, did exist in medieval times.

Therefore, European civilization reinvented schools.

And by so doing, it made childhood a necessity. (36)

Postman argues here that our construction of childhood as a time of immaturity and a time of mental and physical growth arises out of the need to give new community members the time necessary to absorb and fully acquire both the physical and the psychological skills associated with full literacy. In a print-oriented society, he seems to suggest, adulthood is a "symbolic" achievement acquired by means of formal education. Postman goes on to point out, "a child evolved toward adulthood by acquiring the sort of intellect we expect of a good reader: a vigorous sense of individuality, the capacity to think logically and sequentially, the capacity to distance oneself from symbols, the capacity to manipulate high orders of abstraction, the capacity to defer gratification" (46). While no doubt the acquisition of adult status in the community demands more than just literacy, Postman's recognition that children need to learn how to communicate as adults prior to being acknowedged as adults does have merit.

Postman's analysis corresponds well with L. S. Vygotsky's descriptions of the developmental stages of childhood. Vygotsky, like Postman, asserts that adults and children do not necessarily think in the same way: "children differ from adolescents and adults not in the way they comprehend the aim but in the way their minds work to achieve it" (55). The model of cognitive and linguistic development Vygotsky sets out in *Thought and Language* offers a particularly clear insight into the psychological basis of the social split dividing children and adults in our society. Literacy, as

Postman suggests, demands a much greater level of mental "maturity" than does

orality, and it is this process of maturation which forms the focus of Vygotsky's

book. In Figure 1 (page 18), in which I have set the stages of language development

Vygotsky proposes beside the stages of cognitive development he recognizes, the

relationship between language and thought becomes evident. If Vygotsky's

observations are correct, the development of communicative structures and the

development of cognitive structures are both constructed around a progressive ability

to differentiate and abstract elements of the environment, whether it is the social

context surrounding a communication or the physical environment under observation.

This slow acquisition of the ability to think and speak in abstract or symbolic

terms proves highly significant when orality and literacy are introduced as factors in

this developmental process. While all language, as Vygotsky and Ong both point out,

is to some degree abstract and symbolic, only literacy brings about the conscious

recognition of abstraction that Vygotsky defines as "concept thinking." Vygotsky

himself suggests that such is the case when he considers the cognitive structures of

"primitive" peoples:

> Primitive peoples also think in complexes [functional
>
> relationships] and consequently the word in their
>
> languages does not function as the carrier of a concept
>
> but as a "family name" for groups of concrete objects
>
> belonging together, not logically, but factually . . . the
>
> child, primitive man, and the insane, much as their

thought processes may differ in other important respects,

all manifest participation -- a symptom of primitive

complex thinking and of the function of words as family

names.   (72)

Although Vygotsky makes no mention of literacy in this context, his statement

clearly implies that the acquisition of literacy provides access to the final stage of

cognitive maturity, conceptual thinking. By associating children, "primitive" and

therefore presumably oral peoples, and the insane with the conceptual structures of

complex thought, a term Vygotsky has already established as *preceding* true

conceptual thought, he indicates that the movement into the final stage of thinking is

limited to those who possess literacy. Vygotsky says as much when he suggests,

the advanced concept presupposes more than unification.

To form such a concept it is also necessary *to abstract,*

to single out elements, and to view the abstracted

elements apart from the totality of the concrete

experience in which they are embedded. In genuine

concept formation, it is equally important to unite and to

separate: Synthesis must be combined with analysis.

Complex thinking cannot do both.   (76)

"Genuine concept formation" demands that an individual single out elements of the

environment and reorder them into abstract categories of perception. But the mind

can only learn to combine synthesis with analysis once language, and thereby thought,

Figure 1

Vygotsky's Developmental Stages of Communication
and Concept Formation

Stages of Communication	Stages of Concept Formation
1. Natural Stage Pre-intellectual Speech & Pre-verbal Thought	1. Natural Stage Beginnings of Syncretism
2. Naive Psychology Application of experience with self and environment [characterised by grammatical "mimicry"]	2. Syncretism Elements grouped into 'one unarticulated image on the strength of some chance impression'
3. Egocentric Stage Use of external aids to solve internal problems (eg. counting on fingers) [characterised by verbalised thought]	3. Complex Thinking Elements grouped by functional, not subjective, bonds
4. Ingrowth Stage 'logical memory' made up of inherent relationships and inner signs replaces external aids [characterised by conscious differentiation between inner-speech and social speech]	4. Concept Thinking Abstract and logical relationships replace functional relationships in determining bonds

is perceived as object not event -- a situation that occurs only within a literate community. Thus, although Vygotsky does not construct the differences between adults and children around the acquisition of literacy as such, his own research strongly implies that literacy does play a primary role in the psychological and social division of adults and children. His observations give power to Postman's assertion that "a child evolved toward adulthood by acquiring . . . the capacity to think logically and sequentially, the capacity to distance oneself from symbols, [and] the capacity to manipulate high orders of abstraction" among other things; and suggests that, like concept thinking, comprehensive literacy only develops in adolescence.

Most children, while capable of many feats of intellectual and creative reasoning, simply do not perceive or interact with their environment in the same way as do their literate elders. Accordingly, psychological differences become an important influence on social structures and interpersonal relationships within a literate society. In an oral society, once a child can speak and comprehend with reasonable fluidity, not only do almost all texts[6] become accessible to the child, but she or he also becomes capable of actively participating in the same types of interactions, the same situational contexts, as the adults in the community. Aries notes that anecdotal painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth century strongly suggests that "children mingled with adults in everyday life, and any gathering for the purpose of work, relaxation, or sport brough together both children and adults . . . today, as

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[6] While the word "text" tends to be associated with writing in the culture, the word can also refer to the oral equivilent to written text, something Ong describes as a "voicing."

also towards the end of the nineteenth century, we tend to separate the world of children from that of adults" (37-38). In a literate community interactions between adults and children are always influenced by the child's psychological and social immaturity. Even when reading and writing do not form the direct focus of interactions, illiteracy and literacy necessarily form part of the situational and cultural context of the relationship. "[A]s childhood and adulthood became increasingly differentiated, each sphere elaborated its own symbolic world, and eventually it came to be accepted that the child did not and could not share the language, the learning, the tastes, the appetites, the social life of an adult" (Postman 50-51).

Although children in literate societies are most often well-acquainted with the concept of written text very early in life -- through books, signs, product labels, and innumerable other sources, as well as the literate interactions of the adults around them -- they themselves do not possess the skills to fully participate within this world. "[A] passing acquaintanceship with literate organization of knowledge has . . . no discernible effect on illiterates. Writing has to be personally interiorized to affect thinking processes" (57) according to Ong.[7] His words suggest that while children

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[7] Shirley Brice Heath's ethnographic study of two small, rural towns in the United States, as described in *Ways With Words*, confirms the degree to which literacy must be interiorized in order to influence thinking processes. Her findings suggest that certain modern communities retain their oral orientation, and exhibit the same context-oriented, interactive communication structures as all oral people. Even living in a highly literate culture, it is possible for individuals and communities to retain oral cognitive structures if they do not, for whatever reason, interiorize literate thinking processes.

may well gain exposure to written text prior to obtaining literacy skills, and these texts, like all else, will affect their perceptions of language and its application, they will perceive and interact with their environment as oral, not literate, individuals.

As they grow, children are taught to recognize and adopt the registers of literate language, to communicate in a form related to the familiar patterns of speech but possessing its own unique structures and rules. The acquisition of literacy involves far more than learning how to put words on paper. Children must learn to read and to write, not as though speaking to another person, but using the particular linguistic constructions associated with the written word. Rosalind Horowitz and S. Jay Samuels address this issue in *Comprehending Oral and Written Language*: "The acquisition of literacy entails a shift (or shifts) from psychological, linguistic, and social-cultural experiences as a speaker and oral-language processor . . . to those of a reader and user of more formal oral and written language registers in school (and other written forms, thereafter, outside of schools)" (14). In becoming literate, children learn to understand language as object rather than event.

Children approach literacy through their experiences with oral communication: "Readers and writers are first and foremost listeners and speakers" (Horowitz/Samuels 14). In developing proficiency with the written word, they can only begin with the language already known to them, the language of speech. The necessity of contextualizing the written word in the oral forms accessible to the child result in a functional need for a new type of text. Just as Miller has claimed, new situational types (and therefore new genres) develop out of functional necessity. As new types

of interactions with children become common, as children become systematically isolated from the adult environment, children's literature develops into a genre.

Once we recognize that our societal view of childhood arises in response to changes in the social world, including the shift from dominant orality to dominant literacy, we can begin to gain some insight into the origins and development of children's literature. The physical, social, and psychological differences separating children from adults within a literate society require the development of new situational "types," which in turn require new textual forms. The result, inevitably, is a division between the types of texts accessible to, and considered appropriate for, the two groups. In an oral society there is no real distinction between the texts available to adults and those accessible to children; within a literate society, however, this state of universal access necessarily becomes obsolete and new forms of interaction take their place. As these new forms of interaction, with their unique demands upon language, become more and more of a functional necessity in the community, the need for a particular category of texts to appeal to the non-literate and semi-literate segments of the population is simultaneously recognized and filled.

Children must learn to be literate in this society, but they can only become so if the texts they are to read reflect their own mental capacities and structures. Adult texts, based in the formal abstractions of the fully literate, cannot fulfil this requirement; so, as literacy has come to dominate the communicative structures of adult society, and effectively restructured the situational contexts surrounding adult-

child communication, a genre able to meet the special communicative needs and goals

of children and adults alike has necessarily developed.

CHAPTER 2

"THE FIRST FURNISHINGS OF THE MIND":

SHAPING THE NURSERY RHYME

Contextualizing the Origins of Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes, like fairy tales, occupy a special place within our community

(that is, among those who share European or, more precisely, British ancestry).[8] So

fundamental are these rhymes to the cultural context of the community that Iona Opie

is moved to describe them as "the first furnishings of the mind; the bottommost layer

of the comfortable hereditary clutter of mottoes, proverbs, and half-remembered tales

that we use to ornament conversations throughout our lives, knowing they are

common currency" (9). Nursery rhymes have become part of our communal identity,

one of those common elements of cultural knowledge that confirm one's membership

within the group; and, like the fairy stories Jack Zipes discusses in "The Changing

Function of the Fairy Tale," they have become "more of a cultural institution than

anything else" (7).

At the same time, even as the verses make up part of the cultural context of

this society and "ornament conversations throughout our lives," it is also true that

these texts are closely associated with children and childhood. Nursery rhymes

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[8] The verses are also known as "Mother Goose" rhymes in much of North
America. While the two terms are largely interchangeable, "nursery rhyme"
emphasizes the situational context of the rhymes, and so acts as the better descriptor
for my purposes.

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comprise one of the few forms of poetry that are identified consistently as children's

verse; and, as the forceful association of a maternal or paternal croon with "Hush-a-

bye baby," of delighted tumbles with the end of "Ring-a-round-a-rosie," or of a

chorus of children's voices with "Star light, star bright" tell us, nursery rhymes --

more than almost any other type of text -- embody some of our most cherished

perceptions of childhood.

Although *Tom Thumb's Songbook*[9] was printed around 1744, it was not until

the nineteenth century that the traditional, highly patterned verses contained in early

"songbooks" were collectively identified as nursery rhymes.[10] While there is no

doubt that certain kinds of poetry have always been a part of children's lives --

lullabies have existed as long as there have been babies -- the close association

between the verses and children really only begins with the printed publication of

these collections. Although their comparatively recent publication suggests that

nursery rhymes, as a body of texts, do not possess a lengthy history, many of the

verses existed long before they were written down.

Even though nursery rhymes are the earliest known type of children's verse --

they are the first poetic forms to be typically characterized in terms of a prominent,

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[9] The second volume of *Tom Thumb's Songbook* was titled *Tom Thumb's Pretty Songbook*. The two books were first published in London although an American version was also published during the eighteenth century.

[10] *Tom Thumb's Pretty Songbook* was followed by several other volumes of self-proclaimed "children's" verse: *Nurse Truelove's New-Year's-Gift* (1755), *Tommy Thumb's Little Story Book* (1760), *Gammer Gurton's Garland* (1784), and *Nancy Cock's Pretty Song Book for all Little Misses and Masters* (1780?).

almost exclusive, association with children -- many modern nursery rhymes in origin actually predate the existence of children's poetry as an identifiable genre. Most verses originate in the early seventeenth century, at least one hundred years before the first book of nursery rhymes was published, and a number have histories dating back several more centuries. For instance, children were playing "King of the Castle" in Roman times, while several of the rhyming riddles ("White bird featherless" and "Two legs sat upon three legs" among others) have been traced as far back as the tenth century. Even the traditional bedtime prayer "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John" was well-known in the fifteenth century.[11] All in all, about a quarter of the verses now identified as nursery rhymes were known prior to the seventeenth century, while a full forty percent could be heard by the time the century was half-complete.

Considering the close identification that has developed between children and the verses over the past two hundred and fifty years, it seems almost ironic that most of the texts we recognize as nursery rhymes were never created for children. According to Iona and Peter Opie, editors of *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, "It can be safely stated that the overwhelming majority of nursery rhymes were not in the first place composed for children" (3). They explain, "of those pieces

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[11] I have included the complete text of all verses mentioned in this chapter, but not incorporated in the main body, in Appendix A. The source text for all nursery rhymes referenced is Iona and Peter Opie's *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. After more than forty years, this text remains the most definitive scholarly collection of nursery rhymes in print. As well as offering a detailed introduction to the history and origins of the verses, it contains 550 separate poems, all fully researched with details of origins, publication histories, and connections to other poems in both English and other European languages.

which date from before 1800, the only true nursery rhymes (i.e. rhymes composed especially for the nursery) are the rhyming alphabets, the infant amusements (verses which accompany a game), and the lullabies. Even the riddles were in the first place designed for adult perplexity" (4).

According to Zipes, whose suggestions about the historic and modern functions of fairy tales can be applied equally well to nursery rhymes, "[s]ome so-called warning tales dealing with dangerous animals were apparently directed at children, but they were not considered 'children's tales.' The fact is, children were not excluded from the audience when tales were told, no matter how bawdy, erotic, or scatological they might have been" (14). While Zipes himself provides little direct evidence to support this claim, recall that Aries' analysis of medieval and renaissance paintings and texts largely seem to support Zipes' interpretation. Nursery rhymes, like fairy tales, are "survivals of an adult code of joviality, and in their original wording were, by present standards, strikingly unsuitable for those of tender years" (*Dictionary* 3), but in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, it appears few children would have been prevented from hearing them. Children's early exposure to such "adult" texts (whether prose or poetry) indicates that standards applied to children's upbringing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended to differ from those in operation today; but more importantly, it suggests that the cultural structures functioning in the period made it *useful* for children to encounter such discourse at an early age.

Zipes provides a clue to the shape of this culture when he suggests, "It was through the tales that one gained a sense of values and one's place within the community. The oral tradition was in the hands of the peasantry, and each peasant community made its mark on tales that circulated beyond its borders" (14). In the seventeenth century, the time in which the bulk of modern nursery rhymes were first heard, a strong oral culture would still have been in existence. Many people, particularly those in the lower classes, would have been members of speech-based communities, despite the fact that the society as a whole could be categorized as "print conscious" (a term I borrow from Ong's stages of societal literacy). In other words, while print would not be unknown in the larger society, many communities, certainly those occupied by "peasants," would function without much recourse to the written word. This means that the characteristics of oral language would form the basis of communication in many arenas of seventeeth-century society. In Chapter 1, we saw how literacy imprints its characteristics not only upon text, but upon the socio-cultural contexts surrounding communication. Orality also affects contextual structures; and speech-dependent communities inevitably organise contextual parameters so as to best exploit and accommodate oral communication.

In all cultures, the creation and reiteration of communal text, the "common currency" to which Iona Opie refers, helps to construct a framework of common references (ideas, images, and texts) that allows a community to create and maintain its own particular culture. One of the most important communicative drives found within an oral society is the transmission of these communal texts. In exactly the

same way as the fairy tale, constant exposure to the community's folk rhymes would allow "one [to gain] a sense of values and one's place within the community"; and so, knowledge of societal stories and songs would serve to define membership within an oral community.[12] The functional purpose of folk texts in these societies led to the need to disseminate songs and stories as widely as possible. In a non-literate environment, one of the ways in which this goal could be achieved would be through the construction of situational contexts in which all community members participated, children and adults alike. With interpersonal dialogue the most common means of passing along cultural knowlege, it did not make sense to isolate children from any of the communal situational contexts which would help them to acquire a sense of cultural identity.

Children, just as much as the adults that around them, needed to know the stories and songs that formed the basis of their culture. Yet, unlike most other children's poetry, the verses were in no way directed at or constructed around the particular needs of children. In most children's verse, as we will see in Chapter 4, the unique abilities and inclinations of children underlie the structure and content of the poems; in this case, the distinctive form of the verses is driven by the dominant orality of the community as a whole. Texts do not necessarily need to take shape as verse in order to reflect and reinforce communal identity, yet it is clear that when

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[12] It is interesting that Iona Opie has found evidence that knowledge of communal text continues to play a vital role in school playgrounds. In *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, she records the fact that children entering a new school quickly adopt the current rhyme forms of that school, even if they already know another version of the rhyme (15).

such needs influenced communication in an oral society, speakers often chose to design their texts as heavily patterned, strongly rhythmic poems.

In speech-dependent communities, just as in literate communities, the retention and transmission of knowledge is of central importance. Without written text, however, language remains fundamentally ephemeral, and knowledge "ha[s] to be constantly repeated or it would be lost" (Ong 24). Lacking the means to create a physical record of words and ideas, oral communities have instead developed ways of "recording" ideas in an oral format. Only by encoding language in forms which increase its overall memorability can knowledge attain the semblance of permanence within an oral culture.

> In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the
>
> problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated
>
> thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic
>
> patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought
>
> must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced
>
> patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and
>
> assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions,
>
> in standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the
>
> duel, the hero's 'helper,' and so on), in proverbs which
>
> are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to
>
> mind readily and which themselves are patterned for

retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic forms.

(Ong 34)

Within an oral society, it is inevitable that texts often take on the characteristics of verse, since the mnemonic devices associated with poetic structures give oral communities the means to shape texts in ways that allow them to be shared and transmitted with reasonable accuracy. In oral communities, the construction of highly mnemonic folk rhyme is thus not only probable, but necessary.

The characteristic structure of nursery rhymes evolves out of functional necessity -- the need to remember; but is shaped, in linguistic terms, not so much by individual mnemonic devices as by their *interrelationship*. The apparent simplicity of these verses is belied by the complex interaction of patterns of repetition and contrast which characterise them. Mnemonic patterning appears within the most basic elements of sound, in the words and combination of words, in the structuring of sentences, and even at sophisticated levels of meaning and cohesion. The ways in which these language patterns interact with each other result in a kind of mnemonic "density" that increases the likelihood of texts being remembered and passed along through the generations.

Familiar nursery rhyme patterns tend to work together in very specific ways. The aural associations created by rhyming pairs -- such as "pie/cry" "play/away" in "Georgie Porgie" -- are enhanced by their position at natural "pause points" in language (namely, at the conclusion of phrases, clauses and sentences). These

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structural breaks, in their turn, are emphasized by the strong, regular rhythms that are as closely identified with the verses as rhyme itself:

```
    /         /         /         /
GEORgie PORgie, PUDdin and PIE,
    /         /         /         /
KISSED the GIRLS and MADE them CRY.
    /         /         /         /
WHEN the BOYS came OUT to PLAY,
    /         /         /         /
GEORgie PORgie RAN aWAY.
```

The consistent layering of these three powerful mnemonic devices -- the aural, the rhythmic, and the structural -- multiplies the mnemonic power of the overall verse. So effective is this link between rhyme, "pause points," and rhythm in mnemonic terms, that it is almost never violated within this verse form.

Patterning words in sequences of repetitions and contrasts also serves to enhance the mnemonic density of these verses. For instance, "The Queen of Hearts" not only displays the characteristic interactions of rhyme, rhythm, and structure, but makes prominent use of repeated and contrasting words and phrases.

> The Queen of Hearts,
> She made some tarts
> All on a summer's day.
> The Knave of Hearts,
> He stole the tarts,
> And took them clean away.
>
> The King of Hearts
> Called for the tarts,
> And beat the knave full sore;
> The Knave of Hearts
> Brought back the tarts,
> And vowed he'd steal no more.

Beyond the obvious repetition of the word "tarts" in the same position in both stanzas of the poem, consider the sequence of "Queen," "Knave," "King," "Knave". These four words possess mnemonic force both in structural and conceptual terms. Not only do the words appear in equivalent positions in the sentence, each is consistently followed by the phrase "of Hearts." Furthermore, the identity they share as familiar royal positions constructs collocative (or associative) links which increase mnemonic impact. Thus, these words share a cognitive relationship which is itself emphasised by both sentence structure and repetition. In this rhyme, as in many others, the mnemonic impact of sound and structure is further enhanced by pragmatic patterning.

