

# Anthropocentric Manipulation in Juvenile Literature: The menagerie in Nursery-Rhymes

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## ABSTRACT

If mainstreaming an environmental and ecological concern in daily human lives certainly is one of the prior requirements, then certainly the need is to compose more literary stuffs incorporating real environmental concerns within, and also studying the existing ones with an ecological approach, and so do need to be the approach while studying juvenile literature, for kids, children or young adults, and even for nursery-rhymes, as the last being the initiating-tool to education in most of the learning-system across nations, cultures or languages and thus forming a much important bulk to focus on.

Nursery rhymes, most of which can find their roots in some ancient era and have survived and evolved through time, nations and languages, (or even the comparatively modern or revamped pieces) portrays quite much in abundance various characters, both human and certainly non-human animals as well. And, if these non-human character ranges from mammals to birds to reptiles or even insects, then the attitude propagated towards these characters or the human-animal relation portrayed also comes in various emotions and actions. If some of the animal names come quite in nonsense mode just for rhyming's sake, then there are quite a collection of them where the pieces portray and thus propagate a certain kind of attitude towards those certain animals in particular and all of the non-human living world in general. And this very variety in approaches can be accredited to reasons such as normalising casual violence towards animals, or religious or utilitarian biases playing the operator to teach benevolence towards them etc.. For example, the "Baby-Bunting" piece goes like "Bye, Baby-Bunting,/ Father's gone a hunting,/ To fetch a little bunny's skin,/ To wrap Baby Bunting in.", which not only attempt normalising hunting, and to talk of that period it used to be considered so as well, but normalises the act of violence for a kid as well, reeking very much of an anthropo-colonial attitude. Whereas considering another quite famous example of "Ding,dong , bell, pussy's in the well", one may find it to be teaching kids good values and compassion towards animals, but the anthropocentric twist comes with utilitarian approach to value that particular animal, and here the pussy's act of killing mice in the barn upped its brownie points, bettered its prospects to be valued by human beings, or at least the rhyme suggests so, and there are many more rhymes, the nonsense ones or the fablelike ones with some moral lesson being the content, which somehow tends to manipulate, knowingly, unknowingly or habitually, the juvenile minds in to an anthropocentric bent.

A counter argument can obviously be posed questioning the validity of scanning for ecologically irresponsible approach in juvenile rhymes meant for kids and toddlers which are primarily purposive of being the very beginning step to learning and education and initiating children being capable to good memory, good pronunciation, and some good moral values, and all of it coming in a package of fun to make it entertaining for the kids. But, the fact is that, juvenile literature is a space, equally important and even more than any other literature, which can prove to be a bigger help in building up an ecologically responsible behaviour, an ecologically responsible generation and an ecologically responsible future, and thus in a serious need to be cultivated and provided accordingly, and which certainly needs to address the existing problems in the same where anthropomorphized animal characters are presented to the little people where anthropocentric manipulation exists in abundance and contributes in cultivating an attitude and approach, a binary power-matrix, where human beings continue to think of and treat themselves in superlative terms over the 'others' the non-human.

The proposed paper offer to analyse and discuss this very anthropocentric politics.

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## 1. Introduction

" There is a great proverb-that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter ", said Chinua Achebe, the famous Nigerian novelist, and one of the most important voice African literature, the African world, in an interview. Of course his response was certainly contextual to the utter necessity of the colonized

African community to be heard, and the story of himself getting inspired to join the bandwagon of the few writers who were trying their best to make their life, culture and anecdotes heard and seen. But, the powerful proverb, even without leading to any deeper metaphorical resonance, or without any particular context, stands startling in revealing the intricate relation between power matrix and the discursive space, the relation

between privilege and language. The age old African adage certainly talks about the need of putting up with a discursive resistance against the privileged and the powerful- and language and literature certainly plays pivotal to put up with this resistance. The proverb quite prominently expresses the requirement of a textual system, a language, a literature of its own, to counter the manipulation of history and anecdotes contributed by the privileged. But, the problem arises in the fact that not everywhere, to every community belongs a language to communicate, or even if there is a language, chances are there of it not being prominent, effectual or influential enough to claim the 'space', and in turns, the language of the under-privileged gets manipulated by the attitude and belief system advantageous to and propagated by the privileged. And thus, if people able to communicate through words are unlikely to take trouble to learn sign-language, or people with no visual-imperfection are unlikely to learn 'braille' as a parallel language system, likewise, human-beings do rarely try to follow, learn and understand the language of the non-human animal-world, and thus the 'lion' or any other animal, without their own 'language', their own 'historian', always gets represented through the language the privileged humans, and their representation most of the time gets biased and coloured with varying shades of anthropocentric streaks.

If in the human-non-human binary, human stands privileged, then such is the case when we consider a power-matrix of the adult and the child, where certainly the child is the vulnerable one and depended on the adult human being for nourishment, for sustenance, for protection. And ,if the human-child, specifically the toddler, has also its own communicating system, its own language and perception, its temporary, which obviously gets conditioned by the adult world, and gradually so. Even, the textual-space, the literature offered to the juveniled are mostly formatted by adult writers. So, both the non-human animals and human children lack a language, a textual system, a discursive space of their own, which mostly suffer the adult-human manipulation in varying measures. And, what this paper proposes to proceed with is how much of this anthropocentric manipulation dominates when the adult human world takes the charge of introducing the non-humans to the juveniles, and becomes a supervising force in influencing the direction of the relation between the two vulnerable sections, and animals being an unconscious and yet vulnerable party in this whole system of textual-manipulation and children being the future privileged adult-human beings, the shades and measures of anthropocentric leanings in juvenile literature, and particularly, as the limited ambit of my study concern here, nursery rhymes, stands quite immense in influencing the future of the non-human living existence in particular and the future of the ecological harmony in general.

What a complete concept of Ecocriticism contains as its prime motive is a call for coordination , a close cooperation between literature and biosphere. William Rueckert, who was a pioneering figure of this movement quoted about the problem that the human community is gradually destroying the 'natural community' and thus destroying the 'human community' along with, and attempted seeking solution against this gradual destruction in changing our approaches towards writing,

reading or teaching literature. His solution lied in attempting a coordination between 'literature' and the biosphere:

How can we move from the community of literature to the larger biospheric  
Community which ecology tells us (correctly, I think )  
we belong to even as we are destroying it.

(pp.- 121 )

Cheryl Glotfelty in her essay " Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" also defines ecocriticism quite in similar terms of developing an attitude integrating literature with environmental concerns:

What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. ( Introduction, xviii )

And this very environmental-concerned attitude or an 'earth-centred approach' is very much inclusive of studying literature with a concern for the representation of non-human animal-figures in them as well. And if we desire to counter the anthropocentric practises in real life, which rarely questions the human action inflicting cruelty and suffering towards the non-humans, then we need to start immediately countering the anthropocentric portrayals of them in our arts and literature as well, to purge out the anthropocolonial hubris, and more so to purge our juvenile literature, what we cater to toddlers and children and which actually contributes much in the formation of a particular attitude in their 'tabula rasa' and helps in influencing or forming certain perceptions, not only in individuals, but actually a generation.

Australian animal-rights activist and moral philosopher Peter Singer in his epoch-making *Animal Liberation* (1975) addresses the same issue of the inevitable influence of literature in developing proper attitude towards animals. "Recognizing the importance of the attitudes we form when young", Singer observes that " the feminist movement has succeeded in fostering the growth of a new children's literature, in which brave princess, and girls play the central, active roles that used to be for boys" ( pp-215), and he suggests to adopt a same positive revival for the portrayal of animal figures in children's literature. But, though, a conscious change in attitude has been evident till then, in terms of a proper non-crude and non-sentimental portrayal of the non-humans in literature or animations for children, interesting it is to see how tricky it has been to eliminate the unconscious and casual anthropocentric leanings in the same. And, the nursery-rhymes, which forms a much larger part of the elementary or pre-school education for toddlers and little children, and which perhaps offers a much larger repertoire of different animal-figures, quite justifiably stands responsible to explain the way generally animals are portrayed in them.