These analyses only begin to scratch the surface of the mnemonic density of most nursery rhymes. The true intricacy of patterning (combinations of repetition, or expectation, and difference) in these verses can be seen in the in-depth analysis of "Baa, baa, black sheep" contained in the next chapter. Even without such information, however, it is possible to recognize that the demands of orality will ensure that the stylistic shape of the verses will be typified to some degree despite, as we will see, the wide variety of social contexts in which they are employed.

The stylistic similarities shared by the verses provide the first, and perhaps most readily identifiable, connection between them. Yet, it is important to remember that each of these rhymes, like all other texts, were designed to function within particular situational contexts. Where the linguistic connections between the verses are readily perceived, less obvious are the social bonds linking these texts together.

The origins of the rhymes have been traced to ballads and folk songs, ritualistic sayings, street market cries, and popular jokes (from both high classes and low); they were found in taverns, around battlefields and rebellions, in playhouses, street markets and private houses; often they were designed to poke fun at religion and authority, or to immortalize popular figures of all kinds; several were romantic, and many were explicitly crude (*Dictionary* 3-4).

Ranging from taverns to drawing rooms to street markets, from jokes to proverbs, the very diversity of situational contexts in which the verses were used indicates the degree to which poetic language structures could be found in everyday communications in the seventeenth century, but at the same time it seems to militate against any functional connection between these texts. Nevertheless, the identification of the situational contexts originally giving rise to the verses is the first step in exposing the origins of their collective identity: despite their apparent diversity, these texts are linked by more than just their form. Just as linguistic necessity has encoded textual form in unique patterns, so too has social function embedded itself within the texts.

In Lucy Rollin's opinion, the connection shared by nursery rhymes primarily resides in basic psychological experience. In *Cradle and All: A Cultural and Psychoanalytic Reading of Nursery Rhymes* she focuses, not unexpectedly, on the role nursery rhymes play in shaping primary emotional drives into communicable language-based forms. Rollin argues, "the products of a collective human effort, such as nursery rhymes, are the result of a culture's projection of the inner concerns of its

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people" (11).[13] Later in the book, she expands upon this idea, defining nursery

rhymes as powerfully symbolic texts: "If nursery rhymes speak to our psyches, as I

believe they do, then they speak not directly to issues of material culture such as

overpopulation, pollution, and healthy diet, but symbolically to those early loves,

rivalries, hostilities, anxieties, and sensations" (143). According to Rollin, the

ongoing cultural importance of folk literature stems from psychological need: nursery

rhymes, like fairy tales, are symbolic texts, functioning primarily as acceptable

expressions of primal fears and desires.

Rollin's approach to nursery rhymes offers useful insights into the ongoing

appeal of these verses, especially those containing violence and cruelty.[14] The texts

do seem to evoke potent emotional responses, and it is not unreasonable to accept that

they have entered deeply into the cultural matrix of this society in part because of this

psychological function.[15] At the same time, I take issue with Rollin's assertion that

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[13] Rollin's statement echoes Bruno Bettelheim's arguments about the function of
fairy tales in *The Uses of Enchantment*. Both see communal literature, whether
poetry or prose, as a vehicle for the expression of primal human drives, both physical
and psychological.

[14] Rhymes considered "unsuitable for children" because of their violence, cruelty,
sexual innuendo, or promotion of immoral values (including several of the most
popular verses) have come under attack since the rhymes first became associated with
children. For an account of the various attempts to regulate, confine and rewrite
"offensive" nursery rhymes, see Ronald Reichertz's article, "The Generative Power of
Nursery Rhymes" (*ChLA Quarterly* Fall 1994).

[15] I must admit, however, to finding some of Rollin's psychological readings
questionable. For instance, her analysis of "Henry was a worthy king," which she
describes as "a form of graceful seduction" (7) seems to me a relatively speculative
interpretation. Rollin asserts, but provides little supporting evidence, that the
exchange of gifts (a lily and an egg) acts as a metaphor for sexual intercourse, as she
claims, or that "playing at king and queen" represents sexual play. While the

the rhymes "speak not directly to issues of material culture . . . but [speak] symbolically." In making this statement, Rollin oversimplifies the function of the verses -- they possess more than just symbolic force.

In some ways, Rollin's focus mimics the the efforts of John Bellenden Ker and Katherine Elwes Thomas (among others), both of whom attempted to prove that nursery rhymes were really disguised political commentaries. In all three cases, the true meaning (whether socio-political or psychological) of the verses only becomes evident once the presumed facade of triviality and nonsense has been stripped away. While Rollin's views show considerably more depth and authority than either Ker's or Thomas', she, like them, treats the texts as a poetic "code" in need of deciphering.

While I have no real difficulty accepting that the verses have a symbolic, psychological component, and am willing to believe that some refer to specific historic individuals and situations, I am convinced that it is a mistake to ignore the surface content of the rhymes, and the place they hold in the interactions between community members. Contrary to Rollin's view that the verses speak primarily of inner concerns, I would argue that in most cases, verse grows out of the communal, rather than private, world of the speaker. It is telling that few nursery rhymes explicitly foreground private or internal perceptions; instead these texts tend to reflect the public interests and concerns of the population at large. Consider that the rhymes consistently originate as part of a highly social, mostly public, interaction. Taverns, drawing rooms, street markets, and playhouses might not share any obvious

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interpretation is not impossible, I see no compelling reason to believe her.

contextual features, but they are connected in terms of situational type -- as overtly public environments. While at some level, many of the verses might well explore certain universal psychological experiences, they are equally or more concerned with the external, social constructs involved in community membership.

Evidence that the rhymes arise as responses to particular social needs or as reflections of community concerns are readily suggested by the verses themselves. Popular nursery rhymes such as "Hot Cross Buns," or "Young lambs to sell" originate as street vendor's cries. These verses possess a clear social purpose -- to attract attention to the vendor, and to entice business (just as the "jingles" from radio and television advertisements do today). Similarly, songs and verses would grow up around common chores, sometimes to help the work progress smoothly (or at least represent it as progressing smoothly), sometimes to stave off boredom -- verses such as "Cushy cow, let down your milk," "Away, birds, away," and "Come, butter, come" are part of this tradition.

Even the verses used as entertainment in pubs, plays or community gatherings tend to explore instances of individual behaviour in light of their social, rather than psychological, impact. Popular ballads and songs like "A frog he would a-wooing go" or "Bobby Shaftoe" focus on issues of love and marriage (as do many of the verses) through a focus on common wooing rituals. Comic verses, including ones such as "Who comes here? / A grenadier" mock human foibles (sometimes affectionately) through descriptions of public disgrace; ones such as "I have a jolly shilling" reflect upon monetary interests and transactions; and those like "To market,

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to market" are based upon common activities. Individual concerns such as love, piety, and drunkenness tend to be represented within the context of social interactions in these verses: the world of the individual is consistently placed within the context of the community's shared social routines and expectations.

These verses thus represented and typified the social world of community members; but at the same time they were not simply playful, stylised reflections of everyday life. They played an active role in structuring social interactions, standing as an integral part of the daily lives of community members: they formed part of the ongoing interactions of community members in the pubs, plays, streets, and markets; they regularly commented on popular figures, and reflected the daily routines that evolved naturally around work and play; they asserted popular opinion and commonly known truths, and confirmed ancient rituals. In short, the verses reflected in their content and use the cultural structures of work, play, and thought that shape individuals into an identifiable community. While psychological influences undoubtedly play a part in the development of the verses and their retention within this culture, the rhymes have also developed as practical expressions of the community's material interests. The verses possess social functions as well as psychological ones.

So, despite the apparent diversity of these texts, it is clear that the verses have always shared functional, as well as linguistic, connections. Moreover, it is arguable that both types of bond evolve, at least in part, out of the structuring influences of cultural orality. The primary alliance between these verses lies not so much in any

specific subject or source, but in language itself, in the mnemonic structures that occur as a neccesary aspect of communication within an oral environment and the communal orientation which remains the best way of providing cultural identity in a scriptless society. Despite the clear diversity of their origins as song fragments, riddles, rhymes, and verse sayings, functional necessity has provided these texts with a certain inherent unity.

The Literate (R)Evolution: Reshaping the Social World

The unifying features of folk rhyme were not foregrounded until the cultural context altered to the point at which literate language effectively dominated communication structures within the overall society. We have already established that, in societies in which most people cannot read, the transmission of cultural information and its attendant sense of community membership occur within an environment of intimate, interactive oral discourse. Once, however, a significant portion of the community's population becomes literate, modes of communication, and even of thought, are irretrievably altered. Ong goes so far as to claim, "More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness" (78).[16]

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[16] Some degree of proof for this claim comes from A. R. Luria's research into the differences between oral and literate cognitive structures in *Language and Cognition*. In this book, Luria identifies characteristics of perception and cognition which seem to be specificially linked to the acquisition of literacy.

Inevitably, as a result, the intimacy characterizing the situational context in which cultural information is transmitted in oral societies is heavily modified in a community bound more closely by the written word. Ong calls it an "isolating" influence, pointing out that "writing makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set" (105). The development of writing encourages introspection and independence to a degree that would be simply impractical within an oral community. Because literacy separates text from an immediate, interactive context, it makes communication more wholly than ever before the province of the individual rather than the product of the group.

As literacy has come to dominate the linguistic environment of this society, it has restructured the cultural context of communication. Because the written word encourages communication independent of specific interactive contexts, the communal function -- that is, the reconfirmation of societal membership -- that once influenced so many spoken communications plays a much less central role in daily discourse: there is now much less need for communal verse, constantly spoken and repeated by community members, to ensure the passage of knowledge and the culture's stories.

This alteration in situational contexts has had a profound impact upon communal folk rhyme. Based as it is in the interactive, oral structures of discourse, the position of this verse form within a literate social environment becomes increasingly peripheral. It continues to be used in a multitude of contexts, but usually

as an "ornament" to discourse rather than as a necessary element of it. Consider, for instance, how the verse "Red sky at night, sailor's delight / Red sky at morning, sailors take warning" is used in the modern world: at one point, it would have been the linguistic representation of a valuable piece of information about weather prediction. Now, while the verse continues to play an occasional role in discussions about the weather, the informative value of the verse has been largely superseded by newspaper and television reports which exhibit the same predictive force of the rhyme. The verse is still used, but no longer is a necessary way of transmitting information. It has become, because of the impact of literacy, a stylistic addition to discussions of the weather rather than a central feature of such discourse.

As literacy has come to dominate the communication structures of this culture, folk rhyme has become increasingly isolated as a textual form. The literate society tends to express its communal knowledge in written forms: having less need for the constant public reiteration of important cultural information, there is less drive to create or utilize texts structured primarily for mnemonic impact. The encoding of cultural information in written form has inevitably reduced the need for mnemonic texts such as folk rhyme in the daily interactions of community members. However, the effective textual isolation of folk rhyme has not resulted in significant alterations to the verses, nor have they disappeared from societal discourse. Instead, the slow segregation of this verse form from the daily flow of communication has led to a redefinition of their function and use within the culture.

As folk rhyme occupies less and less space in most situational contexts, it has developed stronger associations with those environments in which it continues to play a central role. The most prominent of these remaining contexts is that of the nursery (the term encompasses both physical and social arrangements separating children from adult society), a structure, as Chapter 1 points out, that itself has developed partially in response to growing literacy levels. The nursery, unlike most other areas within the community, has remained an oral environment: it is one of the few places in which interactive oral communication continues to control the situational and cultural context. Because children are necessarily illiterate, their environment inevitably reflects this state, despite the changes that have affected the wider community.

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "nursery" refers to "a room or place equipped for young children;" yet, the word implies much more than simply a physical space. The nursery, even when considered only as a room in a building, possesses inherent ties to a broader social context. Constructed as a space devoted to the youngest members of the community, it also houses the characteristic social environment that devlops out of interactions with those community members. A nursery is thus more than just a child's room: it is the physical expression of a particular social relationship.

The precise nature of this relationship deserves some examination, for it is within the context of these interactions that the environment surrounding the construction and use of nursery rhymes has developed. The nursery is a place for a child, but one which is also implicitly under the control of an adult. Thus, while the

social context of the nursery revolves around the child, it tacitly defines as part of its composition the figure of an adult caregiver.

The social context of the nursery is constructed around the interaction of adult and child, and it is as a part of this relationship that nursery rhymes are found.[17] The adult largely chooses the texts which will play a part in this relationship -- after all, "rhymes enter the nursery through the predisposition of the adults in charge of it" (*Dictionary* 6) -- and so the adult acts as a controlling figure, as the individual who decides what does and does not make up part of the communicative text.[18]

Yet, the child is by no means powerless in this relationship. While the adult can choose to include or exlude particular texts from the nursery, it is the child, or rather the linguistic and cognitive abilities of the child (as well as other, more idiosyncratic features of personality), which controls the type of text that functions well within the environment. As Ruqayia Hasan points out, "[i]f 'the children had to be amused', then only that would do which was capable of fulfilling this function" (23). According to the Opies, "[t]he mother or nurse does not employ a jingle

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[17] This figure, the caregiver, is embodied in the character of Mother Goose, and thus, the identification of verses as "Mother Goose Rhymes" (particularly common in North America) constructs the verses just as firmly as part of the adult-child discourse.

[18] This feature distinguishes nursery rhymes from "schoolyard rhymes," which are in many other ways structured along similar lines. While nursery rhymes are largely communicated from adult to child, schoolyard rhymes pass from child to child, without the intervention and often even the knowledge of adult supervisors. For further discussion of this distinction, see Iona Opie's *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* and Alison Newall's "Schoolyard Songs in Montreal: Violence as a response" (*ChLA Quarterly* Fall 1994).

because it is a nursery rhyme *per se*, but because in the pleasantness (or desperation) of the moment it is the first thing which comes to her mind" (*Dictionary* 6). Designed specifically to "come [readily] to mind," it is inevitable that nursery rhymes continue to act as shared or communal texts within the context of this relationship. Nursery rhymes, because they originally developed as interactive, social texts with strong mnemonic properties, fulfil the needs of caregiver and child alike.

The context surrounding the verses' original creation was interactive: they were formed to be a part of the various dialogues shared by members of the same community. Initially it might seem somewhat paradoxical that verses springing from the specific social contexts of the seventeenth century (and earlier) have not only survived the passing of that time, but retained their potency, but it is important to remember that the verses continue to function in much the same way as they have always done. The mnemonic features originally incorporated in the texts for reasons of orality continue to influence their use within the modern context of the nursery. Although the cultural context surrounding the rhymes has altered significantly over the past several centuries, the presence of mnemonic devices within the verses remains vital to their modern function. Perhaps in large measure because of their mnemonic density, they remain fundamentally interactive texts:

> [M]ost children experience poetry first through *Mother*
> *Goose* and nursery rhymes, read or spoken at home by
> parents or brothers or sisters. The atmosphere is
> informal; the family relationship warm. The rhymes

seem a natural part of living, even when the reader or

speaker is unskilled in the art of presentation. The tune

and the rhythm provide fun; counting-out rhymes

provoke play; and riddles demand thought. All in all, it

becomes a child's toy.   (Painter 11)

Helen W. Painter's description of the situational context surrounding nursery

rhymes strongly suggests that these texts function within the nursery primarily as

vehicles of play. As part of the interactive discourse of the family, they occur as "a

natural part of living" rather than as something separate from the daily communicative

interactions of the family; and as such, as part of the ongoing activities of the child,

the rhymes simply become another toy to be employed when the need or interest

arises. Infant games such as "Brow Bender," or "This is the way a lady rides" are

probably the most readily identifiable of such verbal toys: designed to accompany

physical interaction, they provide a linguistic structure for physical play. Older

children's games also reflect such "shaping" of physical action: the circling pattern of

"Ring-a-round-a-rosie" and the "bridge" formation identified with "London Bridge"

are only two of the most obvious of these physical expressions of verbal structures.

Painter clearly recognizes the important role the verses have when combined with

physical play, and the fact that these rhymes so often form a part of children's

amusements simply reinforces the degree to which the rhymes retain the interactive,

social nature encoded within their earliest forms. Yet, this is not the only form of

play found within the rhymes: Painter's words also suggest that beyond their use as a

linguistic structure for physical activity, the rhymes also introduce children to the world of linguistic play.

Linguistic play is intimately connected to physical play, particularly in the environments inhabited by children. Physical play helps children to explore their environment and test both its boundaries and its possibilities. Through play, children learn to mimic the structures of the adult world, identifying and reinforcing their own perceptions of their society. Language play is an inherent and necessary part of this environmental exploration. Like physical play, it is designed to test the limits of the environment, but language play provides children with a means to explore the possibilities and potential of the language they are in the process of acquiring. Although the linguistic play of nursery rhymes is a byproduct of the original force motivating their creators (that is, the need to create memorable text), the use of such play within the modern world should not be underestimated.

Children explore their linguistic environment by learning to recognise both the normal "prose" patterns of language and deviations from these patterns found within poetic language. The sentence "My son John went to sleep wearing his trousers and only one shoe" possesses different characteristics once it is coded in poetic form: "Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John / went to bed with his trousers on. / One shoe off and one shoe on; / Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John." While in both cases the same informational content is represented, prose prioritizes content, where the poetic form emphasises linguistic structure. This deliberate reorganization of the normal patterns of the language into regular sets of repetitions and contrasts thus

introduces children to the foundations of the more complex and subtle forms of language play found within more sophisticated texts. In this way, mnemonic devices are in their very nature a basic type of linguistic play, and their identification with the nursery has only served to emphasize this innate playfulness.

> The infant who on his mother's knees chuckles at
>
> > To market, to market, to buy a fat pig
> >
> > Home again, home again, jiggety jig . . .
>
> is probably receiving an early lesson in the appreciation
> of verbal art. The involvement of the body, as it sways
> in keeping with the rhythm, lays the foundation for the
> perception of these patterns so unobtrusively that one
> might be tempted to think of the ability as an innate one.
> Rhyme after rhyme exposes the child to the pleasures of
> patterning in language; alliteration and assonance come
> into their own; repetition and parallel structure are off-set
> by contrasts that break the spell of similarity, introducing
> the joy of the recognition of the unexpected. (Hasan 2)

Ruqaiya Hasan's recognition of the primary importance of patterns in nursery rhymes reveals that the verses provide children with a way of exploring the structures and sounds of their lingusitic environment, leading ultimately to a recognition of these patterns as "verbal art." As Hasan notes, "It is the active experience of properties such as these that functions as a link between the simple parental sound play of the 'a-

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a-a-BOO' game and a sophisticated piece of writing" (2). The patterns appearing so prominently within nursery rhymes seem to provide children with a simple introduction to the patterns of language found in more complex and less highly structured texts. Nursery rhymes, like so many other types of play, thus provide children with an education in their language, giving them the basic tools they require to comprehend the increasingly complex linguistic world that surrounds them.

Hasan identifies the degree to which nursery rhymes are dependent upon this orally based language when she asserts that the appeal of the nursery rhyme "is mostly through the abstract medium of playing upon the lexico-grammar and the sound system of language" (24). Her promotion of language as the primary interest of the verses seems to deny Rollin's belief in the powerful symbolic force of the rhymes. However, it is not necessary to accept one position at the expense of the other; nursery rhymes, no less than other textual types, reflect in both their form and their content the demands of the social environment. The context of the nursery places both linguistic and psychological demands on texts (as well as cultural and social ones), and so it seems reasonable to assert that any verse in order to survive as a nursery rhyme must possess linguistic, psychological, and social impact.

Conclusion

Nursery rhymes, like fairytales, have acquired their collective identity as a result of a comprehensive societal restructuring rather than by any conscious design. In their original contexts, the verses had a number of uses and were found in many

social arenas: clearly, they were never deliberately constructed as a part of any particular genre. Yet, not only have the rhymes come to be recognized as a single, identifiable category of texts, they have developed a functional unity far removed from their original diversity. It seems clear that the gradual reconstruction of community folk rhyme as nursery rhyme did not so much re-create the verses as redefine their societal role, and the most obvious symbol of their altering function is reflected in the label that has come both to describe and to define them -- "nursery rhyme."

CHAPTER 3

STRUCTURING SENSE: AN ANALYSIS OF "BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP"

Making a Meaningful Text

Ruqaiya Hasan's argument that the appeal of nursery rhymes derives from sound and language play -- "the abstract medium of . . . the lexico-grammar [words and syntax] and the sound system of language" (24) -- leads her to suggest that the nursery rhyme "is the one art form that appears to be indifferent to the informational content -- in the rather limited sense of information, where information is only that which is something normally understood, factually correct, and 'logically' plausible" (24). According to Hasan, it is not so much content, at least informational content, that attracts children and others to nursery rhymes, but rather the intricate patterns of language that are their most obvious and memorable feature.

Like Hasan, I have thus far focused on the language patterns in the verses, suggesting that the need for mnemonic density structures these texts and leads to their characteristic layers of patterned language (such as the pairing of rhyme and line end, and line end and syntactic "pause points," for instance). Yet, while there seems little question that much of the appeal of the nursery rhyme derives from its engaging aural characteristics, it would be a mistake to assume nursery rhymes are exclusively sound-oriented texts: the verses are more than just pleasing to the ear.

Most nursery rhymes do not so much display "indifferen[ce] to informational content" as Hasan suggests, as they do selectively play with conventional realities

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(that which is "normally understood, factually correct, and 'logically' plausible"). As happens in most nonsense verse, nursery rhymes tend to reconfigure meaning rather than negate it, distorting real-world facts for pleasurable or humourous effect.[19] At the same time, nursery rhymes, like nonsense verse, tend to shy away from altering the structural elements of communication -- they rarely displace those components which ensure that a text functions as meaningful discourse.[20]

Despite implausible or unrealistic elements, nursery rhymes generally remain coherent and comprehensible -- they are meaningful texts. However, according to Michael Halliday, the meaning of a text derives from much more than its words and syntax: "For a text to be coherent, it must be cohesive; but it must be more besides. It must deploy the resources of cohesion in ways that are motivated by the register of which it is an instance; it must be semantically appropriate, with lexicogrammatical realizations to match (i.e. it must make sense); and it must have structure" (*Grammar* 318). With this observation, Halliday suggests that coherence, or "sense," depends as much on semantic and pragmatic compatibility (that is, how well the text reflects contextual expectations), as it does on the lexicogrammatic characteristics, the words and syntax, of the text. Thus, although Hasan may well be correct in stating that

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[19] A fair bit has been written about the construction of nonsense verse, a type of poetry closely associated with nursery rhymes. For a more detailed explanation of how such verse is constructed, see *Under the Tumtum Tree* (Marlene Dolitsky), and the anthology *Explorations in the Field of Nonsense* (Wim Tigges (ed.)).

[20] James Joyce's manipulations of language in *Ulysses* amply demonstrate the impact of structural displacement. When the components shaping the fundamental or "deep" structure of language are disturbed, meaning becomes difficult, if not impossible, to determine.

nursery rhymes are not focused primarily upon relating plausible, factual occurrences, the verses do evidence concern with content, at least with content relating to the contexts surrounding communication, and with the rules and regulations which shape discourse within these contexts.

For this reason it is possible to say that the meaning of nursery rhymes arises out of more than pleasing combinations of sounds and words: their overall sense depends upon the interactions of multiple levels of meaning, from sound to syntax to context. Because of these interrelationships, the decoding of these texts makes demands upon an audience that are far from light. The verses tend to incorporate meaningful gaps in information, gaps which require individuals to employ their own knowledge of semantic and pragmatic structures to make a particular text meaningful. To put it in Halliday's terms, we must call upon our knowledge of register -- the characteristic features of language associated with particular social circumstances -- to identify a verse as a cohesive, and coherent, text. Although pragmatic patterns (that is, socially constructed patterns of communication) tend to be overshadowed by the more obvious patterns of sound and syntax, they are nevertheless just as influential in nursery rhyme structure as the more familiar mnemonic characteristics. The interactions of the phonological, lexico-grammatic, and pragmatic features of text can been seen operating in almost all nursery rhymes, including the popular "Baa, baa, black sheep."

Constructing Cohesion: The Language of "Baa, baa, black sheep"

"Baa, baa, black sheep" first appeared in print in 1744 as a part of *Tom Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, the first collection of nursery rhymes ever to be published. From the time of its first printing, the verse has been a popular and well-established member of the nursery canon, and remains one of the most readily recognized of all nursery rhymes. The longevity of the poem's association with the nursery is matched by the consistency of its text as it has been passed down through the generations: according to the Opies, "The words of this favourite rhyme have scarcely altered in 200 years" (*Dictionary* 88).

Its long association with the nursery indicates that "Baa, baa, black sheep" possesses qualities that have historically, as well as currently, been associated with nursery rhymes. Furthermore, its continuing and highly consistent level of popularity suggests that the verse possesses particularly strong appeal as a nursery rhyme; and its relatively unchanged textual construction provides some evidence that this appeal lies in both linguistic construction and content. Taken altogether, these characteristics make "Baa, baa, black sheep" a particularly appropriate representative for the entire body of nursery rhymes.

"Baa, baa, black sheep" is, above all else, a satisfying text, both pleasurable to say and pleasurable to hear. Yet, for the most part, the popularity of this verse does not arise from its content. In terms of basic informational meaning, "Baa, baa, black sheep" is a very simple poem:

> Baa, baa, black sheep,
> Have you any wool?

Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full;
One for the master,
And one for the dame,
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.

Beyond the unrealistic, if culturally conventional, attribution of speech to a barnyard animal, there seems nothing particularly unusual in the content of this verse. In fact, its subject, the distribution of certain quantities of wool, borders on the mundane. Had this poem nothing to recommend it except information, it seems unlikely that the text would attain, much less retain, such popularity over the course of three hundred years. We must, as Hasan suggests, look beyond informational content to discover why "Baa, baa, black sheep" has been enjoyed by generation after generation.

The most obvious reason that "Baa, baa, black sheep" has retained its vigour over the centuries is, of course, its prominent use of mnemonic features -- rhyme, rhythm, repetition and contrast, formulaic characters and events, and so forth. As Hasan suggests, much of the appeal or the pleasure in these verses derives from the patterns made by mnemonic devices. However, because such elements tend not, despite their mnemonic value, to make a text meaningful, in nursery rhymes mnemonic patterns rarely occur in isolation.[21] Instead, the verses tend to combine mnemonic constructs with the structures governing the community's discourse. They use the audience's knowledge of social patterns of interaction -- our understanding of

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[21] Certain counting-out rhymes seem to be based purely upon phonological and rhythmic patterns -- for instance, "Ena, Mena, Mona, Mite, / Basca, Lora, Hora, Bite" (*Dictonary* 157) -- but they largely seem to stand alone within the nursery rhyme canon.

purchase transactions, greeting rituals, and the like -- to help make the text meaningful, and thereby to improve both its cohesive and its mnemonic force.

"Baa, baa, black sheep" demonstrates this characteristic interaction of phonological, lexicogramatic, and pragmatic structures. It incorporates both the prominent mnemonic characteristics associated with nursery rhyme, and the non-mnemonic, yet equally powerful, structures of the question-answer (inquiry-response) conversational model. In "Baa, baa, black sheep", as in most nursery rhymes, the overall mnemonic value of the text, its cohesiveness, not only stems from obviously mnemonic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, and repetition, but also develops as a direct result of the conventions of inquiry-response discourse. Both language and context influence the final shape of the text, and work together, as we will see, in complex and subtle ways to construst cohesive and mnemonic force within the rhyme.

Only within the confines of a fictional world can a sheep speak to a human being.[22] Yet, in "Baa, baa, black sheep" the rules governing inquiry-response dialogue make the interaction between man and sheep functionally plausible, at least within the confines of the verse. There is no real restriction on the identity of the questioner or the respondent in the conventions of this discourse: all that is required is that the two entities can communicate.[23] Thus, although the conversation held in

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[22] I am assuming here that "sheep" refers to a real sheep, and is not a slang term or nickname.

[23] Although it is possible for an individual to answer his or her own question, the structure nevertheless enforces the construction of a two-person dialogue: a self-

"Baa, baa, black sheep" is fanciful, the discussion is in no way pragmatically impossible. Our familiarity with question-answer dialogues helps to construct a basic picture of the conversation in this verse, despite its real-world implausibility.

At the same time, the conversation held in "Baa, baa, black sheep" differs from dialogue normally featured in such interactions. The prose forms we tend to associate with questions and answers are replaced by striking levels of repetition in wording and syntax. Of particular note is the repeated use of vocative expressions. Vocative statements are common in spoken discourse, and are often found in question-answer dialogues: they signal to the addressee(s) that the text to follow, or in which the vocative is embedded, is directed at her, him, or them. In this instance, the vocatives used -- "black sheep" (l. 1), and "sir" (l. 3) -- reflect the dialogic expectations of inquiry-response discourse. The questioner, "Sir," prefixes his query with a signal which identifies his addressee -- "black sheep." The sheep, in turn, responds to the question, but mimics the questioner by also prefixing the answer with a direct address. Such an exchange is a familiar convention of question-answer discourse, and thus serves to prepare the audience for the type of exchange contained within the verse.

However, while the appearance of vocative expressions derives from the exchange of questions and answers, the repetitive form accompanying the vocative statements -- "Baa, baa, black sheep" and "Yes sir, yes sir" -- is particularly

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reflexive question requires the questioner to postulate him or herself as the "other" person in the dialogue.

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characteristic of the nursery rhyme. This distinctive structure is noted by Hasan in her analysis of the form: "the repetition of the address form itself is meaningful; its presence indicates the origins of the lines in nursery rhymes" (*Linguistics* 5). While the rules of inquiry-response discourse structure the informational content of the text, in this nursery rhyme, as in most, mnemonic requirements influence the form the dialogue itself takes.

We can see a similar pattern of linguistic and pragmatic interaction in operation in the syntax of the verse. "Baa, baa, black sheep" is divided into two sentences: Sentence 1 (S1) takes up lines 1-2; Sentence 2 (S2) comprises lines 3-8.

```
Sentence 1 (S1)-- Baa, baa, black sheep,
|_____ Have you any wool?

Sentence 2 (S2)-- Yes sir, yes sir,
|                       Three bags full;
|                       One for the master,
|                       And one for the dame,
|                 And one for the little boy
|_____ Who lives down the lane.
```

Figure 2 (page 59) contains a depiction of the verse's sentence structure, one which illustrates the level of mnemonic force achieved through the syntactic impact of inquiry-response conventions. One of the most obvious syntactic features of this verse is the absence of a subject and a verb in S2. However, S2 -- as English speakers intuitively know -- does not so much lack a subject or main verb, as implicitly adopt the subject-verb combination of the first sentence. This unstated grammatical connection is the result of *ellipsis*, defined as "[a] clause, or part of a clause, or a part (ususally including the lexical element) of a verbal or nominal group,
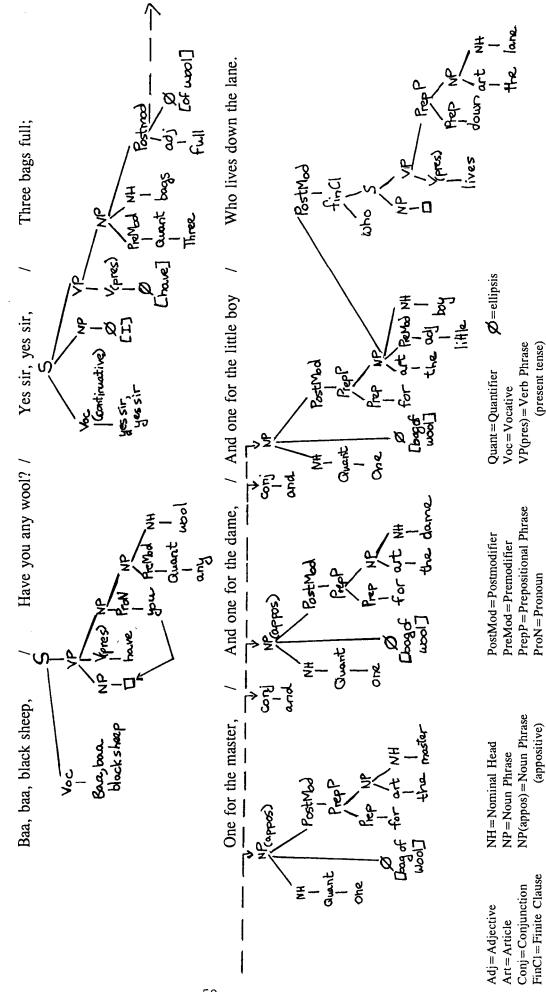
. . . presupposed at a subsequent place in the text by the device of positive ommission -- that is, by saying nothing, where something is required to make up the sense." (Halliday *Grammar* 288). In other words, under certain circumstances, a sentence can appropriate part of another sentence without directly repeating it. It is a grammatical construction most commonly found in conversations, and is particularly characteristic of questions and answers. It is also a structure which is defined by Halliday as increasing the cohesiveness of a text -- those phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic ties that shape a text into a single unit of discourse. Thus, in "Baa, baa, black sheep," the ellipsis found in S2 effectively tightens the bonds between sentences, since in order to make sense, the subject and verb of the first sentence must continue to operate in S2.

Further cohesive effects are developed through the use of ellipsis in the sequence of direct objects found in lines 4-7 in S2. Line 4, "Three bags full," assumes the hearer's familiarity with the conventional ellipses associated with inquiry-response discourse: he does not include the phrase "of wool" after the word "bags," expecting the audience to "fill" the space by inserting the appropriate word from the original question. Like the bonds created when ellipsis is used to construct the subject and verb of S2, this partial ellipsis of the direct object ties the sentence more closely to its predecessor. The three appositive phrases in the rhyme (lines 5-7) exhibit similar connections, but also create a futher layer of cohesive ellipsis within the verse. In addition to the presupposition of the words "of wool," the three

Figure 2

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF "BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP"

Baa, baa, black sheep, / Have you any wool? / Yes sir, yes sir, / Three bags full;

One for the master, / And one for the dame, / And one for the little boy / Who lives down the lane.

Adj = Adjective
Art = Article
Conj = Conjunction
FinCl = Finite Clause

NH = Nominal Head
NP = Noun Phrase
NP(appos) = Noun Phrase (appositive)

PostMod = Postmodifier
PreMod = Premodifier
PrepP = Prepositional Phrase
ProN = Pronoun

Quant = Quantifier
Voc = Vocative
VP(pres) = Verb Phrase (present tense)

∅ = ellipsis

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appositive phrases connect themselves with the first direct object in line 4 by omitting the word "bag": instead of "One [bag] [of wool] for the master", we are presented with "One for the master." By this means, the cohesive impact of direct object ellipsis is effectively doubled in the last four lines of the verse.

Ellipsis serves as one of the major cohesive forces in "Baa, baa, black sheep", but it by no means stands alone. The effects of the elliptical structures within the verse are strongly reinforced by its syntactic structures. As Figure 2 shows, each sentence in "Baa, baa, black sheep" is constructed around a subject -> verb -> direct object format, despite initial appearances. Although the interogative nature of S1 requires the inversion of the normal declarative form -- the text reads "have you" rather than "you have" -- functionally "you" remains the subject of the clause. Even the structure of S2, lines 3-8, turns out to be relatively simple. The three appositive phrases in lines 5-8 each in turn replace the initial direct object ("One for the ---" takes the grammatical position of "Three bags full"), thus creating a series of subject -> verb -> direct object structures. The consistent repetition of a single syntactic structure throughout the verse enhances the effectiveness of ellipsis by ensuring that the elliptic gaps recur several times in the same syntactic position. The more times the ellipses are repeated, the more strongly are they emphasised, and the more strongly is the verse tied together. Thus, the combination of repetitive syntactic structure and recurring ellipsis leads to a powerfully cohesive and therefore strongly mnemonic verse structure.

The overall structure of "Baa, baa, black sheep" provides insight into the linguistic subtlety contained within this apparently simple verse. Through the use of ellipsis, apposition, and repeated sentence structures, "Baa, baa, black sheep" contains an enormous amount of repetition. But repetition occurs not so much within the confines of the verse, but rather in the mental transformations performed by the audience. The verse's meaning relies heavily upon the audience's familiarity with the language and the context of inquiry-response dialogue. Without an understanding of how ellpsis or appositives work, the sense of this verse cannot be constructed. "Baa, baa, black sheep" thus exploits the audience's familiarity with the use of particular kinds of language constructs within certain situational contexts to create powerful cohesive and mnemonic ties throughout the verse structure.

Yet, despite the elements which imbue this conversation with a high degree of cohesiveness, "Baa, baa, black sheep" is also a divided verse. S2, although structurally quite simple, is a two-part sentence: lines 3-4 provide a preliminary answer to the question by identifying the total number of wool bags, and lines 5-8, the series of appositive phrases, supply a second answer by specifying selective details about the destiny of each individual bag. We could think of S2 as being comprised of S2a -- "Yes sir, yes sir, / Three bags full" -- and S2b -- "One for the master, / and one for the dame, / and one for the little boy / who lives down the lane". S2b possesses a strong semantic link to both the preceding answer (upon which it elaborates) and the question intially posed (which it, like S2a, answers), a connection

which is reinforced by its elliptic gaps. However, at the same time S2 exhibits these

strong internal cohesive ties, S2a and S2b are also being pushed apart by an implicit

stanzaic division occurring between lines 4 and 5:

```
S1--    Baa, baa, black sheep,
|___    Have you any wool?
S2a-    Yes sir, yes sir,
|___       Three bags full;
        ----------------------
S2b-    One for the master,
|          And one for the dame,
|          And one for the little boy
|___    Who lives down the lane.
```

This separation once again distinguishes the verse from its real-world

counterpart: it seems far more likely that the text would be divided as question and

answer in a prose conversation (that is with the question separated from the answer --

S1/S2a-S2b rather than S1-S2a/S2b). As it is, this verse tends to be presented as two

equal stanzas. Much of the source of this stanzaic formation lies in the phonologic

and rhythmic patterns (the prosody) of the verse. Once again we can see that

although the meaning of the rhyme is governed by the conventions of inquiry-response

discourse, the dialogue itself has been reshaped to suit the form's mnemonic

requirements.

While most nursery rhymes possess strong rhythms, it can be difficult to

construct the regular one-to-one, syllable-to-stress pattern that is demanded by most

traditional descriptions of meter. The approach taken by Derek Attridge in "Rhythm

in English Poetry" offers a different way of representing rhythm, one which reflects

the actual experience of those encountering the verses, and so offers a more visible indication of the rhythmic tensions incorporated in "Baa, baa, black sheep".

According to Attridge, in order to accurately describe poetic rhythms "[w]hat is needed . . . is an approach that begins not with the abstractions of metrical feet or grids of weak and strong positions, but with the psychological and physiological reality of the sequences of rhythmic energy pulses perceived, and enjoyed, by reader and listener alike" (1016). In pursuit of this approach Attridge introduces a new vocabulary for discussing poetic rhythms -- in particular the overt rhythmic structures associated with children's verse. He describes poems as having an "intonation contour" (1017) which is constructed out of a specific combinations of energy pulses or "beats" (B), and relaxations or "offbeats" (o).

Figure 3

Attridge's System of Rhythmic Documentation

Name	Symbol	Example
Single Syllable	B o	**Mary, Mary, quite** contrary
(beat + offbeat)		B o B o B o B o
Two Syllable	B oo	**Hickory, Dickory, Dock**
(beat + 2 offbeats)		B oo B oo B
Unrealized Offbeat	[o]	**Little Robin Redbreast**
(a rhythmic pause		B o B o B o
or "weakening of		**Sat upon a rail;**
energy" between		B o B o B [o]
two stressed		**Niddle Noddle went** his **head**
syllables.)		**Wiggle Waggle went** his **tail.**

Applied to "Baa, baa, black sheep", Attridge's system of documenting rhythm

produces this analysis:

```
1      Baa,   baa,   black   sheep
       B      o      B       o
2      Have   you    any     wool?
       B      o      oo      B    [o]
3      Yes    sir,   yes     sir,
       B      o      B       o
4      Three  bags   full.
       B      o      B       [o]
5      One    for    the     master,
       B      oo             B    o
6      And    one    for     the   dame,
       o      B      oo              B    [o]
7      And    one    for     the   little   boy,
       o      B      oo              B      oo
8      Who    lives  down    the   lane.
       o      B              oo     B      [o]
```

Of most notable interest is the shift occurring between lines 1-4 and lines 5-8. The

first four lines of the verse are characterised by a "single syllable" rhythm; in the

second four, the verse changes to a "two syllable" beat. While both rhythms are

striking, the movement from a "march" rhythm to what Attridge describes as "a full

blooded triple movement" (1021) dramatically alters the sound structure of the verse

halfway through. This rhythmic shift establishes the basic stanzaic division found

within "Baa, baa, black sheep". At the same time, the overall intonation contour of

"Baa, baa, black sheep" reveals a certain consistency throughout the verse. With two

beats per line consistently emphasised, the continuity of the intonation contour helps

to create a sense of cohesion within the text.

The rhymes in "Baa, baa, black sheep" perform in an almostidentical fashion,

both dividing and connecting the two halves of the verse. The ABCB/DEFE rhyme

scheme supports the dividing line suggested by the rhythmic shift. At the same time, just as the rhythmic pattern alters during the course of "Baa, baa, black sheep" but also exhibits a consistent intonation contour, the contents of the rhyming pattern alter but the form of the rhyme repeats. In this way, the mnemonic impact of sound is concentrated, taking advantage of the mnemonic effects of both repetition and opposition to construct a regular stanzaic division while at the same time reinforcing the overall cohesiveness of verse.