The relationship human beings and the non-humans share, (a dubious one certainly, in the human defence against the wild aggression in the ancient ages or the various kind of human exploitation of the same in the current age, only hyphenated by some attempts to balance the ecological equation by prioritizing consideration over animal rights and being 'right' animal representation ) certainly goes back to the time when the humans came on the earth and the relationship getting its share of reflection in arts and literature is quite ancient as well. If the Rouffignac cave in France can be seen adorned with paintings of mammoths, woolly rhinoceros, horses, bisons and Capricorns dating back to the upper paleolithic age, or Chauvet Cave in Sothern France is home to prehistoric era paintings of predatory animals such as lions, hyenas, panthers or bears, or the Altamira Cave in Spain is home to the famous bison-figure, then post the 'pre-historic' period different civilizations which flourished in different ages at different places also reflects non-human entities enclosed everywhere in their art, literature and culture. For example, if the Egyptian history yield many animal figures or human-animal hybrids as their deities, then the hieroglyphs symbols also contain a variety of animals like vulture, duck, lizard, fish, hare, bull, cat, bees , crocodile etc. The mysterious Mayan civilization also used to count upon animals such as jaguar or black howler monkey as some sort of divinity, and the rich remnants of the Indus Valley civilization contains animal-figures in terracotta or bronze toys, or on different seals found, of animals such as elephants, tigers, bull, ( which is perhaps the most dominant figure to be found), or even the mythical unicorn. Indus Valley Civilization has been studied to have evidenced of domestication of animals such as buffaloes, pigs, donkeys, goats, sheep, elephant or the humped-back bull, and perhaps this mastery of man over animals get treated in different portrayals on seals like a human figure mastering over two tigers standing on hind legs beside, or on another seal we find a human figure perched on a tree doing some controlling hand gesture towards a tiger who is looking back at him, or a same trait can be sighted in the famous 'Pashupati', a horned deity ( or wearing a horned head-gear) who is the authoritative figure in the portrayal surrounded by animals such as tiger, elephant, bull or rhinoceros. If historians and archaeologist have interpreted this particular human-animal congress as the precursor of the concept of 'bahana', Hinduism entertained later, where most of the Hindu deities were gifted with a carrier animal, who also assisted them in wars and other jobs, then the concept of 'avatar' or incarnation also describes different deities being incarnated into some or other non-human animals, specially so with lord Vishnu appearing as a tortoise or a lion or a fish etc. or the Jataka-stories describing lord Buddha's multiple incarnations into different non-humans. Religions, and almost all of them, sparing one or two like of Jainism, also has shared this dichotomous relationship with the non-human animals, and the same dubiousness can be accounted for finding religious texts and edicts being both propagating a considerate attitude towards the non-humans, and as well as harbouring various superstitious actions against them, animal-sacrifice certainly being one of them, which is till now only too rampant in both Hinduism or Islam. And Christianity too displays this anomaly of attitude with including the dove or the lamb as symbols of divinity and announcing a

complete human claim over the nature, including the non-human entities inhabiting within:

Then God said, " Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea, and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground "

(Genesis 1:26, New International Version of the Bible )

\_\_\_ and certainly, though there is confusion over the interpretation of the same as instructing the human beings in complete power over the 'other', the non-humans, or just in charge of their protection or supervision, there can never be any confusion over the anthropo-colonial character of it.

Advancing from religions or religious texts towards ancient literary endeavours, we find plenty of them primarily to be either religious or mythological derivatives or of didactic nature, and of course portrayals of animals in, both real, mythological or imaginary ones, were not rare to spot. And almost a congregation of religion, mythology, legends and folklores, treated with an allegorical approach , counting extensively on different animal-figures to fit in the bill, thus ended up introducing an altogether different sub-genre of beast-fables, which is a must-mention in any discussion focused on portrayals of animals in literature. These beast-fables were primarily purposive of providing moral lessons through amusement, and the animal-figures came into the picture to provide the 'amusement', and also the symbolic safety-valve against being directly offensive. From Aesop's Fables, to Vishnu Sharma's ( as assumed to be) Panchatantra, or the Jataka Tales, the earliest ones in this tradition, all follows an identical pattern. Firstly, these fables, which primarily belonged to the oral tradition ( as with the Aesopian ones), or only limited textual reach, expanded beyond the spatio-temporal and linguistic limitations and got multiple translated versions, at times original or else revived or influenced, and at times, the oral-transmission also contributed in intersecting and overlapping of these different collections. Secondly, almost all of these fables portrayed anthropomorphized and mostly animal figures, to impart moral values. Interestingly, Nursery Rhymes also share identical tendencies, where the oral tradition likewise worked havoc and a single rhyme can be discovered in multiple versions. Not only that, nursery-rhymes also showcase a variety of non-humans birds, beasts or insects, and most of them get anthropomorphized portrayals, that too purposive of imparting moral exhortations through light-hearted amusing drama. And, this is where the requirement of a discussion is quite necessary, as the portrayals of these animals are found to be not only laden with pretentious superficiality, or as Mike Cadden presents it , with 'fake realism' ( Handbook of Research on Children's Literature), but too callous and casual about rampant anthropocentric values being imparted too along with. And these anthropocentric attitude gets reflected in various ways, such as references to casual violence towards animals, or, promoting animal-love with their utility for the human world prioritized, or speciesism, which again is sourced from this utility-based valuation of the non-

humans, and of course confidently announcing the superiority of the homo sapiens over any other species, and through extensive application of anthropomorphization too comes an anthropocentric attitude of turning living entities into tropes and symbols and appropriating other non-human species in human appearance and language for purposes solely serving the Human. Introducing too much reality into children's literature , and specially so in nursery rhymes meant for toddlers and little children needed to be in check as real things about the human—non-human relationship is not only about having lovely and cuddly pets such as a parrot or a dog, but rather about slaughter houses or the leather-industry or the meat-industry too, and children and toddlers cannot be exposed in such a tender age to so much of violence, which may in turns get some utterly negative result of promoting and normalizing violence. But the anthropomorphized versions of our non-human counterparts in our juvenile rhymes act too innocent, and pretentious, comparable to the neat and tidy , attractively packaged processed meat in city-shop's counters, wiping out the 'real' gory deals it was accessed and processed through. These attempts of whitewashing the undesirable details which are capable of brewing discomfort and also guilt perhaps, can be seen regularly and very much so where the non-humans are commodified. For example, the famous food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken advertising their quality chicken-products showing a chicken dancing in a slaughter-house like room, or like how National Egg Coordination Committee of India announced eggs or chicken to be safe to consume after a period of chicken-flu episode, with an advertisement featuring figures of a cock , a hen and their chicks guaranteeing for their safety quotient for human consumption.



Fig.1. National Egg Coordination Committee- Me and my family are fine. (2006)

These particular advertisements certainly reflects the notoriety of the anthropocentric gaze. Now, if we weigh some of the nursery rhymes, which have been catered to children for years, then a same pretentious innocence is to be found. For example, in T.H. Carter's Grandmamma's Book of Rhymes the cow comes as an animal only too ready to provide her human 'owners' with milk, and there is no mention of the calf, who

deserves the milk nonetheless, and the final stanza of this particular one goes like :

“ Till the milkmaid calls us home/ Then most cheerfully will come,/ And our store will yield to you,/ Master, Miss and Baby too” ( pp- 25, “ The Cow” )