While rhythm and rhyme construct the basic stanzaic division within this verse, the split develops not only from its prosodic patterns: it is also reinforced by the pragmatic conventions of inquiry-response discourse. Our understanding of the normal patterns of questions and answers tells us that an interrogative sentence, such as the one that begins "Baa, baa, black sheep", should be followed by an answer: the words "have you any wool" imply as they are produced that a response will follow. Without an answer S1 is incomplete, and without a question, S2 makes no sense. A question and an answer form a single unit of discourse, an "adjacency pair" to adopt a term used by Halliday. However, because S2a ("Three bags full") provides a satisfactory response to the question, S1 and S2a effectively act as the adjacency pair in this text. S2b, while it expands our knowledge about the sheep's wool, does not have the same *necessary* connection to S1 as does S2a because, in effect, the question has been already answered. As a result, while S1 and S2 form an adjacency pair overall, the distance between S1 and S2b makes it less likely that we will feel

ourselves obliged to consider S2b a part of the same immediate discourse "unit" that is formed by S1 and S2a.

S2b also distinguishes itself in grammatical terms as a separate, if closely related, unit of discourse. S2b, as noted earlier, is comprised of three appositive phrases linked by means of the conjunction "and." While independently, the three phrases parallel the structures of both S1 and S2a, the repeated and consistent use of "and" constructs a closer internal connection between the three phrases. To put it another way, the three appositive phrases refer more strongly to each other than they do to either S2a or S1. Because the "and" provides an explicit grammatical and lexical connection between the three phrases, they are grouped together so as to form a single, and separate unit of discourse.

This internal connection is strongly reinforced by the strong degree of lexical repetition found in the three phrases. The "One for the . . ." phrase repeated in the initial position of lines 5 through 7 effectively divides S2b from S2a and S1, which do not contain such repetitions. Consequently, S2b is constructed as a separate unit of discourse, despite its basic structural connections with the rest of the verse. These reinforcing levels of repetition provide these last four lines of the rhyme with a well-developed internal cohesion, one which reinforces the semantic and phonologic divisions already in place.

Intriguingly, at the same time as the phrases exhibit a strong internal cohesion, the last line of the verse creates a dramatic break in the established patterns of the lexico-gramatical structure. Up until line 8, "Baa, baa, black sheep" exhibits a

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remarkable consistency; however, line 8 itself, "who lives down the lane," is, given

the previous consistency of the rhyme's grammatical model, a surprise. All of the

other phrases and clauses fit into a particular syntactic pattern, but as a relative

clause, line 8 has no grammatical mate in the rest of the rhyme. This difference is

reinforced by the lexical movement away from the patterns of the rest of the verse.

Prior to line 8, "who lives down the lane," the subject matter of the verse has been

concerned with the wool and the identification of the individuals to whom this wool is

distributed. However, in line 8, the verse suddenly delves into some detail about one

of the owners, underscoring not his identity but rather his location: it is as if, unlike

"the master" and "the dame," this individual is not well-known to the addressee.

Although, as a relative clause, the line is dependent upon the remainder of the

sentence, its unique structure, reinforced by the lexical variation of the text, acts

ultimately as a kind of linguistic surprise for speaker and audience.[24]

"Baa, baa, black sheep" carries in it a characteristic intensity of linguistic

patterns. Occurring at the levels of sound, structure, and meaning, the linguistic

patterns of this text confirm the degree to which the appeal of nursery rhymes lie in

their mnemonic structures. Many of the most notable mnemonic patternings of this

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[24] Actually, the pattern change is signalled slightly before line 8, as the
premodifying adjective "little," is inserted before "boy." This adjective also
introduces a phonological reinforcement of the shift as it initiates the first set of
alliterations since the first line /b/ sounds. Over the course of seven words, three
begin with /l/ ("little," "lives," "lane"). Since /l/ does not appear in an initial
position anywhere else in the rhyme and only occurs one other time at all (in "black"
in the first line), the frequency of its appearance in lines 7-8 has the effect of
emphasising the differences between this part of the rhyme and the previous lines.

text occur at the lexico-grammatic level, at the level of word and syntax; and it is within the lexico-grammatic level of language that the interaction of mnemonic structuring and inquiry-response discourse most strikingly appear. While the cohesive force of ellipses sets up strong connections within the text, the mnemonic structures of parallel syntax and repetition reinforce and refine these elliptical connections. At the same time, mnemonic demands on prosody, the rhythm and rhyme of the verse, introduce patterns of division and cohesion which effectively distinguish the rhyme from its prose counterparts. The semantic context of the inquiry-response dialogue serves to create a basic model for "Baa, baa, black sheep", but this model of discourse is effectively constructed around the highly mnemonic features associated primarily with the nursery rhyme. "Baa, baa, black sheep" is only one among hundreds of nursery rhymes; however the interactions of the phonologic, the lexico-grammatic and the pragmatic contained within this verse are characteristic of most nursery rhymes. While, as Hasan suggests, the "lexico-grammar and sound system of language" form the basic mnemonic building blocks of nursery rhyme, the mnemonic force created out of these blocks relies upon both linguistic and social comprehension.

Conclusion

Despite outward appearances, nursery rhymes are not simple texts. Because they are identified as *children's* poetry, many assume the verses lack the depth of other poetic forms (even Hasan seems to characterise nursery rhymes as "introductory" poetry, a means of acquainting children with the tools they need to

appreciate more complex "verbal art"). However, as we have seen with this analysis, even apparently simple nursery rhymes demand from their audience a relatively sophisticated knowledge of both linguistic and pragmatic structures in operation within their community. The verses are formed not only around patterns of syntax and sound, but also around the less conspicuous patterns found in communicative contexts. In other words, nursery rhymes make meaningful and pleasurable patterns not only by using the phonological and lexico-grammatic features of language, but also by making use of the audience's familiarity with the rules regulating interactions within the community. By calling upon the audience's understanding of the prominent features of their own interactions, nursery rhymes squarely place themselves as social as well as linguistic texts.

CHAPTER 4

CHANGING REFLECTIONS: AUTHOR(IZ)ING CHILDREN'S POETRY

FROM THE VICTORIAN AGE TO THE MODERN WORLD

In "Genre as Social Action," Carolyn R. Miller asserts that "[t]he set of genres is an open class, with new members evolving, old ones decaying" (153). We have already seen evidence of this process in the development of children's poetry: it emerged in response to comprehensive social changes which began in the seventeenth century, among which was a cultural shift from orality to literacy.[25] So far, this discussion has centred around the earliest stages of the genre's development, examining the advent of the nursery rhyme as the first recognised form of children's poetry. With their historic primacy and continuing prominence in the discourse of children and their caregivers, there is little doubt that nursery rhymes act as core texts within the field of children's poetry. Yet, while the texts have had a profound impact on how children's poetry has developed as a genre, as Miller points out, genres do evolve in response to changes in the communicative context.

The evolution of children's poetry reflects a continuing effort to recognise and adapt to children's unique status within the community: "[E]ach period has coded into its children's literature what may be described as a public or consensual view of the young and therefore their books" (Egoff 3). As the society has accommodated

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[25] I remind readers that although I have chosen to focus exlusively on the impact of literacy on the development of children's poetry, the influence of changing political, economic, religious, and philosophic ideas should not be dismissed.

within itself new ideas and new perceptions, its image of childhood has also shifted.[26] These renegotiations of the "consensual view of the young" are invariably incorporated into the textual constructs which surround children. According to Sheila A. Egoff, "writing for children has tended, more than most other branches of literature, to be very much a reflection (although in miniature) of the prevailing social concepts and conditions" (2). An analysis of several collections of children's poetry from different periods in the genre's history indicates that, as Egoff suggests, changing ideas of childhood, of children themselves, both shape and are reflected in the images and language found in children's poetry.

After nursery rhymes, Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* and A. A. Milne's companion books *When We Were Very Young* and *Now We Are Six* rank among the two most readily recognised collections of children's poetry in this society.[27] Like nursery rhymes, the enduring popularity of these two works suggests that they, in some way, embody features of central importance within the genre. Continuously popular since their first publication -- *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), *When We Were Very Young* (1924), *Now We Are Six* (1927) -- these texts

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[26] Scholars in different disciplines continue to investigate the social structures which have affected the image of childhood over the last century. For example, both Neil Postman in *The Disappearance of Childhood* and Viviana A. Zelizer in *Pricing the Priceless Child* examine changes to communal perceptions of childhood. Although Postman focuses on the influence of the media where Zelizer considers the impact of socio-economic changes, both agree that conceptions of childhood, as well as the ways of examining them, continue to evolve.

[27] I count Milne's two volumes of verse as a single collection since *Now We Are Six* seems in every respect a continuation of *When We Were Very Young*.

reflect, and in many ways personify, conceptions of children and childhood which have endured for more than a century.

Standing in contrast to these two classic collections of children's poetry is *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle and Other Modern Verse* -- an anthology of modern children's poetry compiled by Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders, and Hugh Smith, published in 1966. Designed as a school text, the work has been enjoyed by high school students as well as middle and upper elementary school students.[28] Even taking into account the broad audience for which this book is intended, the editors' selections seem to support the proposal that genres continually adapt to changing situational contexts. For, although a number of the poems included in the anthology emanate from the same period as Milne's work (a few even predate his publications), *Reflections* constructs a markedly different vision of childhood than that conceived by either Stevenson or Milne.

From Isolation to Integration: Images of Childhood in Children's Poetry

The children in *A Child's Garden of Verses* tend to inhabit a world something very like a garden. The garden is a domesticated space, safe and controlled but still natural and vital. The children in Stevenson's poems, with all their vibrancy and imagination, also function within a contained, regulated environment: they are a part of the larger world while all the time being apart from it. "Bed in Summer", the first

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[28] This information comes from Alethea K. Helbig's "Dunning, Lueders, and Smith's *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle*: A Watershed in Poetry for the Young".

poem in *A Child's Garden of Verses*.reflects this state of affairs, illuminating the basic

limitations placed upon the child's participation in the larger social environment.

> In winter I get up at night
> And dress by yellow candle-light.
> In summer, quite the other way,
> I have to go to bed by day.
>
> I have to go to bed and see
> The birds still hopping on the tree,
> Or hear the grown-up people's feet
> Still going past me in the street.
>
> And does it not seem hard to you,
> When all the sky is clear and blue,
> And I should like so much to play,
> To have to go to bed by day?   (17)

Most of this poem centres around the child's frustration (gently stated as it is) with

being able to see and hear things going on around him when he himself is unable to

join in.[29] Alone in his room, the child in this poem is effectively isolated from the

activities of the outer world, although he has ample evidence that many things are still

going on outside of his window. This speaker is constrained by his status as a child;

he has no option but to accept the limitations placed upon him, to live in a kind of

protective custody.

The secure but isolated state suggested by the child's position in "Bed in

Summer" underlies many of the poems in *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Adults form a

constant and controlling presence, but they rarely seem to interact directly with the

children in these poems. Instead, the child speakers in *A Child's Garden of Verses*

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[29] I am presuming, perhaps unjustly, that most of Stevenson's narrators are male.

seem to interact primarily with their environment -- an entire section of the book is entitled "The Child Alone" -- and there is little evidence that children concern themselves with relationships, especially with adults. "Auntie's Skirts" is a short poem which suggests the distance that exists between the child and the adult in much of Stevenson's poetry:

> Whenever Auntie moves around,
> Her dresses make a curious sound;
> They trail behind her on the floor,
> And trundle after through the door. (30)

Auntie's skirt rather than Auntie herself seems to be the living being in this poem: her dress "make[s] a curious sound" and her skirts "trail" and "trundle". Without even a name, Auntie is a distant figure in this poem, and in herself is much less interesting or significant to the child than are her skirts. Auntie's status within this poem is emblematic of the position of most of the adults in *A Child's Garden of Verses* (consider, among others, "Escape at Bedtime" (38), "My Bed is a Boat" (52), and "The Land of Storybooks" (83-84)).[30] In *A Child's Garden of Verses*, adults are omnipresent and generally powerful, but also somewhat removed from the immediate world of play and imagination the child inhabits.

Milne, even more overtly than Stevenson, acknowledges the problematic nature of the boundaries adults impose on children. He seems to recognise the relative powerlessness of children in their society, and the frustration that they must deal with in being continually restrained. The rebelliousness that is so gently and

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[30] The text of all poems cited in this chapter, but not included in the main body, can be found in Appendix B.

subtly acknowledged in "Bed in Summer" is brought out into the open in Milne's poetry: a number of the poems -- of which "Independence" (17) and "Politeness" (43) in *When We Were Very Young* are only two -- describe a child's (generally unfulfilled) desire to be independent, to be left alone, to have some control over where to go or what to do. Some of his verses even express a type of wish-fulfilment: James James Morrison's mother disappears despite his warning "not to go down to the end of the town if you don't go down with me" ("Disobedience" *Young* 32); Emmeline runs away to the queen to confirm that, despite the adults' opinions, her hands are "*purfickly* clean" ("Before Tea" *Young* 85); and so forth. Although, as Anita Wilson rightly claims, "Milne chose to emphasise the joyous aspects of childhood; disappointments and frustrations are handled with a light touch which makes them humorous rather than devastating" (179), it is clear that Milne understands that childhood is not entirely a pleasurable experience. However light his touch, Milne ensures that the ambiguities of childhood -- such as the adult insistence on being "good," and the impossibility of achieving such perfection -- are incorporated frequently into his poems.

Yet, for all the frustration the children in Milne's poems seem to experience, they are much more involved in the social world than the children in Stevenson's work. Even though adult control restricts the children in both collections to a relatively limited set of experiences, in Milne's poems children are conscious of the boundaries of their world and actively respond to them and those who construct them. Milne recognises children as social beings; although their place in the social world is

restricted, they are not isolated from it as are many of the children in Stevenson's

poetry. Children in Milne's poems constantly interact with other people. "Journey's

End" in *Now We Are Six* records one such interaction:

> *Christopher, Christopher, where are you going*
> > *Christopher Robin?*
> "Just up to the top of the hill
> Upping and upping until
> I am right at the top of the hill,"
> > Said Christopher Robin.
>
> *Christopher, Christopher, why are you going,*
> > *Christopher Robin?*
> *There's nothing to see, so when*
> *You've got to the top, what then?*
> "Just down to the bottom again,"
> > Said Christopher Robin. (46-47)

The subject of "Journey's End" is Christopher Robin's trip to the top of the hill; but

because the poem is set out as a conversation, the interaction between the two

speakers is foregrounded, rather than the action itself. While it is clear that the

questioner (whom I presume to be an adult)[31] does not share Christopher Robin's

enthusiasm for hill-climbing, the conversation the two share does tend to contradict

the image of the distant, powerful adult figure suggested by Stevenson's poetry. This

individual (like most of the adults in Milne's work) is still powerful, framing

Christopher Robin's activities with a series of questions, but nevertheless he or she *is*

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[31] My conclusion is based on the assumption that another child would not likely question Christopher Robin's motives for going up the hill. Adults in Milne's poems tend to have lost or suspended their understanding of non-goal-oriented activity. In addition, the type of questioning constructed here -- "where are you going," "why are you going," -- seems much more characteristic of an adult's questions to a child than they do another child's.

involved in the child's world. Unlike Auntie, the adult in this poem recognizes the child and is, in turn, recognized by him.

While the sound of an adult voice (or any voice other than the speaker's) is rare in Stevenson's poetry, it is a frequent occurrence in Milne's work. As well as "Journey's End," Milne also uses the adult voice in such verses as "Politeness" (*Young* 43), "Rice Pudding" (*Young* 50-53), "Hoppity" (*Young* 62-63), "Sand Between the Toes" (*Young* 75), and "The Good Little Girl" (*Six* 68-70). Even when this voice is not directly incorporated, adult-child interactions are often suggested through paraphrases or reported indirect speech, as occurs at the end of "The Dormouse and the Doctor" (*Young* 68-72):

> And that is the reason (Aunt Emily said)
> If a Dormouse gets in a chrysanthemum bed,
> You will find (so Aunt Emily says) that he lies
> Fast asleep on his front with his paws to his eyes.

Although the narrator of "The Dormouse and the Doctor" is a child, this final verse suggests that the story was told to the child by Aunt Emily. She herself has no voice in the poem; however, her interaction and her relationship with the narrator is acknowledged. It is worth noting that there is no need for Milne to have introduced Aunt Emily into the verse; she is not mentioned until the last stanza, and Milne could have easily constructed the conclusion without reference to another figure. That he chooses to do so suggests that Milne recognizes the importance of such active relationships in shaping a child's world.[32]

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[32] The reference to Aunt Emily also suggests that Milne wished to identify this speaker as a child. This marked identification of the child narrator makes "The Dormouse and the

Yet, although adults participate in children's lives much more directly in Milne's work than they do in Stevenson's, adult-child interactions nevertheless always occur within a limited and well-defined scope. In *When We Were Very Young* and *Now We Are Six* the adult enters the child's world rather than the other way round. In this sense, adults in Milne's work share the same position as those in Stevenson's poetry: they are known exclusively through their relationship to the child and the child's world.

> *There's sun on the river and sun on the hill . . .*
> You can hear the sea if you stand quite still!
> There's eight new puppies at Roundabout Farm--
> And I saw an old sailor with only one arm!
>
> But every one says, "Run along!"
> (Run along, run along!)
> All of them say, "Run along! I'm as busy as can be."
> Every one says, "Run along,
> There's a little darling!"
> If I'm a little darling, why don't they run with me?
>
> *There's wind on the river and wind on the hill . . .*
> There's a dark dead water-wheel under the mill!
> I saw a fly which had just been drowned--
> And I know where a rabbit goes into the ground!
>
> But every one says, "Run along!"
> (Run along, run along!)
> All of them say, "Yes dear," and never notice me.
> Every one says, "Run along,
> There's a little darling!"
> If I'm a little darling, why won't they come and see? (59)

Doctor" somewhat unusual in terms of Milnes other "story-poems," which tend, like folk ballads, to leave the narrator unspecified.

"Come with Me" records a familiar interaction: an excited child tries unsuccessfully to claim the attention of the busy adults around him. Their conversation (such as it is) is portrayed exclusively from the child's point of view; and, as a result, adults are identified by their place within the child's world. It is significant that we are not told what the adults are doing: such activities are not meaningful for the child (as are the eight puppies or the water-wheel), and so have no place in his discourse. Furthermore, not only do the adults ignore the child's efforts to include them in his world, they also pointedly exclude him from theirs: he is repeatedly told to "Run along."

In both Stevenson's and Milne's collections, it is clear that children occupy a special, protected place within the community: they reflect the belief that "[p]roperly loved children, regardless of social class, belonged in a domesticated, nonproductive world of lessons, games, and token money" (Viviana A. Zelizer *Pricing the Priceless Child* 11). Zelizer suggests this confinement of children is "part of a cultural process of 'sacralization' of children's lives ... [children are] invested with sentimental or religious meaning" (11). If children are seen as more "pure" and more vulnerable than adults, they need to be protected from the responsibilities (and dangerous freedoms) of their parents' world. This image of the domesticated child, ignorant of and protected from the rigors of the larger social environment, is very prominent in both Stevenson's and Milne's poetry: children in these collections are largely unaware of, or at least isolated from, adult concerns. At times, children do encounter or describe elements of the adult world, but "grown-up business" -- business which

does not involve caring for or instructing the children themselves -- does not, for the most part, enter the child's environment.

No such assumption of innocence or ignorance informs *Reflections of a Gift of Watermelon Pickle*. The editors of *Reflections* seem to have deliberately set out to undermine the belief that children should be protected from harsh realities, or that they are particularly naive. While the editors have designed the anthology with the child/adolescent audience in mind, in many cases the poems they have included were not initially composed for children. Their selections suggest that they see children as both aware of and concerned about many of the same issues that absorb the adult mind. While *Reflections* marks existing limits within the child's world, it is also designed to encourage children to broaden their horizons with new ideas and new interpretations of ideas.

The shift that occurs between *A Child's Garden of Verses*, *When We Were Very Young / Now We Are Six* and *Reflections* is in no way better illustrated than by the changing representation of play in *Reflections*. In both Stevenson's and Milne's work, joyful, imaginative play features prominently and tends to be associated with the child's protected position within the community. Insulated from the complexities and responsibilities of the adult world, children are free to let their imaginations roam. The editors of *Reflections*, however, seem reluctant to construct play as a sacralized or sentimentalized image of childhood. Instead, play seems to have a much more ambiguous role in the poems the editors select. Consider, for instance, Sy Kahn's "Boy with Frogs":

Under his relentless eye,
Jarred and jeered,
The small frogs hop
And pulse in their
Suddenly glass world.

He, blond and curious,
Captive and captivated,
Holds in his hands
World of water, pebbles, grass
And the power
Of topsy-turvy and crash.

But he is content
To study them a while,
With their delicate legs
Pressed against the glass
Their futile leaps to freedom
And their frantic eyes.