Rufus Merrill's toybook, Rhymes for the Nursery has in it a piece on feeding chickens but interestingly it's less about chickens or at least chickens are not that important here, as importance is given to educate children in feeling gratitude over god's providence. And , certainly there's no references to the real dimension to it, which is that we feed the chickens in order to feed upon them later. If the first stanza describes chickens in the morning ,running, tripping and nibbling on corns with their heads down, the second stanza goes like:

"Dear sister, shall we shut our eyes,  
And to the sight be blind?  
Nor think of Him who food supplies  
To us and all mankind ” (pp-3)

Religious commitment goes threatening in one particular version of “ Goosey Goosey Gander”, and under the garb of a nonsense juvenile rhyme we cater to children how torturing anyone refusing religiosity is fine. The rhyme alleged to be hinting at the history of persecution of Catholics at the hand of the protestants, without the context, ends up instructing religious intolerance and violence (like throwing somebody down the stairs) to nursery children :

“ Goosey, goosey gander,  
Whither shall I wander?  
Upstairs and downstairs  
And in my lady's chamber.  
There I met an old man  
Who would not say his prayers.  
I took him by the left leg  
And threw him down the stairs” (pp.-190, Iona-Peter)

Another available version of this rhyme, which was used to be recited while playing some certain game probably tells about 'shaking up' some Jenny Baker , which is again not something providing some pleasant picture. And , its quite obvious that portrayals of these cruel behaviours (be there some humanized animal figures or not ) will not only begets in children insensitivity towards animals, but insensitivity towards human-beings as well.

While studying “Bah! Bah ! black sheep” which is still now quite a popular one and in action in the nursery world, we find a same tone of anthropomorphized presentations twisting with the real picture. This particular rhyme, which was first published in Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book has its history in the wool tax imposed on farmers in medieval England (Burton-Hill,2017) , but the context being gone somewhat in oblivion, and certainly, nursery children not being made aware of such details, this happy rhyme reflects the human tendency where we commodify animals with utmost ease and kind of

assert claim over them and thus find a figure of a sheep too eager to offer its wool to its human authorities, the 'Master', the 'Dame' or the 'little boy'.

Categorizing and valuing based on their utilities serving human needs and thus treating our non-human counterparts is certainly a reality. We are affectionate towards some and some we butcher or at best exploit thoroughly for certain products and utilities suiting not only our necessity rather our taste or choice as well. And thus we treat dogs or cats or parrots with care and affection, foxes, rabbits, otters or deers as game animals, zebras, bison, kangaroos, elephants, crocodiles, alligators, ostriches, lizards, and snakes for clothings ( continuing legally or even illegally ) etc., and for cows, goats, chicken or pigs our primary consideration is kind of gastronomic. We react and agonize over some of the cases of tortures against animals, and choose to ignore and keep mum over some. The reaction over the trophy hunting of 'Cecil the Lion' in Zimbabwe in 2015 created a furore all over the world, pictures of dogs and cats skinned alive and roasted, emerging during the Yulin festival in China has proved to draw major negative reactions , especially from those part of the world where these creatures are not considered delicacies or a part of the daily diet, rather cared for mostly as companions or pets , but not that much public concern and disgust over the cattles being farmed and butchered for food, and at times ritual slaughters making things the most cruel and suffering or when animals are variously experimented upon, for different medications, or even cosmetics leading to a sad gradual decay of those living entities. Some concerned individuals, sects or communities or organizations working on animal-rights certainly do try to point out the exploitations against the non-humans and to change things , but the majority choose to ignore when the exploitation or the torture meted out is working positively for some human interests, bigger or smaller, such as for supplying food, securing safety with medicines or cosmetics, or even for much larger enterprises such as to decode the mysteries of the galaxy as well. Now, this bias, this discrimination human beings display towards other animals, or prioritizing the human interests over anything, is what comes under the definition of 'speciesism'.