It's a game for a God
Of course.
Later, the vibrant frogs,
Still leaping with protest
And life, are forgotten
On a shelf. He is out
Wondering about the waterbugs. (30)

In this poem, the child takes on the characteristics of "a God," observing the efforts

of less powerful creatures to free themselves from the prison he has constructed for

them.[33] Play in "Boy with Frogs" is not innocent or imaginative, but cruelly

scientific, associated not with life but death. Note that the boy's play is centred

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[33] Consider the difference between "Boy With Frogs" and Milne's "Forgiven"
(*Six* 50-52). Both deal with the capture and confinement of another creature, but in
"Forgiven," the beetle is constructed as playmate rather than prisoner. Although the
same power inequities exist in "Forgiven" as in "Boy With Frogs," Milne avoids such
concerns by adopting the child's point of view. In giving the beetle a name
(Alexander) and a home (a matchbox "beetle-house"), the beetle is personified in our
eyes, just as it is in the child-speaker's.

around observation rather than involvement, for although the speaker describes him as

"captive and captivated," his interest is clearly superficial and transitory: he has soon

forgotten "the vibrant frogs / Still leaping with protest / And life," in favour of still-

elusive waterbugs. Because Kahn has chosen to locate the point of view outside of

the child -- we watch him watching the frogs -- Kahn, and through him the editors of

Reflections, foreground issues of power rather than aspects of play.

The image of play is equally problematic in "Child on Top of a Greenhouse"

by Theodore Roethke:

> The wind billowing out the seat of my britches,
> My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,
> The half-grown chrysanthemums staring up like accusers,
> Up through the streaked glass, flashing with sunlight,
> A few white clouds all rushing eastward,
> A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,
> And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!   (54)

In this poem, Roethke represents a child who, very possibly during the course of his

play, has somehow found his way to the top of a greenhouse. Although the situation

seems to invite the depiction of emotional response -- it would be expected if this

were a poem by Stevenson or Milne -- the emotions of this child are unexpressed: we

do not know if he is frightened by his position, thrilled at the view, or pleased with

his defiance. By deflecting the audience's attention outward, to the scene which

surrounds him, the child speaker distances himself from the audience just as he has

already distanced himself from his community.[34] The overall impact of the poem is

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[34] Compare Roethke's treatment of the child with Stevenson's in "The Hayloft"
(64), or Milne's "Puppy and I" (*Young* 8-10). Unlike "Child on Top of a
Greenhouse" the children in both of these poems seem to encourage the audience to

thus defensive rather than inviting: the child in this poem seems not so much

protected as vulnerable, not so much cherished by his community as isolated from it.

This movement away from play-oriented and imagination-oriented poetry (even

when the topics of the poems might allow or even encourage such an orientation)

suggests that images of children and childhood have shifted since the early years of

the century. This suggestion is confirmed by the number of selections explicitly

reflecting feelings of loss, hurt, anxiety, and alienation.[35] While Milne and

Stevenson recognize the limitations of childhood and its frequent frustrations, the

children in their verses -- even when alone or misunderstood -- have a clearly

defined, secure place in their world, and therefore a stable connection to it and those

within it. This sense of connection seems to become blurred and at times disappears

entirely in *Reflections*. Instead of security, images in a number of the poems reflect

loss, uncertainty, and even, at times, despair. Loneliness, a sense of total isolation

which stands in opposition to the pleasurable aloneness which is often found in

Stevenson's and Milne's collections, forms a powerful undercurrent in this collection:

> Desolate and lone
> All night long on the lake
> Where fog trails and mist creeps,
> The whistle of a boat
> Calls and cries unendingly,
> Like some lost child

---

participate in their experiences; in reading these poems, we enjoy playing in hay
"mountains" and walking around the town along with the speakers.

[35] This should in no way suggest that poems expressing joy, hope, love, pleasure
and other positive, life-affirming emotions are lacking; rather, they have been joined
by poems which suggest or reflect upon the darker side of human existence.

> In tears and trouble
> Hunting the harbour's breast
> And the harbour's eyes.   (69)

Although Carl Sandburg's "Loss" was probably not intended for children, the editors' decision to include it in an anthology designed with children in mind highlights Sandburg's use of the metaphor of the lost child. Sandburg connects the boat's search for "the harbour's breast / And the harbour's eyes" to the lost child's desperate search for a safe haven in a dangerous and unfamiliar world. Since a lost child is a child who has literally lost her or his place and the security that knowing one's place affords, in constructing this metaphor Sandburg emphasises the fragility of the protection offered to children. Strikingly, in the end, he provides no sense of relief or release from the image of the lost child: we leave the boat still hunting, and the child cries "unendingly." Like Milne and Stevenson, the editors of *Reflections* seem to recognize that childhood is not always a carefree experience; however, they seem unable or unwilling to fully endorse the vision of sentimental, domestic childhood that underlies both Stevenson's and Milne's poetry.

In Stevenson's verse, the child is secure but also relatively isolated, interacting with the environment rather than the people in it. In Milne's two books the child is a highly social being, reflecting (not always with pleasure) upon the interactions which shape his or her world. In both collections, the child is surrounded by a benevolent protective shell. The editors of *Reflections*, in contrast, have problematized childhood in the anthology: their selections tend to subvert the portrayal of children as necessarily innocent, or as especially protected. The subjects and approaches they

foreground in the collection -- including tensions between life and death, the end of

the world, the threat of war, pollution, and the double-edge of technology -- suggest

that they have rejected the idea that children should or do inhabit a special, protected

place in the community.[36]

The Changing Voices of Children's Poetry

The enduring need to distinguish children's place within society, when

combined with a continuously changing sense of exactly where their position lies,

means that children's poetry, like childhood itself, must evolve. Just as changes to

the social and communicative context have altered perceptions of children, they have

also affected perceptions of poetry. The introduction of poetic types such as free

verse, concrete poems, and sound poems into the community has inevitably affected

the sound of children's poetry; the traditional historic types of the genre (such as

nursery rhyme and didactic or instructive poetry) are regularly joined by more recent

poetic traditions. However, the collection of conventions that shapes children's

poetry continues to be governed by context: the needs of children still ultimately

determine the genre's final structure.

In "Reactivating the Ear: Orality and Children's Poetry," Roderick McGillis

suggests that orality governs the fundamental structure of children's poetry. He

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[36] Some of the poems dealing with death are "Elegy for Jog" (87), "For a Dead Kitten" (92), "Resume" (68) and "Deer Hunt" (36). Images of Armageddon are found in "Sonic Boom" (79) and two poems entitled "Earth" (81). "Hey Diddle Diddle" (80), "Apartment House" (39), "Transcontinent" (41) and "War" (71) all reflect the negative or violent side of modern life.

argues that "[p]erformance is the condition of literature for children" (224), and that because of this circumstance the central construct of children's poetry is sound, or rather voice: according to McGillis, "[p]oetry for young children draws attention to its voice" (256).[37] While McGillis' assertion of the importance of orality and the centrality of voice in poetry for young children has much to recommend it, it is also important to realise that children's poetry does not exist in a vacuum, but like other genres responds continuously to the changing communicative context. In this society, the framework surrounding poetic creation is literate. Those who create the poems are literate; and although they might recognise the orality of their audience, the creative process is invariably affected by the literate cultural context of the community. Thus, children's poetry balances the central need for orality, for an oral "voice," with the underlying preconceptions about poetic form which have developed around a literate poetic model.

As the prototypical verse form of the genre, nursery rhyme has certainly provided children's poetry with its basic characteristics, language constructs that have remained central to its identity to this day. However, while oral constructs have retained their importance within the genre, many authors combine the features of nursery rhyme with other poetic traditions. It is possible to see echoes of nursery rhymes in many poets' work, but later forms of children's poetry are as much a move

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[37] Like Ong, McGillis suggests that the literate mind structures text as object while the oral consciousness conceives of it as event.

away from the traditional form as they are a recognition of its fundamental place within the genre.

In "How Far from Babylon? The Voices of Stevenson's Garden," Joanne Lewis comments, "the 'voice' of the text is that voice controlled by a human mind choosing the words for a fictive speaker whose characteristics determine diction, images, rhythms" (Lewis 242-243). Her awareness of the choices Stevenson has made when creating *A Child's Garden of Verses* leads her to suggest that much of Stevenson's strength as a children's poet lies in his ability to effectively represent the child's voice in poetic form. To Lewis, "he succeeds because he disciplines himself to plain diction, simple verse form, confines himself to images from a child's reality, not to a grown-up's projection of it, and creates a world separate from but intimately connected to the adult world into which this imagined child audience must grow" (240-241). In other words, Stevenson has attained his status as one of the major children's poets because he speaks to children about their world in language which is not only familiar to them, but is in fact a part of them.

In Stevenson's verse, rhythm and rhyme seem to arise out of his effort to record the essential poetic voice of the child.[38] Recall Lewis' statement that poets create "fictive speaker[s] whose characteristics determine diction, images, rhythms." If, as McGillis points out, "children live as close to a primary oral culture as anyone

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[38] This "child-voice" involves both the depiction of a child's perspective and the language which suggest a child's characteristic patterns of communication.

can" (252), they, more than most others in the community, will tend to incorporate poetic structures into their patterns of discourse. *A Child's Garden of Verses* certainly makes use of the familiar structures of traditional children's poetry, well-known to child and adult alike; however, Stevenson seems to hear in the regular rhythms and rhymes not just the formulaic conventions that have arisen around children's poetry, but also the genuine relationship between these language forms and the language children themselves understand and use.

Stevenson's efforts to record the poetic child-voice lead him to construct poetry which echoes verse forms familiar to children -- that is, nursery rhyme and didactic poetry -- while at the same time tempering their influence by incorporating features more consistent with the introspective and non-judgemental romantic lyric. Lewis notes that Stevenson's work has been described as "the 'domestic lyric,' an outgrowth of the romantic movement's celebration of childhood as separate from and better than adulthood, a kind of poetry capitalizing on the self-absorption of children in their own everyday interests" (239). While Lewis goes on to reject this definition as a sufficient description of Stevenson's verse, her objections centre less upon the linguistic validity of the term than they do on "the reputation for smugness" (239) which has accompanied it. Yet "domestic lyric," with its connotations of intimacy and modesty, does seem to capture the essence of Stevenson's work -- depictions of the small, daily events and experiences that shape a child's life.

The lyric, characterised not so much by form as by its expression of personal insight, readily combines with the more structural characteristics of orally based

poetry to create the "domestic lyric." By combining features of oral and lyric poetry,
Stevenson is able to create poems which suggest childlike simplicity of language and
thought while at the same time expressing insight into characteristic experiences and
observations. Consider, for instance, "The Swing":

> How do you like to go up in a swing,
>   Up in the air so blue?
> Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
>   Ever a child can do!
>
> Up in the air and over the wall,
>   Till I can see so wide,
> Rivers and trees and cattle and all
>   Over the countryside --
>
> Till I look down on the garden green,
>   Down on the roof so brown --
> Up in the air I go flying again,
>   Up in the air and down! (54)

Although this poem is entitled "The Swing," the swing as object is almost entirely
subsumed to the child's thoughts and feelings about swinging. In creating not just an
image, but a reflection of experience, Stevenson draws upon the traditions made
popular by the romantics earlier in the nineteenth century. According to William
Wordsworth, "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings . . .
[created] by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had
also thought long and deeply" (*Romantic Writers* 321).[39] The "spontaneous overflow
of powerful feelings" is clearly present in this poem. The verse is punctuated by
extremes of emphasis: the air is "so blue," the roof "so brown", the child can see

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[39] Wordsworth documented the theoretical underpinnings of romanticism in the
"Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads".

"so wide", and swinging is "the pleasantest thing / Ever a child can do." Yet, for all

this is a record of experience, the poem also indicates the speaker's reflections upon

the experience: the initial question "How do you like to go up in a swing" suggests

that this child is seeking to construct his individual experience in terms of a larger

appreciation of swinging.

While this speaker thinks as well as feels and thus fulfills romantic principles,

he is still a child, vocalizing his insights in a child's voice. And it is in this voice

that echoes of nursery rhymes, of oral poetry, are found. The verse is constructed

around regular rhythms and regular rhymes -- patterns which reflect the rhythmic to-

and-fro and up-and-down of the child's movements.[40] "The Swing" is indeed a

domestic lyric, its content recording the common experience of swinging in such a

way as to give it renewed meaning; and its simply patterned language echoing the

orality of the child who speaks it.

Similar patterns of lyric poetry influenced by oral patterns occur in many of

Stevenson's poems, including "Where Go the Boats?" (30), "Foreign Children" (48),

"The Moon" (53), and "The Hayloft" (64). Several of the poems in *A Child's

Garden of Verses* do, however, exhibit an even more explicit relationship to the

nursery rhyme and didactic forms. These verses, although they at first appear simply

to mimic the earlier traditions, in fact subtly undercut them. "Whole Duty of

Children" is one of the most famous of these verses, a poem exhibiting strong

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[40] Note that "up" and "down" occur repeatedly at line ends, marking high and
low points of the child's linguistic as well as physical progress.

connections both to the aurally rich traditions of the nursery rhyme, and to the

didactic impetus that shaped much Victorian children's poetry:

> A child should always say what's true,
> And speak when he is spoken to,
> And behave mannerly at the table:
> At least as far as he is able. (20)

When writing this poem, Stevenson might well have had the familiar nursery rhyme

"Come when you're called" in mind. This verse, originally aimed at servants, but

often applied to children, expresses the virtue of obedience in plain language:

> Come when you're called,
> Do as you're bid,
> Shut the door after you,
> Never be chid.   (*Dictionary* 136)

Initially, "Whole Duty of Children" seems to express much the same ideals as "Come

when you're called"; both encourage good behaviour with some very heavy-handed

advice. In both verses, the first three lines contain specific, detailed instructions

about proper behaviour, but in the fourth and final lines the two verses diverge. In

"Come when you're called," instruction is followed by reward -- "Never be chid" --

the implication being that obedience to these precepts is necessary to escape

castigation. However, in "Whole Duty of Children," the final line instead suggests

that if the child is as truthful, respectful, and mannerly "as he is able" then he cannot

be chastised: the child determines the level of behaviour considered acceptable. This

shift away from the dictatorial statements of the nursery rhyme suggests that even in

this pseudo-nursery rhyme Stevenson is incorporating the child's voice. Although in

this verse the language is stylistically that of the didactic poem, the contents suggest a

child's re-interpretation of that form. "Stevenson can never maintain the consistently serious tone necessary to the moral instructor. He plays this role seldom, and when he does, the voice is often coloured by an ironic subtext" (Lewis 241).

This irony, or subversion of the traditional forms of children's poetry, is just as evident in A. A. Milne's work as it is in Stevenson's. Although Milne tends to construct poetry in patterns that are highly reminiscent of the nursery rhyme form, like Stevenson he adapts the typical or traditional characteristics in the service of a more modern construction of the genre.[41] The rudiments of this adaptation of the nursery rhyme form can be seen in "A Thought" in *Now We Are Six*:

> If I were John and John were Me,
> Then he'd be six and I'd be three.
> If John were Me and I were John,
> I shouldn't have these trousers on. (71)

This short verse exhibits strong echoes of nursery rhyme patterns. The repeated syntax in lines 1 and 3 combines with the reversal of the subject and object to form an effective parallel-antithesis pair. In addition, the verse has the same properties as the self-evident proposition, a popular nursery rhyme form.[42] "A Thought" even seems to retain the mild humour of such verses, its appeal strengthened as the speaker comes to the logical, practical conclusion of his reasoning: "If John were Me and I

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[41] An analysis of the use Milne makes of typical nursery rhyme characteristics is found in Appendix C.

[42] The self-evident proposition is a form in which the truth of a statement is so manifestly obvious that its articulation becomes humorous. The saying "wherever you go, there you are" is an example of this phenomenon, as is this nursery rhyme: "There was an old woman / lived under a hill; / And if she's not gone / she lives there still."

were John, / I shouldn't have these trousers on." At the same time, the verse

diverges from the general patterns of nursery rhyme. "A Thought" has an identified

child speaker, highly uncommon in nursery rhyme (which tends to use speakers of

unspecified origin). Moreover, this poem relates the thoughts of this speaker on his

status in his world. "A Thought" is children's poetry in part because it echoes the

nursery rhyme, but perhaps even more because it speaks a child's thoughts in a

child's voice.

This is not to claim that every poem in Milne's collection adopts the

perspective of a child narrator. Verses such as "Summer Afternoon" (*Young* 67),

"The Invaders" (*Young* 84), and "The Charcoal Burner" (*Six* 32-34) provide little

indication of the speaker's age. Generally, such poems are focused upon describing a

scene (usually pastoral or domestic). While such descriptive poetry is well within the

accepted traditions of children's poetry (it is a staple of the lyric form), they cannot

be considered Milne's strongest work. Where Stevenson seems to be capable of

successfully adapting lyric tradition in support of his representation of the child's

world, Milne's poetry is much more successful when he echoes children's

playfulness.

Much more than Stevenson, Milne seems to play with texts in all kinds of

ways, from content to sound to appearance. His numerous verse-tales[43] blend

typically fantastic story elements (such as kings, knights, and talking animals) with

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[43] Among others, "The Dormouse and the Doctor" (*Young* 98-72), "Bad Sir
Brian Botany" (*Young* 94-96), "King John's Christmas" (*Six* 4-8), and "The Knight
Whose Armour Didn't Squeak" (*Six* 24-30).

everyday objects and events (such as a doctor's visit, india-rubber balls, or tea-time). To some extent, his verse-tales echo the traditional folk ballad,[44] but Milne shapes the form around ideas and images which reflect the expectations and experience of the children of his time. In a way, he domesticates the traditional ballad-form just as Stevenson domesticated the lyric, both authors adapting the original form to a more limited, specialised context.

Milne even plays with nursery rhymes themselves upon occasion, manipulating traditional verses in order to create images of children's poetry within his own time.[45] "Cherry Stones" is a good example of this reconstruction of traditional forms:

> *Tinker, Tailor,*
> *Soldier, Sailor,*
> *Rich Man, Poor Man,*
> *Ploughboy, Thief --*
>
> And what about a Cowboy,
> Policeman, Jailer,
> Engine-driver,
> Or Pirate Chief?
> What about a Postman -- or a Keeper at the Zoo?
> What about the Circus Man who lets the people through?
> And the man who takes the pennies for the round-abouts
>   and swings,

---

[44] One example is "A frog he would a-wooing go".

[45] Milne makes direct references to nursery rhymes in "Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue" (*Young* 78-80) and "Cherry Stones" (*Six* 21-23). Other poems seem to be direct descendants of specific rhymes: "Market Square" (*Young* 23-29) has echoes of "I have a shilling" (*Dictionary* 388-389); "Daffodowndilly" (*Young* 30) suggests the verse "Daffy-down-dilly is new come to town, / With a yellow petticoat, and a green gown" (*Dictionary* 141); "Cradle Song" (*Six* 89) is another poem constructed around the self-evident proposition.

Or the man who plays the organ, and the other man
     who sings?
What about a Conjuror with rabbits in his pockets?
What about a Rocket Man who's always making rockets?

Oh there's such a lot of things to do and such a lot
     to be
There's always lots of cherries on my little cherry
     tree!   (*Six* 21-23)

The famous "Tinker, tailor" rhyme forms the basis of "Cherry Stones", but the

nursery rhyme has been recontextualised through the child speaker's thoughts. In this

verse, the rhyme represents imaginary playtime professions, each proposed role a

point of contact with the larger world. Yet, Milne's method of making this context

evident, of positioning the rhyme as part of a child's thoughts, occurs only as the

child moves on to discussing professions much closer to his own time and place.

Instead of tinkers and tailors, this child plays postman and conjuror. The child's

perceptions again control the text, including the text of the original nursery rhyme.

In this way, Milne explicitly acknowledges nursery rhyme as part of the child's

textual environment, but also signals that the child's world has moved beyond these

verses.

Milne is a master of oral language play, and his verses can always be enjoyed

for their pleasing sounds. Yet, he exploits the visual characteristics of text just as

effectively as he does its aural qualities. Consider his sophisticated use of

typographical structures. Milne's famous poem "Disobedience" (*Young* 32-35), for

instance, indicates a man well-aware of the influence of the *appearance* of language

on its sound. Derek Attridge points out that "Disobedience" is "a poem written by a

single author and published in a printed book in 1924, and while it -- or at least its opening stanza -- may exist in many memories as a verbal sequence without a specific visual organization, its appearance on the page is not without importance" (1028). Milne's use of visual cues establishes important variations in the purely aural constructs of the verse (which are, typically for Milne, strongly marked). In the third stanza, for instance, he uses boldface capitalizations to create a dramatic visual impact:

> King John
> Put up a notice,
> "**LOST** or **STOLEN** or **STRAYED!**
> **JAMES JAMES**
> **MORRISON'S MOTHER**
> **SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MISLAID.**
> **LAST SEEN**
> **WANDERING VAGUELY:**
> **QUITE OF HER OWN ACCORD,**
> **SHE TRIED TO GET DOWN TO THE END**
> **OF THE TOWN--FORTY SHILLINGS**
> **REWARD!**"

The sight of these boldfaced capitals encourages readers to give the king's proclamation a "weightier" pronunciation: the words tend to be spoken slowly and somewhat more deeply, resulting in an appropriately solemn tone. In this stanza, the typography of the words increases the overall playfulness of the poem, as the grave tone is belied by the humorous impact of the words themselves.

While the fourth and fifth stanzas incorporate italics to produce slight alterations in the established rhythmic pattern of the verse, the final stanza of the poem displays a truly remarkable use of typography. "[T]he final stanza -- after all hope for the mother is given up -- allows print to take command" (Attridge 1029):

> *(Now then, very softly)*
>
> J. J.
> M. M.
> W. G. Du P.
> Took great
> C/o his M*****
> Though he was only 3.
> J. J.
> Said to his M*****
> "M*****," he said, said he:
> "You-must-never-go-down-to-the-end-of-the-town-
> if-you-don't-go-down-with ME!"

There are no words in this section of the poem, only symbols of words, and in this, Milne truly exploits the visual representation of language to its limits. Within this stanza, individual letters and sets of asterixes create linguistic meaning, although in several cases the symbols cannot be spoken (what does an asterix "sound" like? How is it possible to note the difference between "three" and "3" without a visual reference?). Attridge says of "Disobedience": "Here we have words on the page revelling in their status as visual image, yet claiming to be nothing but instructions for an oral performance" (1029).

Exploring the tension between visual and aural/oral language play characterizes much of Milne's poetry; however, typographic play is not the only way in which Milne exploits the printed page. By working closely with Ernest H. Shepard, he is also able to make use of the powerful influence of illustration: Shepard's "decorations" not only describe the poems, but help to construct their meaning. "Solitude" is only one instance of Shepard's influence. The text of "Solitude" looks like this:

I have a house where I go
   When there's too many people,
I have a house where I go
   Where no one can be;
I have a house where I go,
Where nobody ever says "No";
Where no one says anything--so
   There is no one but me.   (*Six* 3)

Accompanying the poem is Shepard's drawing of a small fair-haired boy seated with

his hands folded around his knees, looking slightly upward. He is backed on two

sides by a tall wooden fence, and is surrounded on one side by a miniature

wheelbarrow and shovel and on the other by what appears to be the edge of a garden

plot. The child sits on the grass underneath a trio of sticks which have been lashed

together teepee-style. He smiles slightly.

Shepard's drawing affirms that the "house" the child refers to in this poem has

physical as well as mental substance. However, the child's retreat is contained by the

tall garden fence, indicating that while he has moved from the main house, he is still

within the field of influence of those he seeks to escape for a time. His "house" is

also noticeably shaky: made only of a few sticks, it is at best a temporary refuge,

susceptible to both invasion and destruction. The physical reality of the boy's house

seems to belie his confident statements that it is a place "'Where no one can be . . .

Where nobody ever says "No" / Where no one says anything.'" Yet, this very

incongruity is suggestive. The fragility of the boy's house is countered by his smile,

suggesting that even if its physical reality is suspect, the comfort he derives from it is

not. Thus, the picture leads to the conclusion that the real "house" spoken of in this

poem is one constructed within the imagination rather than the real world. Shepard's

drawing, while it initially seems to suggest that the child's retreat is primarily physical, instead reinforces the idea that the real "house" the child runs to is his imagination.

Milne is a poet who is fascinated by patterns, both visual and auditory, and his ability to incorporate pattern play into his poetry in concept, language, structure, and presentation distinguishes his work. The tension he is able to create between the visual identity and the oral identity of his poems constructs a continuous movement between poetry as sound and poetry as image, a tension which is exploited even more overtly in some of the selections in *Reflections*.

Although the poems in *Reflections* were designed for a wide variety of contexts, the selections the editors have made nonetheless reflect the contexts they envision for the poems' use. They have chosen poetry they believe will be accessible to, meaningful for, and stimulating to a wide range of children. The poems in *Reflections* thus indicate, no less than Stevenson's or Milne's creations, a particular understanding of the relationship between children and poetry. However, being compiled from many varied sources, the poems in *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle* incorporate a much more diverse set of poetic traditions than either Stevenson's work or Milne's; and this very diversity helps to suggest that the editors have chosen to recognise both the oral and literate influences shaping children's texts in the modern world.

A couple of the verses in *Reflections* are actually modifications of familiar nursery rhymes; their form remains the same, but their content has been strikingly modernized:

Hey diddle diddle
The physicists fiddle,
     The Bleep jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed to see such fun
     And died the following June.

Little Miss Muffet
Crouched on a tuffet,
Collecting her shell-shocked wits.
There dropped (from a glider)
An H-bomb beside her --
Which frightened Miss Muffet to bits. (80)

Like most nursery rhymes, neither of these verses was composed specifically for a child audience. Yet, in these two poems, Paul Dehn exploits the community's familiarity with nursery rhymes, and their association with "innocent" children, in order to present a topical message about nuclear war. In both cases, Dehn closely echoes the language of the two original verses, the shock value of his work developing from his juxtaposition of twentieth-century images of destruction with seventeenth-century nonsense verse. Significantly, his *only* violation of the nursery rhyme form occurs in his incorporation of modern images -- physicists, shell-shock, gliders, H-bombs. Dehn retains the mnemonic oral constructs of the original versions -- the powerful rhythms and rhymes, even their sentence structure. In constructing his message about the dangers of the atom bomb within such a memorable form, Dehn calls upon the general public's familiarity with such verses to ensure that his words, and his message, are recalled. For, even as the audience recognises and reacts to the violation of their expectations, they continue to have an image of the original texts (and their conventional context) in mind: this double-vision dramatically increases the impact of Dehn's poems.

The editors' decision to include Dehn's modern adaptations of the nursery

rhyme indicates the continuing centrality of nursery rhyme in the poetic context of

children's poetry. However, Dehn's work, with its traditional format, is more the

exception than the rule in *Reflections*. The book is, after all, a collection of modern

verse, and the editors have made a point of incorporating more modern poetic

influences. Among them, we can see the logical extension of Milne's interest in

typographic representation. The interest in a poem's appearance on the page grows as

words develop a tangible physical presence. Eventually, as with some of Milne's

poems, certain poems become just as much visual art as they are auditory art.

Indeed, it is fair to argue that certain kinds of free verse cannot be fully represented

in oral form: the physical appearance of words on the page are an integral part of the

poem and cannot be divorced from its auditory presence. "Fortune" by Lawrence

Ferlinghetti is one such poem. Although not specifically intended for children, the

poem nevertheless constructs a reflection of childhood experience and voice through a

conscious, sophisticated manipulation of physical space:

> Fortune
> > has its cookies to give out
>
> which is a good thing
>
> > > since it's been a long time since
>
> > that summer in Brooklyn
> > when they closed off the street
> > > one hot day
> > > and the
>
> > > > FIREMEN

turned on their hoses

and all the kids ran out in it

        in the middle of the street

    and there were

                maybe a couple dozen of us

                            out there

with the water squirting up
                        to the

                    sky

                        and all over
                                    us
        there was maybe only six of us
                            kids altogether
        running around in our
                        barefeet and birthday
            suits
                and I remember Molly but then

the firemen stopped squirting their hoses
        all of a sudden and went
                back in
            their firehouse
                    and
        started playing pinochle again
            just as if nothing
                had ever
                    happened

while I remember Molly
                    looked at me and

    ran in

because I guess really we were the only ones there.
                                (102-103)

"Fortune" is as much a visual poem as a verbal one, its sound and sense integrated with its physical presentation. The layout of the words in "Fortune" mimics the mental skips of the speaker as he or she reconstructs a childhood memory. In the irregularity of line lengths, the placement of the words on the page, the abrupt starts and stops in the middle of syntactic and conceptual structures, it is easy to see the unsteady process of recalling an event occuring "a long time since". Equally, the physical placement of words on the page echoes the story being told: the movement of the eyes back and forth across the page, following the words as they progress in unpredictable sequences, subtly suggests the position of an observer watching the movements of playful children as they run through watersprays on a hot city street. Ferlinghetti involves the reader in the poem through his manipulation of physical space just as much as through his manipulation of language.

While Ferlinghetti does not employ steady rhyme or rhythm in this poem, "Fortune" nevertheless possesses dramatic rhythmic power: it does exhibit a powerful voice. The shape of the poem on the page forms its basic rhythmic structure: irregular and abrupt, but also evocative of certain familiar speech patterns. The first few lines of the poem, down to "FIREMEN," are relatively smooth suggesting a slow but reasonably steady recollection of a childhood experience. But after this point, the poem's language becomes much more erratic, seemingly in response to the rush of details and the speaker's growing involvement in the memory. The sequencing of relatively long lines of text and sharp, one- or two-word phrases (characteristic of the last two-thirds of the poem) suggests the sudden rush of words punctuated by

breathlessness that often occurs in overexcited children. In effect, the speaker returns

to his childhood in this poem, and the process is mimicked by alterations in the

rhythm. Like Stevenson, Ferlinghetti seems to capture the shape of children's

language, particularly as the speaker's memory becomes clearer and more intense.

But, where Stevenson shaped voice around a lyric model using oral rhythms to echo

the child's own orality, Ferlinghetti seems to suggest the prose speech patterns of

excited and exhausted childhood.

Most of the poetry included within *Reflections* stands somewhere in between

the two extremes suggested by Dehn and Ferlinghetti. On the one hand, modern

children's poetry can work closely within traditional forms, manipulating expectations

to serve modern ideologies. On the other hand, modern children's poetry can also

choose to work against the historic traditions of the notoriously conservative genre,

restructuring its boundaries by emphasising the limitations of traditional formats and

the potential of more modern poetic constructs. Recreations of the genre draw upon

earlier traditions, legitimizing themselves through references to familiar structures

while at the same time redefining these structures. We have already seen such

manipulations of tradition within Stevenson and Milne's work. With its use of

modern poetic forms, *Reflections* sets itself more obviously in opposition to

conventional forms of children's poetry, but in doing so it also demonstrates the

editors' awareness of the standard constructions of form and substance.

In *Reflections* the editors, not the authors, have determined what is acceptable

in their definition of the genre: much of the poetry chosen for this collection was,

like nursery rhymes, not specifically created for children. With individual pieces, there is often no way of telling what the authors' intentions originally were. Yet in their choices, the editors have confirmed the continuing basis of children's poetry. Just as nursery rhymes became nursery rhymes because of their uniquely appropriate voice, so too do the poems in *Reflections* get selected because of their use within the context of a child's world. While the uses Dunning and his co-editors have conceived might not match those of the mother lulling her child to sleep, context continues to shape the structure of the genre.

Portraying the World of the Child

Despite the many differences separating the collections constructed by Stevenson, Milne, and the editors of *Reflections*, they seem to share the same idea about structuring the boundaries of children's poetry. Although Stevenson and Milne might write poems about playing on a swing where *Reflections* includes a poem about the joys of a motorcycle, in each collection the authors/editors attempt to reflect the common experiences and interests of the children of their time. In all three books focus tends to stay upon images likely to be part of the child's background: people, places, things, and events about which children probably have heard or in which it is reasonable to expect they would be interested. As the society grows and changes, so too does the information and the experiences children can be expected to possess. Yet, for all the differences such changes enforce, the ultimate goal of children's poetry remains, in many ways, the same. In structuring the genre, authors and

editors accommodate children's limitations, whether the boundaries are created by the stages of physical and cognitive development, or by more variable social influences.[46]

Because few children are capable of fully abstract reasoning prior to adolescence, it is not surprising that children's poetry, regardless of period, tends to share a preference for concrete images over abstract meditations. All three collections examined here mark out childhood in terms of observable images and events, suggesting that this relationship between children and abstract reasoning is one entertained by the culture as a whole: concreteness marks the construction of the reader in this genre. Stevenson's and Milne's poetry explicitly concentrates on depicting children's lives -- the things they see, they imagine, the relationships they have with others, the stories they tell, and so on. The editors of *Reflections* have also ensured, despite significant differences in stylistic approach, that their anthology contains many of the same features. Although many of the poems in *Reflections* were not created with children in mind, few of the poems selected for the anthology are not grounded in a concrete image. "The Lamplighter" (*Garden* 50) and "The Steam Shovel" (*Reflections* 37) may have little in common in terms of subject or style, but both are recognizable depictions of familiar objects.

Even on the rare occasions when poems do attempt to illuminate obviously abstract concepts, ideas tend to be approached through highly concrete forms. We

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[46] It is worth noting that children's limitations are not only accommodated by the genre, but are also to some degree constructed by it -- at least in the case of social restrictions.

have already encountered one instance of such referencing in "Boy with Frogs":

ideas of power and the abuse of power are suggested through means of a concrete

example. Another instance of such a treatment of an abstract idea is found in the

poem which launches *Reflections*:

> How to Eat a Poem
>
> Don't be polite.
> Bite in.
> Pick it up with your fingers and lick the juice that may run down your chin.
> It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.
>
> You do not need a knife or fork or spoon
> or plate or napkin or tablecloth.
>
> For there is no core
> or stem
> or rind
> or pit
> or seed
> or skin
> to throw away. (15)

In this poem, Eve Merriam explores the concept of poetry by means of an experience

that would be familiar to even the youngest child. Although the drive to eat is

instinctive, the physical and behaviourial structures surrounding food consumption in

this culture -- knives, forks, napkins, and so forth -- can make the process of eating

daunting, particularly for the young. Similarly, poems are often surrounded by

complicated and unfamiliar language (metaphor, image, theme, etc.) and accompanied

by demands (often for analysis) most individuals feel ill-equipped to fulfil. As a

result, poetry can, like mealtimes, be highly intimidating. By identifying poetry with

food, and more specifically food which is easy and fun to eat, Merriam makes her

idea of poetry easier to grasp for an audience not comfortable with conceptualizing ideas in more overtly abstract terms.

While cognitive development is, for the most part, an immutable process and thus will invariably affect the context of children's poetry, other elements of a child's world are more variable: the significant social and technological developments of the last century have modernized the face of children's poetry.[47] Yet, while such changes should not be minimized, the updating has not substanially altered assumptions about the kinds of poems children are interested in. Poems featuring aliens (*Reflections* "Earth" 81, "Southbound on the Freeway" 82) have overshadowed poems about fairies (*Garden* "Fairy Bread" 58, *Young* "Waterlilies" 31), but the belief that children respond to the fantastic remains. Similarly, the depiction of animals (particularly wild animals) has altered to suit changing perceptions of the natural world: poems about animals in zoos are joined by poems depicting animals in their natural habitat. Yet, even while depictions of animals have changed, the responses of children to such poems have not.[48] Growing urbanization leads to poems such as "On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper" (38), "Apartment House" (39) and "Central Park Tourney" (47) being included in *Reflections*, where the most urban image in Milne's work is a visit to Buckingham Palace. The homes

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[47] Consider, for instance, the way in which Dennis Lee's poems in *Garbage Delight* maintain a highly mnemonic form (echoing the nursery rhyme) while tending to incorporate modern images.

[48] Ann Terry, in reporting the findings of a study she conducted on children's poetry preferences, notes that children consistently "favoured content having to do with animals" (25).

might have changed, but the depiction of children's physical environment has remained a central feature of the genre. Thus, although verses about haylofts (Stevenson 64) may be replaced by poems about apartment buildings (Dunning 39), from *A Child's Garden of Verses* to *Reflections*, the underlying goal is precisely the same -- to express in verse the experience and interests of the child.[49]

Conclusion

Children's poetry, like other genres, is ultimately defined by context; it is a category demarcating the unique linguistic signature associated with specific situational types or typifications. Some of the elements characterizing a situational type inevitably alter as the society changes; yet, as long as the motivation underlying the typification still operates, the genre will remain functional. Although many aspects of the cultural and situational contexts in this society have altered since the initial construction of children's poetry, a central issue separating children from adults -- society's shift from orality to literacy -- remains one of the major motivating forces behind the construction of both the collective identification of children and the texts associated with them. Children form an oral enclave within the larger literate society, and their unique status is both recognized and reinforced in the textual structures of the community.

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[49] Inevitably as conceived by the adults who write children's poetry or edit anthologies of children's poetry.

The poetic influences which have joined nursery rhyme in forming the overall textual shape of children's poetry have not entered the genre by accident: these more-recent contributions to children's poetry serve the context of communication through means other than just mnemonic density. Often the verses incorporate powerful oral constructs, but they also embellish such mnemonic structures through their use of other types of linguistic manipulation. Powerful images, inventive word use and typography, and other orchestrations of language and image signal the efforts of non-traditional verse types to strike a chord in their audience.

Underlying the poems considered acceptable for children there inevitably exists an interpretation of childhood and the place of poetry within it. The recent shift from away from the image of the cloistered, protected child has produced strong echoes of the original context of the nursery rhyme: now, as then, poems don't necessarily need to be written for children to be incorporated within the genre of children's poetry. At the same time, altering perceptions of children and childhood are also constructed within a modern, literate social context. Today, children's poetry must serve as much to introduce and accustom children to the literate contexts which dominate the interactions of their elders as they do to reflect children's own unique presence in the community. While there is no question that highly oral poetry such as the nursery rhyme retains a central place in the structuring of children's poetry, children's poetry always incorporates within itself a constant tension between oral needs and literate influences, between a recognition of immaturity and a need to broaden horizons and experience.

APPENDIX A

Nursery Rhymes Cited in Chapter 1

"Away, birds, away"
> Away, birds, away,
> Take a little and leave a little,
> And do not come again;
> For if you do,
> I will shoot you through,
> And there is an end of you.

"Bobby Shafto"
> Bobby Shafto's gone to sea,
>   Silver buckles at his knee;
> He'll come back and marry me,
>   Bonny Bobby Shafto!
>
> Bobby Shafto's fat and fair,
>   Combing down his yellow hair;
> He's my love for evermore,
>   Bonny Bobby Shafto!

"Brow Bender"
> Brow bender,
> Eye peeper,
> Nose dreeper,
> Mouth eater,
> Chin chopper,
> Knock at the door,
> Ring the bell,
> Lift up the latch,
> Walk in . . .
> Take a chair,
> Sit by there,
> How d'you do this morning?
> (Note: According to the Opies, "in this game a finger is laid on the baby's
> forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, and chin. While saying 'knock at the door,' the
> chin is tickled; 'ring the bell', the hair or ear pulled; 'lift up the latch and
> walk in', the baby's nose is raised and a finger popped in the mouth"
> (*Dictionary* 103))

"Come, butter, come"

     Come, butter, come,
     Come, butter, come;
     Peter stands at the gate
     Waiting for a butter cake.
     Come, butter, come.

"Cushy cow, let down your milk"

     Cushy cow, bonny, let down thy milk,
     And I will give thee a gown of silk;
     A gown of silk and a silver tee,
     If thou wilt let down thy milk to me.

"A frog he would a-wooing go"

     A frog he would a-wooing go,
       Heigh ho! says Rowley,
     A frog he would a-wooing go,
     Whether his mother would let him or no.
       With a rowley, powley, gammon and spinach,
       Heigh ho! says Anthony Rowley.

     So off he set with his opera hat,
       Heigh ho! says Rowley,
     So off he set with his opera hat,
     And on the road he met with a rat,
       With a rowley, powley, &c.

     Pray, Mister Rat, will you go with me?
       Heigh ho! says Rowley,
     Pray, Mister Rat, will you go with me?
     Kind Mrs. Mousey for to see?
       With a rowley, powley, &c.

     They came to the door of Mousey's hall,
       Heigh ho! says Rowley,
     They gave a loud knock, and they gave a loud call.
       With a rowley, powley, &c.

[Mrs. Mouse invites the pair in, and gives them some beer. At Mrs. Mouse's request, Mr. Frog sings; and then Mrs. Mouse sings. The merry-makers are interrupted by the arrival of a cat and her kittens, who promptly eat Mr. Rat and Mrs. Mouse.]

This put Mr. Frog in a terrible fright
  Heigh ho! says Rowley,
He took up his hat and he wished them good-night.
  With a rowley, powley, &c.

But as Froggy was crossing over a brook,
  Heigh ho! says Rowley,
A lily-white duck came and gobbled him up.
  With a rowley, powley, etc.

So there was an end of one, two, three,
  Heigh ho! says Rowley,
The rat, the mouse, and the little frog-ee.
  With a rowley, powley, gammon and spinach,
  Heigh ho! says Anthony Rowley.

"Hot Cross Buns"
       Hot cross buns!
       Hot cross buns!
       One a penny, two a penny,
       Hot cross buns!
       If your daughters do not like them
       Give them to your sons;
But if you haven't any of these pretty little elves
You cannot do better than eat them yourselves.

"I have a jolly shilling"
  I love sixpence, jolly little sixpence,
    I love sixpence better than my life;
  I spent a penny of it, I lent a penny of it,
    And I took fourpence home to my wife.

  Oh, my little fourpence, jolly little fourpence,
    I love fourpence better than my life;
  I spent a penny of it, I lent a penny of it,
    And I took twopence home to my wife.