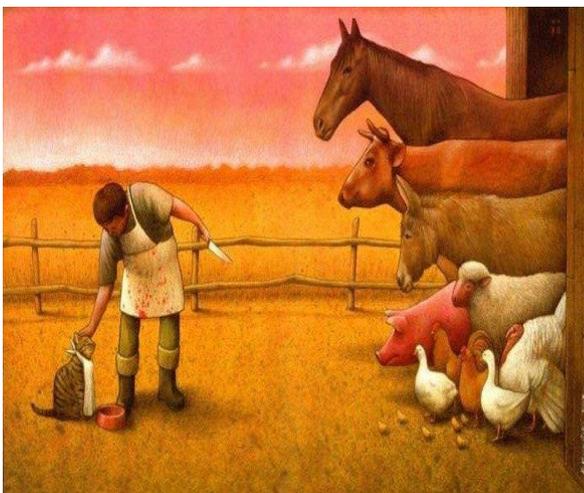


Fig. 2.- Paweł Kuczyński's depiction of what speciesism looks like

And, this is the human phenomenon where we try attaching values to each species, especially valuing how do

they, or can they contribute to the human needs. Unfortunately even in juvenile literature and nursery rhymes as well we get to see an unhealthy amount of speciecism. For example, the cat gets a comparatively privileged treatment, where she gets to play a fiddle ( "The Cat and the Fiddle"), or a visit to London to meet the queen ( " Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat" ) in certain nonsense pieces, and we see the 'lamb' as a loving little jolly girl's companion ("Mary has a little lamb"), which can at least partially be accounted to this particular animal's divine association, whereas we get chickens or cows are portrayed with much a focus on the supplies they are expected with, such as eggs or milk etc. For example, the children learn mostly about hens associated with their laying eggs, as in

Hickety, pickety, my black hen,  
She lays eggs for gentlemen,  
Gentlemen come everyday  
To see what my black hen doth lay

(pp.-261, Halliwell )

Whereas, the cat, being a pet generally, enjoys lazing in comfort

Pussy sat by the fire-side  
In a basket full of coal-dust.

(pp.-261)

Interesting is also how at times the subordinated animals stands for some other subordinated human-communities and the rhyme particular actually judges both of them on a utility-scale. Such as in :

I had a little hen,  
the prettiest ever seen,  
She washed me the dishes  
And kept the house clean;  
She went to the mill  
to fetch me some flour,  
She brought it home  
in less than an hour.  
She baked me my bread,  
She brewed me my ale;  
She sat by the fire  
and told many  
a fine  
tale.

And what is pretty obvious that the rhyme is less about 'hen' and certainly about housewives, and all the 'utilities' or duties expected of a housewife have been listed here. Though speculations suggest that 'hen' was a term of endearment for wife during the 17-th or 18-th century, the information has little to condone the utility based outlook.

Another one of those very popular rhymes, "Ding, dong, bell ", which instructs children rightly how to be kind and considerate towards animals, as did Tommy Stout by pulling out and rescuing the cat from the well , and not to harass or torture them as did Johnny Green by pushing it into well, and yet nonetheless how the cat does help in human business gets

mentioned too, as if determining its value for the human world, which emphasizes on how the pussy never 'did any harm' and helped in killing 'mice in his father's barn'. The counter argument can always points out that there's no real harm to emphasizing certain non-human animals being useful to the human world, as it certainly betters the chance to inculcate a proper attitude among people to act more considerate towards animals. But the hitch is that a complete utilitarian approach might work for a quick short term results, but in the long run, it only helps in generating and strengthening a deeply flawed anthropocentric belief-system, which will be certainly lead to a major unhealthy ecological future. Bentham in his "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation" advocate for non-human animals to be treated with due consideration and this consideration should not be determined over their capability to reason, but their sensitivity to feelings. He quoted that "The question is not can they reason? Or can they talk?", rather "Can they suffer". On a similar note, the question needs not to be if they are useful for the human-world, rather the emphasis should be on the fact of their being living entities who suffer, and can feel the pain while tortured.