  Oh, my little twopence, jolly little twopence,
    I love twopence better than my life;
  I spent a penny of it, I lent a penny of it,
    And I took nothing home to my wife.

Oh, my little nothing, jolly little nothing,
   What will nothing buy for my wife?
I have nothing, I spend nothing,
   I love nothing better than my wife.

"Hush-a-bye, Baby"
      Hush-a-bye, Baby
      On the tree-top,
      When the wind blows
      The cradle will rock.
      When the bough breaks
      The cradle will fall;
      And down will come baby,
      Cradle and all.

"King of the Castle"
      I'm the king of the castle,
      Get down you dirty rascal.
      (Note: In the game, the "king" stands on top of a hill of some kind and tries
      to prevent others from pulling him down.)

"London Bridge"
      London Bridge is broken down,
         Broken down, broken down,
      London Bridge is broken down,
         My fair lady.

      Build it up with wood and clay,
         Wood and clay, wood and clay,
      Build it up with wood and clay,
         My fair lady.

      Wood and clay will wash away,
         Wash away, wash away,
      Wood and clay will wash away,
         My fair lady.

      [The speaker goes on to suggest bricks and mortar, iron and steel, and silver
      and gold.]

      Silver and gold will be stolen away,
         Stolen away, Stolen away.
      Silver and gold will be stolen away,
         My fair lady.

Set a man to watch all night,
  Watch all night, watch all night,
Set a man to watch all night,
  My fair lady.

Suppose the man should fall asleep,
  Fall asleep, fall asleep,
Suppose the man should fall asleep?
  My fair lady.

Give him a pipe to smoke all night,
  Smoke all night, smoke all night,
Give him a pipe to smoke all night,
  My fair lady.
(Note: In the game, two children stand with arms raised and joined, forming
a "bridge." The other players move under the bridge until it "breaks down" --
the two children let their arms fall -- and traps one or two of the other players.
The "victims" then become the bridge, and the game goes on.)

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John"
    Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
    Bless the bed that I lie on.
      Four corners to my bed,
      Four angels round my head;
      One to watch and one to pray
      And two to bear my soul away.

"Ring-a-round-a-rosie"
    Ring-a-ring o' roses,
    A pocket full of posies,
      A-tishoo! A-tishoo!
    We all fall down.

"Star light, star bright"
    Star light, star bright,
    First star I see tonight,
    I wish I may, I wish I might,
    Have the wish I wish tonight.

"This is the way a lady rides"
    This is the way the ladies ride,
      Nimble, nimble, nimble, nimble;
    This is the way the gentlemen ride,
      A gallop a trot, a gallop a trot;

This is the way the farmers ride,
   Jiggety jog, jiggety jog;
And when they come to a hedge -- they jump over!
And when they come to a slippery place -- they scramble, scramble
      Tumble-down Dick!
(Note: In this game, the child is appropriately "jogged" on one's crossed
knee. On the last line, the child is allowed to slip down to the floor.)

"To market, to market"
   To market, to market,
     To buy a fat pig;
   Home again, home again,
     Jiggety-jig.

   To market, to market,
     To buy a fat hog;
   Home again, home again,
     Jiggity-jog.

   To market, to market,
     To buy a plum bun;
   Home again, home again
     Market is done.

"Two legs sat upon three legs"
   Two legs sat upon three legs
   With one leg in his lap;
   In comes four legs
   And runs away with one leg;
   Up jumps two legs,
   Catches up three legs,
   Throws it after four legs,
   And makes him bring back one leg.
(Answer: A man sits on a three-legged stool with a leg of mutton. A dog
steals the mutton; the man throws the stool after the dog, who brings back the
meat.)

"White bird featherless"
    White bird featherless
    Flew from Paradise,
   Pitched on the castle wall;

Along came Lord Landless,
Took it up handless,
And rode away horseless to the King's white hall.
(Answer: The snow and the sun)

"Who comes here? / A grenadier"

Who comes here?
  A grenadier.
What do you want?
  A pot of beer.
Where's your money?
  I forgot.
Get you gone,
  You drunken lot.

"Young lambs to sell"

Young lambs to sell! Young lambs to sell!
I never would cry young lambs to sell,
If I'd as much money as I could tell,
I never would cry young lambs to sell.

Poems Cited in Chapter 4

A Child's Garden of Verses

"My Bed is a Boat"

    My bed is like a little boat;
      Nurse helps me in when I embark;
    She girds me in my sailor's coat
      And starts me in the dark.

    At night, I go on board and say
      Good-night to all my friends on shore;
    I shut my eyes and sail away
      And see and hear no more.

    And sometimes things to bed I take,
      As prudent sailors have to do;
    Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
      Perhaps a toy or two.

    All night across the dark we steer:
      But when the day returns at last,
    Safe in my room, beside the pier,
      I find my vessel fast.

"Escape at Bedtime"

    The lights from the parlour and kitchen shone out
      Through the blinds and the windows and bars;
    And high overhead and all moving about,
      There were thousands of millions of stars.
    There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a tree,
      Nor of people in church or the Park,
    As the crowds of the stars looked down upon me,
      And that glittered and winked in the dark.

    The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,
      And the star of the sailor, and Mars,
    These shone in the sky, and the pail by the wall
      Would be half full of water and stars.

They saw me at last, and they chased me with cries,
  And they soon had me packed into bed;
But the glory kept shining and bright in my eyes,
  And the stars going round in my head.

"Fairy Bread"
  Come up here, O dusty feet!
    Here is fairy bread to eat.
  Here in my retiring room,
    Children, you may dine
  On the golden smell of broom
    And the shade of pine;
  And when you have eaten well,
  Fairy stories hear and tell.

"Foreign Children"
  Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
  Little frosty Eskimo,
  Little Turk or Japanee,
  O! don't you wish that you were me?

  You have seen the scarlet trees
  And the lions over seas;
  You have eaten ostrich eggs,
  And turned the turtles off their legs.

  Such a life is very fine,
  But it's not so nice as mine;
  You must often, as you trod,
  Have wearied *not* to be abroad.

  You have curious things to eat,
  I am fed on proper meat;
  You must dwell beyond the foam,
  But I am safe and live at home.

  Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
  Little frosty Eskimo,
  Little Turk or Japanee,
  O! don't you wish that you were me?

"The Hayloft"
> Through all the pleasant meadow-side
>   The grass grew shoulder-high,
> Till the shining scythes went far and wide
>   And cut it down to dry.
>
> These green and sweetly smelling drops
>   They led in waggons home;
> And they piled them here in mountain tops
>   For mountaineers to roam.
>
> Here is Mount Clear, Mount Rusty-Nail,
>   Mount Eagle and Mount High;--
> The mice that in these mountains dwell,
>   No happier are than I!
>
> O what a joy to clamber there,
>   O what a place for play,
> With the sweet, the dim, the dusty air,
>   The happy hills of hay.

"The Lamplighter"
> My tea is nearly ready
>   and the sun has left the sky;
> It's time to take the window
>   to see Leerie going by;
> For every night at tea-time
>   and before you take your seat,
> With lantern and with ladder
>   he comes posting up the street.
>
> Now Tom would be a driver
>   And Maria go to sea,
> And my papa's a banker
>   and as rich as he can be;
> But I, when I am stronger
>   and can choose what I'm to do,
> O Leerie, I'll go round at night
>   and light the lamps with you!

For we are very lucky,
  with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it
  as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry by
  with ladder and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child
  and nod to him to-night!

"The Land of Storybooks"
  At evening when the lamp is lit,
  Around the fire my parents sit;
  They sit at home and talk and sing,
  And do not play at anything.

  Now, with my little gun, I crawl
  All in the dark along the wall,
  And follow round the forest track
  Away behind the sofa back.

  There in the night where none can spy,
  All in my hunter's camp I lie,
  And play at books that I have read
  Till it is time to go to bed.

  There are the hills, these are the woods,
  These are my starry solitudes;
  And there the river by whose brink
  The roaring lions come to drink.

  I see the others far away
  As if in firelit camp they lay,
  And I, like to an Indian scout,
  Around their party prowled about.

  So, when my nurse comes in for me,
  Home I return across the sea,
  And go to bed with backward looks
  At my dear land of Story-books.

"The Moon"

    The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
    She shines on thieves on the garden wall,
    On streets and fields and harbour quays,
    And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

    The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,
    The howling dog by the door of the house,
    The bat that lies in bed at noon,
    All love to be out by the light of the moon.

    But all of the things that belong to the day
    Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;
    And flowers and children close their eyes
    Till up in the morning the sun shall rise.

"Where Go the Boats?"

    Dark brown is the river,
      Golden is the sand.
    It flows along for ever,
      With trees on either hand.

    Green leaves a-floating,
      Castles of the foam,
    Boats of mine a-boating--
      Where will all come home?

    On goes the river
      And out past the mill,
    Away down the valley,
      Away down the hill.

    Away down the river,
      A hundred miles or more,
    Other little children
      Shall bring my boats ashore.

When We Were Very Young
(Note: While the text of these poems is accurate, the full effect of the poems can only be seen in their original form, with the original typography and accompanied by Shepard's illustrations.)

"Bad Sir Brian Botany"
     Sir Brian had a battleaxe with great big knobs on;
     He went among the villagers and blipped them on the head.
     On Wednesday and on Saturday, but mostly on the latter day,
     He called at all the cottages, and this is what he said:

          "I am Sir Brian!" *(ting-ling)*
           "I am Sir Brian!" *(rat-tat)*
          "I am Sir Brian, as bold as a lion--
           "Take *that!*--and *that*--and *that!*"

     Sir Brian had a pair of boots with great big spurs on,
     A fighting pair of which he was particularly fond.
     On Tuesday and on Friday, just to make the street look tidy,
     He'd collect the passing villagers and kick them in the pond.

          "I am Sir Brian!" *(sper-lash)*
           "I am Sir Brian!" *(sper-losh)*
          "I am Sir Brian, as bold as a lion--
           "Is anyone else for a wash?"

     Sir Brian woke one morning, and he couldn't find his battleaxe;
     He walked into the village in his second pair of boots.
     He had gone a hundred paces, when the street was full of faces,
     And the villages were round him with ironical salutes.

          "You are Sir Brian? Indeed!
           You are Sir Brian? Dear, dear!
         You are Sir Brian, as bold as a lion?
          Delighted to meet you here!"

     Sir Brian went a journey, and he found a lot of duckweed;
     They pulled him out and dried him, and they blipped him on the head.
     They took him by the breeches, and they hurled him into ditches,
     And they pushed him under waterfalls, and this is what they said:

          "You are Sir Brian--don't laugh,
           You are Sir Brian--don't cry;

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You are Sir Brian, as bold as a lion--
    Sir Brian, the lion, good-bye!"
Sir Brian struggled home again, and chopped up his battleaxe,
Sir Brian took his fighting boots, and threw them in the fire.
He is quite a different person now he hasn't got his spurs on,
And he goes about the village as B. Botany, Esquire.

    "I am Sir Brian? Oh, *no*!
    I am Sir Brian? Who's he?
    I haven't got any title, I'm Botany--
    Plain Mr. Botany (B)."

"Before Tea"
    Emmeline
    Has not been seen
    For more than a week. She slipped between
    The two tall trees at the end of the green . . .
    We all went after her. *"Emmeline!"*

    "Emmeline,
    I didn't mean--
    I only said that your hands weren't clean."
    We went to the trees at the end of the green . .
    But Emmeline
    Was not to be seen.

    Emmeline
    Came slipping between
    The two tall trees at the end of the green.
    We all ran up to her. "Emmeline!
    Where have you been?
    Where have you been?
    Why, it's more than a week!" And Emmeline
    Said, "Sillies, I went and saw the Queen.
    She says my hands are *purfickly* clean!"

"Daffodowndilly"
    She wore her yellow sun-bonnet,
        She wore her greenest gown;
    She turned to the south wind
        And curtsied up and down.

She turned to the sunlight
  And shook her yellow head,
And whispered to her neighbour:
  "Winter is dead."

"The Dormouse and the Doctor"
    There once was a Dormouse who lived in a bed
    Of delphiniums (blue) and geraniums (red),
    And all the day long he'd a wonderful view
    Of geraniums (red) and delphiniums (blue).
    A Doctor came hurrying round, and he said:
    "Tut-tut, I am sorry to find you in bed.
     Just say 'Ninety-nine,' while I look at your
        chest . . .
    Don't you find that chrysanthemums answer the
        best?

    The Dormouse looked round at the view and replied
    (When he'd said "Ninety-nine") that he'd tried and he'd tried,
    And must the most answering things that he knew
    Were geraniums (red) and delphiniums (blue).

    The Doctor stood frowning and shaking his head,
    And he took up his shiny silk hat as he said:
    "What the patient requires is a change," and he went
    To see some chrysanthemum people in Kent.

    The Dormouse lay there, and he gazed at the view
    Of geraniums (red) and delphiniums (blue),
    And he knew there was nothing he wanted instead
    Of delphiniums (blue) and geraniums (red).

    [The Doctor returns, digs up the bed of delphiniums (blue) and geraniums
    (red), and plants "chrysanthemums (yellow and white)." The Dormouse,
    missing his delphiniums and geraniums, rolls over to shut out the sight of the
    chrysanthemums. The Doctor attempts a number of cures including "Milk and
    Massage-of-the-back", while the Dormouse "with his paws to his eyes"
    pretends the bed is full of geraniums and delphiniums.]

    The Doctor next morning was rubbing hs hands,
    And saying, "There's nobody quite understands
    These cases as I do! The cure has begun!
    How fresh the chrysanthemums look in the sun!"

The Dormouse lay happy, his eyes were so tight
He could see no chrysanthemums, yellow or white,
And all that he felt at the back of his head
Were delphiniums (blue) and geraniums (red).

And that is the reason (Aunt Emily said)
If a Dormouse gets in a chrysanthemum bed,
You will find (so Aunt Emily says) that he lies
Fast asleep on his front with his paws to his eyes.

"Hoppity"

Christopher Robin goes
Hoppity, hoppity

Hoppity, hoppity, hop.
Whenever I tell him
Politely to stop it, he
Says he can't possibly stop.

If he stopped hopping, he couldn't go anywhere,
Poor little Christopher
Couldn't go anywhere . . .
That's why he *always* goes
Hoppity, hoppity,
Hoppity,
Hoppity,
Hop.

"Independence"

I never did, I never did, I never *did* like
      "Now take care, dear!"
I never did, I never did, I never *did* want
      "Hold-my-hand";
I never did, I never did, I never *did* think much of
      "Not up there, dear!"
It's no good saying it. They don't understand.

"The Invaders"

In careless patches through the wood
The clumps of yellow primrose stood,
And sheets of white anemones,
Like driven snow against the trees,
Had covered up the violet,
But left the blue-bell bluer yet.

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Along the narrow carpet ride,
With primroses on either side,
Between their shadows and the sun,
The cows came slowly, one by one,
Breathing the early morning air
And leaving it still sweeter there.
And, one by one, intent upon
Their purposes, they followed on
In ordered silence . . . and were gone.

But all the little wood was still,
As if it waited so, until
Some blackbird on an outpost yew,
Watching the slow procession through,
Lifted his yellow beak at last
To whistle that the line had passed . . .
Then all the wood began to sing
Its morning anthem to the spring.

"Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue"
 "What have you done with your sheep,
   Little Bo-Peep?
 What have you done with your sheep,
   Bo-Peep?"
 "Little Boy Blue, what fun!
 I've lost them, every one!"
 "Oh, what a thing to have done,
   Little Bo-Peep!"

 "What have you done with your sheep,
   Little Boy Blue?
 What have you done with your sheep,
   Boy Blue?"
 "Little Bo-Peep, my sheep
 Went off, when I was asleep."
 "I'm sorry about your sheep,
   Little Boy Blue."

 "What are you going to do,
   Little Bo-Peep?
 What are you going to do,
   Bo-Peep?"

"Little Boy Blue, you'll see
They'll all come home to tea."
"They wouldn't do that for me
        Little Bo-Peep."

"What are you going to do,
        Little Boy Blue?
What are you going to do,
        Boy Blue?"
"Little Bo-Peep, I'll blow
My horn for a hour or so."
"Isn't that rather slow,
        Little Boy Blue?"

[Boy Blue asks Bo-Peep whom she will marry. She replies "I'd like to marry you" to which he replies "I think I should like it too." They discuss where they will live.]

"I'll love you for ever and ever,
        Little Bo-Peep.
I'll love you for ever and ever,
        Bo-Peep."
"Little Boy Blue, my dear,
Keep near, keep very near."
"I shall be always here,
        Little Bo-Peep."

"Market Square"
        I had a penny,
        A bright new penny,
        I took my penny
          To the market square.
        I wanted a rabbit,
        A little brown rabbit,
        And I looked for a rabbit
          'Most everywhere.

For I went to the stall where they sold sweet lavender
("Only a penny for a bunch of lavender!").
"Have you got a rabbit, 'cos I don't want lavender?"
        But they hadn't got a rabbit, not anywhere there.

I had a penny,
And I had another penny,
I took my pennies
  To the market square.
I did want a rabbit,
A little baby rabbit,
And I looked for rabbits
  'Most everywhere.

And I went to the stall where they sold fresh mackerel
("Now then! Tuppence for a fresh-caught mackerel!").
"Have you got a rabbit, 'cos I don't like mackerel?"
    But they hadn't got a rabbit, not anywhere there.

I found a sixpence
A little white sixpence,
I took it in my hand
  To the market square.
I was buying my rabbit
(I do like rabbits),
And I looked for my rabbit
  'Most everywhere.

So I went to the stall where they sold fine saucepans
("Walk up, walk up, sixpence for a saucepan!).
"Have you got a rabbit, 'cos we've got two saucepans?"
    But they hadn't got a rabbit, not anywhere there.

I had nuffin',
No, I hadn't got nuffin',
So I didn't go down
  To the market square.
But I walked on the common,
The old-gold common . . .
*And I saw little rabbits
  'Most everywhere!*

So I'm sorry for the people who sell fine saucepans,
I'm sorry for the people who sell fresh mackerel,
I'm sorry for the people who sell sweet lavender,
    'Cos they haven't got a rabbit, not anywhere there.

"Politeness"
>
> If people ask me,
> I always tell them:
> "Quite well, thank you, I'm very glad to say."
> If people ask me,
> I always answer,
> "Quite well, thank you, how are you today?"
> I always answer,
> I always tell them,
> If they ask me
> Politely . . .
> BUT SOMETIMES

I wish

That they wouldn't.

"Puppy and I"
>
> I met a man as I went walking;
> We got talking,
> Man and I.
> "Where are you going to, Man?" I said
> (I said to the Man as he went by).
> "Down to the village, to get some bread.
> Will you come with me?" "No, not I."
>
> I met a Horse as I went walking;
> We got talking,
> Horse and I.
> "Where are you going to, Horse, today?"
> (I said to the Horse as he went by).
> "Down to the village, to get some hay.
> Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

[The speaker meets a woman going for some barley, and some rabbits going for some oats.]

> I met a Puppy as I went walking;
> We got talking,
> Puppy and I.

"Where are you going this nice fine day?"
(I said to the Puppy as he went by).
"Up in the hills to roll and play."
"I'll come with you, Puppy," said I.

"Rice Pudding"

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
She's crying with all her might and main,
And she won't eat her dinner--rice pudding again--
What *is* the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
I've promised her dolls and a daisy-chain,
And a book about animals--all in vain--
What *is* the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
She's perfectly well, and she hasn't a pain;
But, look at her, now she's beginning again!--
What *is* the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
I've promised her sweets and a ride in the train
And I've begged her to stop for a bit and explain--
What *is* the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
She's perfectly well, and she hasn't a pain;
And it's lovely rice pudding for dinner again!--
What *is* the matter with Mary Jane?

"Sand-between-the-Toes"

I went down to the shouting sea,
Taking Christopher down with me,
For Nurse had given us sixpence each--
And down we went to the beach.

We had sand in the eyes and the ears and the nose,
And sand in the hair, and sand-between-the-toes.
Whenever a good nor' wester blows,
Christopher is certain of
Sand-between-the-toes.

The sea was galloping grey and white;
Christopher clutched his sixpence tight;
We clambered over the humping sand--
And Christopher held my hand.

    We had sand in the eyes and the ears and the nose,
    And sand in the hair, and sand-between-the-toes.
    Whenever a good nor' wester blows,
    Christopher is certain of
    Sand-between-the-toes.

There was a roaring in the sky;
The sea-gulls cried as they blew by:
We tried to talk, but had to shout--
Nobody else was out.

    When we got home, we had sand in the hair,
    In the eyes and the ears and everywhere;
    Whenever a good nor' wester blows,
    Christopher is found with
    Sand-between-the-toes.

"Summer Afternoon"
    Six brown cows walk down to drink
      (All the little fishes blew bubbles at the may-fly).
    Splash goes the first as he comes to the brink,
      Swish go the tails of the five who follow. . . .
    Twelve brown cows bend drinking there
      (All the little fishes went waggle-tail, waggle-tail)--
    Six from the water and six from the air;
      Up and down the river darts a blue-black swallow.