A self-claimed patronising authoritarian attitude gets taught to children in "The Donkey" in Carter's publication, where we find a little narrator advising the donkey to be good and behave and obey to make sure that he is not beaten-

Then be a good Donkey, and go rather quick,  
Give me a good ride, and I'll not use a stick

(pp.-16-17)

And when children are taught this theory of 'obedience or punishment' towards animals, it not only helps developing an arrogant attitude, but as children, they feel themselves vulnerable to certain punitive measures in the adult world as well.

A direct attitude of violence against animals can be found in many a nursery rhymes as well. If the finger-play rhyme "This Little Piggy Went to the Market" only hints faintly at the pig-farms or the bacon-industry sending the pigs to the market to get slaughtered, then the violence sanctioned in "Three blind mice" is of course horrible, where a farmer's wife chasing after blind mice and cutting off their tails cannot be something to be recommended for toddlers. It might attempt to portray some real human problems and real kind of solution they adopt for as rodents are still now treated with disgust and there's a heavy market for anti-rodents products as well, and for farmers, the antipathy is for some practical (at least apparently so) reason of rodents being of course pests and damaging crops and grains, but still nothing can excuse, 'cutting tails' or, prescribing such violence for toddlers and children, which not only teach them to be rude and torturous towards animals, but insensitive and harassing towards people with any kind of physical deficiencies. Mention may be made of the venture by John. W. Ivimey, Complete Version of Ye Three Blind Mice, (1909), where he weaves a complete backstory portraying three fun-loving mice out to enjoy and rejected by humans, and ultimately scared by a cat, blinded by a 'bramble hedge' and maimed by a farmer woman, and yet ultimately giving it a

happy twist where they are revived with eyesight and new tails as well. Now, this comparatively modern version is certainly less macabre, but there's certainly not any direct antipathy towards the cruelty meted out to the rodents, and the only saving grace is perhaps that the chemist who helped them out of their miseries was a human, at least the illustration accompanying suggesting so. Another such astonishing example of catering non-sense violence to children in the garb of fun is the piece "I had a little Cow" (Halliwell,269), where the cow is pushed down a well for eating up the hay-made bell rope in a church. The rhyme "Bye, Baby bunting" is another popular rhyme and can be found in any collection of rhymes, specially the earlier ones, is another example of normalising violence against animals and catering the same to children., and here it is about normalising rabbit-hunting:

Bye, Baby Bunting,  
Father's gone a hunting,  
To fetch a little bunny skin,  
To wrap baby Bunting in. (pp.- 19, Tommy Thumb's Song-Book)

The reference of the rabbit skin being used is certainly grossly anthropocentric and ranks as the same with the negativity associated with the leather industry or fur industry, and one must agree that we can provide better wordplays and amusement to the toddlers. In the same collection one can find another rhyme "Robin and Bobbin" (PP.-29) which portrays three little boys engaged in wren hunting, which was quite the tradition then, and of course encourages its little readers to follow so, accompanied with an illustration depicting the same.

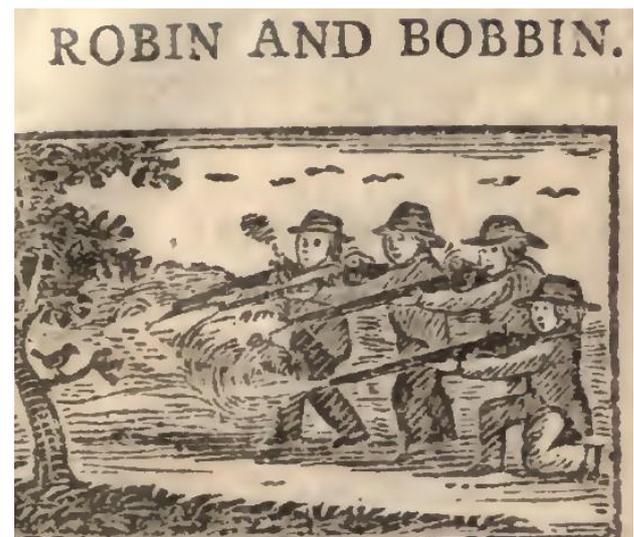


Fig.3. Little boys engaged in wren hunting, "Robin and Bobbin"

To educate children, to impart them with the basic zoological facts can also be seen in some anthologies, such as in Tommy Thumb's Song Book (1815), which is introduced as "Artificial Memory for the Infants whereby they may acquire the knowledge of Animals and some of their sounds, before they can go or speak", and starts with a series of sounds or calls of different animals, accompanied by illustrations of the same. And these animals refer to both common and domestic ones and wild ones such as dog, cat, horse, hen, monkey, fly, cuckoo, lion, parrot, owl, crow, sheep, duck, donkey, squirrel,

pig etc. Another collection *Over in the Meadow* (1906) consisting of short rhymes, though not in the conventional nonsense nursery trend, attempts initiating children to the world of meadow-animals. And along with that it tries weaving within some moral lessons, where each animal-rhyme along with a reference to the place of inhabitation of those animals, comes a mother-figure of the same as a prologue and advises on how to maintain cleanliness, how to not be too complaining, not to tell lies, to study without sulking, to be gentle etc. maintaining that the animals mentioned also follow the same, helping not much in real animal education or animal-ethics. But still reaching near conclusion it must be admitted that there are of course instances where we find nursery rhymes properly channelling a proper animal ethics within, as in:

I had a little pony  
His name was Ivory Black  
I lent him to a lady  
To ride a mile and back  
She whipped him, she lashed  
him  
She rode him through the  
mire;  
I would not lend my pony now  
For all the lady's hire.

(pp.-8, Concord)

Or, when in "Grandmamma's Book of Rhymes for the Nursery" in the piece about 'The Butterfly', try pointing out the importance of every living species in contributing to the ecological balance of the earth:

Of Insects and Reptiles no use can we see;  
Yet they have their use, or they never would be  
Allowed on this good earth to stay.

(pp.- 52)

## 2. Conclusion

The conclusion must once again emphasize that ecocriticism is certainly a business where academia and activism needs to come together and go parallel, and so is the case when we try weighing anthropocentric residues in juvenile literature or nursery rhymes, and this attitude of human-colonialism certainly needs to get purged off, of juvenile texts, print, or even any other media such as films or animations. And this endeavour needs to be a project where writers, teachers and parents also need to get conscious of any such negative and arrogant belief system in work in the texts they are providing children to develop with. it, and these may be materials which are racist, sexist, or anthropocentric, which justifies or assert any kind of bias or any kind of exploitation of the less privileged by the ones currently topping the power pyramid.. we need to prioritize that affecting the juveniles thinking pattern, the belief system with anthropocentric arrogance only makes way not only a tougher ecological future with animals facing torments, rather a bleak future where a generation grows up flawed with minimum sensitivity. Frank R. Ascione in his *Childrens and Animals: Exploring the Roots of Kindness and Cruelty* refers to how children with history of animal abuses grow up along with their habit of abusing and bullying, which becomes no more limited to merely non-humans. Anthropomorphism, surely have a place, which certainly amuses little children to find friends or a protecting figure, (as in bigger animals) in certain animal figures, and it helps in initiating little juveniles to the non-human world in a positive and gentle way, and as Vogl argues that it is less important an issue than it is made to appear. We, again, can agree that human beings perhaps haven't till now reached the desired situation where we can completely let off go using animals in human use, as the concept of 'Deep Ecology' calls for. But certainly, we can monitor that we don't assert our guilty actions of exploitations as our rights and indoctrinate our children into the same.

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