"Water-lilies"
    Where the water-lilies go
    To and fro,
    Rocking in the ripples of the water,
    Lazy on a leaf lies the Lake King's daughter,
    And the faint winds shake her.
    Who will come and take her?
    I will! I will!
    Keep still! Keep still!
    Sleeping on a leaf lies the Lake King's daughter . . .
    The the wind comes skipping
    To the lilies on the water;

And the kind winds wake her.
Now who will take her?
With a laugh she is slipping
Through the lilies on the water.
Wait! Wait!
Too late, too late!
Only the water-lilies go
To and fro,
Dipping, dipping,
To the ripples of the water.

Now We Are Six

"The Charcoal Burner"
>The charcoal-burner has tales to tell.
>He lives in the Forest,
>Alone in the Forest;
>He sits in the Forest,
>Alone in the Forest.
>And the sun comes slanting between the trees,
>And rabbits come up, and they give him good-morning,
>And rabbits come up and say, "Beautiful morning" . . .
>And the moon swings clear of the tall black trees,
>And owls fly over and wish him good-night,
>Quietly over to wish him good-night . . .
>
>And he sits and thinks of the things they know,
>He and the Forest, alone together--
>The springs that come and the summers that go,
>Autumn dew on bracken and heather,
>The drip of the Forest beneath the snow . . .
>All the things they have seen,
>All the things they have heard:
>An April sky swept clean and the song of a bird . . .
>Oh, the charcoal-burner has tales to tell!
>And he lives in the Forest and knows us well.

"Cradle Song"
>O Timothy Tim
> Has ten pink toes,
> And ten pink toes
>Has Timothy Tim.
>They go with him

Wherever he goes,
And wherever he goes
They go with him.

O Timothy Tim
    Has two blue eyes
    And two blue eyes
Has Timothy Tim.
They cry with him
    Whenever he cries,
    And whenever he cries,
They cry with him.

O Timothy Tim
    Has one red head,
    And one red head
Has Timothy Tim.
It sleeps with him
    In Timothy's bed.
    Sleep well, red head
Of Timothy Tim.

"Explained"
    Elizabeth Ann
    Said to her Nan:
    "Please will you tell me how God began?
    Somebody must have made Him. So
    Who could it be, 'cos I want to know?"
    And Nurse said, *"Well!"*
    And Ann said "Well?
    I know you know, and I wish you'd tell."
    And Nurse took pins from her mouth, and said,
    "Now then, darling, it's time for bed."

    Elizabeth Ann
    Had a wonderful plan:
    She would run round the world till she found a man
    Who knew *exactly* how God began.
    She got up early, she dressed, and ran
    Trying to find an Important Man.
    She ran to London and knocked at the door
    Of the Lord High Doodeldum's coach-and-four.
    "Please, sir (if there's anyone in),
    However-and-ever did God begin?"

The Lord High Doodeldum lay in bed,
But out of the window, large and red,
Came the Lord High Coachman's face instead.
And the Lord High Coachman laughed and said:
"Well, what put *that* in your quaint little head?"

Elizabeth Ann went home again
And took from the ottoman Jennifer Jane.
"Jenniferjane," said Elizabeth Ann,
"Tell me *at once* how God began."
And Jane, who didn't much care for speaking,
Replied in her usual way by squeaking.

What did it mean? Well, to be quite candid,
I don't know, but Elizabeth Ann did.
Elizabeth Ann said softly, "Oh!
Thank you Jennifer. Now I know."

"Forgiven"
    I found a little beetle, so that Beetle was his name,
    And I called him Alexander and he answered just the same.
    I put him in a match-box, and I kept him all the day . . .
    And Nanny let my beetle out--
        Yes, Nanny let my beetle out--
            She went and let my beetle out--
                And beetle ran away.

    She said she didn't mean it, and I never said she did,
    She said she wanted matches and she just took off the lid,
    She said that she was sorry, but it's difficult to catch
    An excited sort of beetle you've mistaken for a match.

    She said that she was sorry, and I really mustn't mind,
    As there's lots and lots of beetles which she's certain we could find,
    If we looked about the garden for the holes where beetles his--
    And we'd get another match-box and write BEETLE on the lid.

    We went to all the places which a beetle might be near,
    And we made the sort of noises which a beetle likes to hear,
    And I saw a kind of something, and I gave a sort of shout:
    "A beetle-house and Alexander Beetle coming out!"

    It was Alexander Beetle I'm as certain as can be
    And he had a sort of look as if he thought it must be ME,

And he had a sort of look as if he thought he ought to say:
"I'm very, very sorry that I tried to run away."

And Nanny's very sorry too for you-know-what-she-did,
And she's writing ALEXANDER very blackly on the lid.
So Nan and Me are friends, because it's difficult to catch
An excited Alexander you've mistaken for a match.

"The Good Little Girl" (Six 68-70)
    It's funny how often they say to me, "Jane?
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"
    And when they have said it, they say it again,
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"

    I go to a party, I go out to tea,
    I go to an aunt for a week at the sea,
    I come back from school or from playing a game;
    Wherever I come from, it's always the same:
      "Well?
      Have you been a *good* girl, Jane?"

    It's always the end of the lovliest day:
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"
    I went to the Zoo, and they waited to say:
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"
      "Have you been a *good* girl?"

    Well, what did they think that I went there to do?
    And why should I want to be bad at the Zoo?
    And should I be likely to say if I had?
    So that's why it's funny of Mummy and Dad,
    This asking and asking, in case I was bad,
      "Well?
      Have you been a *good* girl, Jane?"

"King John's Christmas"
    King John was not a good man--
      He had his little ways.
    And sometimes no one spoke to him
      For days and days and days.

And men who came across him,
   When walking in the town,
Gave him a supercilious stare,
Or passed with noses in the air--
And bad King John stood dumbly there,
   Blushing beneath his crown.

King John was not a good man,
   And no good friends had he.
He stayed in every afternoon . . .
   But no one came to tea.
And, round about December,
   The cards upon his shelf
Which wished him lots of Christmas cheer,
And fortune in the coming year,
Were never from his near and dear,
But only from himself.

King John was not a good man,
   Yet had his hopes and fears.
They'd given him no present now
   For years and years and years.
But every year at Christmas,
   While minstrels stood about,
Collecting tribute from the young
For all the songs they might have sung,
He stole away upstairs and hung
   A hopeful stocking out.

King John was not a good man,
   He lived his life aloof;
Alone he thought a message out
   While climbing up the roof.
He wrote it down and propped it
   Against the chimney stack:
"TO ALL AND SUNDRY--NEAR AND FAR--
F. CHRISTMAS IN PARTICULAR."
And signed it not "Johannes R."
   But very humbly, "JACK."

I did want crackers,
   And I want some candy;
I think a box of chocolates
   Would come in handy;

I don't mind oranges,
  I do like nuts!
And I SHOULD like a pocket-knife
  That really cuts.
And, oh! Father Christmas, if you love me at all
Bring me a big, red india-rubber ball!

[King John retreats to his room in some anxiety. While thinking about his
note, he dismisses all the presents he's suggested except for the india-rubber
ball. Although on Christmas morning others find "crackers, toys, and games"
in their stockings, King John receives nothing. He goes through his list of
presents again, reflecting upon how he did really want them, particularly of
the india-rubber ball.]

King John stood by the window,
  And frowned to see below
The happy bands of boys and girls
  All playing in the snow.
A while he stood there watching,
  And envying them all . . .
When through the window big and red
There hurtled by his royal head,
And bounced and fell upon his bed,
  An india-rubber ball!

AND, OH, FATHER CHRISTMAS,
MY BLESSINGS ON YOU FALL
  FOR BRINGING HIM
  A BIG, RED,
  INDIA-RUBBER
  BALL!

"The Knight Whose Armour Didn't Squeak"
      Of all the Knights in Appledore
        The wisest was Sir Thomas Tom.
      He multiplied as far as four,
        And knew what nine was taken from
      To make eleven. He could write
      A letter to another Knight.

      No other Knight in all the land
        Could do the things which he could do
      Not only did he understand
        The way to polish swords, but knew

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What remedy a Knight should seek
Whose armour had begun to squeak.

And if he didn't fight too much,
　It wasn't that he did not care
For blips and buffetings and such,
　But felt that it was hardly fair
To risk by frequent injuries,
A brain as delicate as his.

His castle (Castle Tom) was set
　Conveniently on a hill;
And daily, when it wasn't wet,
　He paced the battlements until
Some smaller Knight who couldn't swim
Should reach the moat and challenge him.

Or sometimes, feeling full of fight,
　He hurried out to scour the plain;
And seeing some approaching Knight,
　He either hurried home again,
Or hid; and when the foe was past,
Blew a triumphant trumpet-blast.

One day when good Sir Thomas Tom
　Was resting in a handy ditch,
The noises he was hiding from,
　Though very much the noises which
He'd always hidden from before,
Seemed somehow less. . . . Or was it more?

[Sir Thomas Tom establishes that the difference he hears is because the
oncoming Knight (Sir Hugh) also has armour that does not squeak.]

He rushed to where his horse was tied;
　He spurred it to a rapid trot.
The only fear he felt inside
　About his enemy was not
"How sharp his sword?" "How stout his heart?"
But "Has he got too long a start?"

Sir Hugh was singing, hand on hip,
　When something sudden came along,
And caught him a terrific blip

Right in the middle of his song.
"A thunderstorm!" he thought. "Of course!"
And toppled gently off his horse.

[Sir Thomas Tom dismounts and helps Sir Hugh to remove his armour. Sir
Thomas takes the armour and drops it in a nearby pond.]

So ever after, more and more,
  The men of Kent would proudly speak
Of Thomas Tom of Appledore,
  "The Knight Whose Armour Didn't Squeak"
Whilst Hugh, the Knight who gave him best,
Squeaks just as badly as the rest.

"The Little Black Hen"
        Berryman and Baxter,
          Prettiboy and Penn
        And old Farmer Middleton
          Are five big men . . .
        And all of them were after
          The Little Black Hen.

        She ran quickly,
          They ran fast;
        Baxter was first, and
          Berryman was last.
        I sat and watched
          By the old plum-tree . . .
        She squawked through the hedge
          And she came to me.

        The Little Black Hen
          Said "Oh, it's you!"
        I said, "Thank you,
          How do you do?"
        And please will you tell me,
          Little Black Hen,
        What did they want,
          Those five big men?"

        The Little Black Hen
          She said to me:
        "They want me to lay them
          An egg for tea.

If they were Emperors,
  If they were Kings,
I'm much too busy
  To lay them things."

"I'm not a King
  And I haven't a crown;
I climb up trees,
  And I tumble down.
I can shut one eye,
  I can count to ten,
So, lay me an egg, please,
  Little Black Hen."

[The Little Black Hen asks what the speaker will pay for an Easter egg. The speaker offers a number of things, including "a Please / and a How-do-you-do", a trip to the zoo, and a sight of "the nettle-place / On my leg". The Little Black hen rejects the first two ideas, but agrees to lay an egg for the speaker if he shows her his nettle-place. He does.]

When I wake up
  On Easter Day,
I shall see my egg
  She's promised to lay.
If I were Emperors,
  If I were Kings,
It wouldn't be fuller
  Of wonderful things.

Berryman and Baxter,
  Prettyboy and Penn,
And Old Farmer Middleton
  Are five big men.
All of them are wanting
  An egg for their tea,
But the Little Black Hen is much too busy,
The Little Black Hen is *much* too busy,
The Little Black Hen is MUCH to busy . . .
  She's laying my egg for me!

Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle

"Apartment House"
        A filing-cabinet of human lives
        Where people swarm like bees in tunneled hives,
        Each to his own cell in the towered comb,
        Identical and cramped -- we call it home.
                                        (Gerald Raftery)

"Central Park Tourney"
        Cars
        In the Park
        With long spear lights
        Ride at each other
        Like armored knights;
        Rush,
        Miss the mark,
        Pierce the dark,
        Dash by!
        Another two
        Try.

        Staged
        In the Park
        From dusk
        To dawn,   ·
        The tourney goes on:
        Rush,
        Miss the mark,
        Pierce the dark,
        Dash by!
        Another two
        Try.
                        (Mildred Weston)

"Deer Hunt"
        Because the warden is a cousin, my
        mountain friends hunt in summer when the deer
        cherish each rattler-ridden spring, and I
        have waited hours by a pool in fear
        that manhood would require I shoot or that
        the steady drip of the hill would dull my ear
        to a snake whispering near the log I sat

upon, and listened to the yelping cheer
of dogs and men resounding ridge to ridge.
I flinched at every lonely rifle crack,
my knuckles whitening where I gripped the edge
of age and clung, like retching, sinking back,
then gripping once again the monstrous gun--
since I, to be a man, had taken one.

<div align="right">(Judson Jerome)</div>

"Earth"

     If this little world tonight
       Suddenly should fall through space
     In a hissing, headlong flight,
       Shrivelling from off its face,
     As it falls into the sun,
       In an instant every trace
     Of the little crawling things--
       Ants, philosophers, and lice,
     Cattle, cockroaches, and kings,
       Beggards, millionaires, and mice,
     Men and maggots all as one
     As it falls into the sun . . .
     Who can say but at the same
       Instant from some planet far
     A child may watch us and exclain:
       "See the pretty shooting star!"

<div align="right">(Oliver Herford)</div>

"Earth"

     "A planet doesn't explode of itself," said drily
     The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air--
     "That they were able to do it is proof that highly
     Intelligent beings must have been living there."

<div align="right">(John Hall Wheelock)</div>

"Elegy for Jog"

     Stiff-dog death, all froth on a bloody chin,
     sniffs at the curb. Skinny-man death, his master
     opens the traffic's hedge to let him in.
     Jog was his name, silliness his disaster.
     He wasn't satisfied to scare the truck:
     he had to bite the tire. Fools have no luck.

<div align="right">(John Ciardi)</div>

"For a Dead Kitten"
>Put the rubber mouse away,
>Pick the spools up from the floor,
>What was velvet-shod and gay,
>Will not want them any more.
>
>What was warm, is strangely cold.
>Whence dissolved the little breath?
>How could this small body hold
>So immense a thing as Death?
>>>>(Sara Henderson Hay)

"Hey Diddle Diddle"
>Hey diddle diddle
>The physicists fiddle,
>>The Bleep jumped over the moon.
>The little dog laughed to see such fun
>>And died the following June.
>>>>(Paul Dehn)

"On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper"
>Nothing sings from these orange trees,
>Rindless steel as smooth as sapling skin,
>Except a crane's brief wheeze
>And all the muffled, clanking din
>Of rivets nosing in like bees.
>>>>(Burton Raffel)

"Resume"
>Razors pain you;
>Rivers are damp;
>Acids stain you;
>And drugs cause cramp.
>Guns aren't lawful;
>Nooses give;
>Gas smells awful;
>You might as well live.
>>>>(Dorothy Parker)

"Sonic Boom"

I'm sitting in the living room,
When, up above, the Thump of Doom
Resounds. Relax. It's sonic boom.

The ceiling shudders at the clap,
The mirrors tilt, the rafters snap,
And Baby wakens from his nap.

"Hush, babe. Some pilot we equip,
Giving the speed of sound the slip,
Has cracked the air like a penny whip."

Our world is far from frightening; I
No longer strain to read the sky
Where moving fingers (jet planes) fly.
Our world seems much to tame to die.

And if it does, with one more pop,
I shan't look up to see it drop.
                    (John Updike)

"Steam Shovel"

The dinosaurs are not all dead.
I saw one raise its iron head
To watch me walking down the road
Beyond our house today.
Its jaws were dripping with a load
Of earth and grass that it had cropped.
It must have heard me where I stopped
Snorted white steam my way,
And stretched its long neck out to see,
And chewed, and grinned quite amiably.
                    (Charles Malam)

"Transcontinent"
> Where the cities end, the
> dumps grow the oil-can shacks
> from Portland, Maine,
>
> To Seattle. Broken
> cars rust in Troy, New York,
> and Cleveland Heights.
>
> On the train, the people
> eat candy bars, and watch,
> or fall asleep.
>
> When they look outside and
> see cars and shacks, they know
> they're nearly there.
> > (Donald Hall)

"War"
> Dawn came slowly,
> almost not at all.
> The sun crept over the hill
> cautiously
> fearful of being hit
> by mortar fire.
> > (Dan Roth)

APPENDIX C

ANALYSIS OF NURSERY RHYME INFLUENCE ON "THE KING'S BREAKFAST"

"The King's Breakfast" (*Young* 57-61) is an excellent example of the nursery rhyme echoes typical of much of Milne's verse. In this poem, as in so many of his verses, Milne adopts a number of the characteristic structures of the nursery rhyme. In doing so, he sets up strong connections between this poem and the earlier verse type; but at the same time, he sets his work apart from nursery rhymes through his integration of traditional oral constructs and more modern conceptual features.

Consider, for instance, the way in which Milne subtly references the popular nursery rhyme "Sing a song of sixpence." "Sing a song of sixpence" is a two-part verse which focuses upon the activities of a king, a queen, a maid, and some blackbirds. The central focus of the first verse is the meal presented to the king. "The King's Breakfast," in comparison, tells the story of the king's nearly thwarted desire for "some butter for the royal slice of bread," and focuses on the flurry of messages sent from king to queen to maid to cow and back again. While there is no direct correlation between the two poems, in employing the same character types as appear in nursery rhyme, Milne taps into an already familiar tradition.

At the same time, Milne escapes from that tradition through his elaborate storyline. "The King's Breakfast," while a seemingly simple story, incorporates extensive detail into its plot. The whole poem employs seven fairly long stanzas to record the resolution of the king's breakfast (taking up five full pages in the book). Such a level of detail is relatively unusual for most nursery rhymes, particularly the popular ones which tend to be only a stanza or two long. Some of the ballads included as nursery rhymes do tell extensive stories -- so even in this Milne has a connection to the earlier forms -- but Milne's subject matter seems less indebted to the nursery rhyme than it does to the breakfast parlours of nineteenth and twentieth century homes.

In similar fashion, it is possible to see Milne's incorporation of nursery rhyme constructs in the verse form itself. Once again, though, Milne uses the features as a basis for an elaborate, intricate structure. The first stanza of the poem incorporates the most prominent of these nursery rhyme elements:

```
1     The King asked
      o     B     o
2     The Queen, and
      o     B    o
3     The Queen asked
      o     B    o
4     The Dairymaid:
      o     B    o    [o]
5     "Could we have some butter for
        B    o    o    o  B  o o
6     The royal slice of bread?
      o   B  o   o   o   B  [o]
7     The Queen asked
      o     B     o
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```
8       The Dairymaid,
        o    B   o
9       The Dairymaid
        o    B  o
10      Said, "Certainly,
        o       B  o
11      I'll go and tell
        o  B   o   o
12      The cow
        o   B  [o]
13      Now
        B
14      Before she's gone to bed."
        o  B   o       o   o  B
                 (Note: B = beat, O = offbeat)
```

High levels of reinforcing repetitions, both on lexicogrammatic and

semantic/pragmatic levels link this poem to familiar nursery rhyme patterns.

A chain is set up with the king speaking with the queen, the queen speaking

with the dairymaid, and the dairymaid speaking with the cow; in the remainder

of the poem, the sequence is reversed, and the whole cycle performed once

again. This strict sequential pattern of conversations is effectively reinforced

by the lexicogrammatic structure used throughout the verse. Of particular note

is how Milne uses syntactic repetition as a way of emphasising the

conversational chain: "The king asked / The queen and / The queen asked /

The dairymaid . . . The queen asked / The dairymaid / The Dairymaid said,

"Certainly" (ll 1-4 and 7-10). His choice to repeat the same grammatical

sequence four times within one stanza sets up a powerful mnemonic structure

emphasising the movement of the message along the conversational chain.

This grammatical reinforcement is further accentuated through lexical

repetition: by repeating the titles of the characters each time they are mentioned, Milne deliberately forces the audience to pause at each section of the conversational chain. Where communicative efficiency would tend to encourage a smoother structure -- "The king asked the queen who asked the dairymaid for some butter. She replied, "Certainly." -- Milne instead opts for increased mnemonic density through multiple layers of patterned language.

Milne further increases the mnemonic density of the poem through his skilful manipulation of sound and rhythm. Developed around a regular series of "OBO" beats, the rhythm in "The King's Breakfast" underscores language patterns. He sets up a regular intonation contour (a consistent sequence of beats and offbeats) from lines 1-4 and 7-10 -- at the same point as the conversational chain. And, just as he divides the sequences through the depiction of the question and the reply it gets, so too does he vary the rhythmic contour of lines 5-6 and 11-14. Again, just as is characteristic of the nursery rhyme form, the patterns set up on semantic, lexical, and syntactic levels are echoed by the phonological structure of the verse. "The King's Breakfast" employs the same principles of mnemonic density as are found within the nursery rhyme form. Thus, although the substance of the poem owes its genesis only indirectly to nursery rhymes, the same cannot be said of the verse's shape.

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