

Chapter 7¹

Child's Play for Private and Public Life

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These letters were but the vehicle for gallantry and trick. It was a child's play, chosen to conceal a deeper game...
Jane Austen (1815: 319).

From the Middle Ages forward, cultures whose political systems depend upon socio-economic and social-intellectual hierarchies have placed high value on familial possession of material ephemera. Though such an emphasis certainly does not override the valuation placed on land ownership and possession of high-cost material goods, such as jewellery, houses, or furniture, ephemera, often involving little or no cash expenditure, seem essential within socially stratified societies. Often, these ephemera systemise the habits surrounding their use into games, playful routines, and other organised leisure-time pursuits. Ball games and their physical accoutrements, as well as card and board games (and their contemporary counterparts in electronic game gadgets), amount to ephemera - continuously acquired but not taken seriously as property to be maintained and preserved.

Rarely do earlier societies leave us their ephemera, for such goods are made to be replaced; moreover, they must continuously reflect in their construction something of the styles and technological possibilities of the time of their production. Consider the changing texture of the paper used for cards of card games, as well as the shifting features of folding game boards and their storage of small items needed in their play.

The ephemera of child's play consistently compel the young to link their actions, thoughts, and deeds to narratives beyond the game or activity at hand. Most obvious are the age-old narratives re-enacted in every game: winning and losing, gaining or falling behind, separating and connecting. Every game or playful routine that goes forward does so through a mutually understood set of rules. Embedded within these rules are meta-narratives that have to do with what it means to win or lose and how the game of the moment relates to life lessons of discipline, sportsmanship, fairness, and cheating or lying. Each game re-enacts narratives of past generations; every newly created move

within the rules lines the individual up as a strong or weak player, able to bring imagination and wit to the habituated familiar. All play and games of children in societies of hierarchical economic and political arrangements encompass fundamental ideological values. These help prepare children in private for following through on the norms and practices essential in the public social fabric held together by adults as workers, family builders, bearers of political and religious ideologies, and members of the civic and cultural commons.

This chapter draws across the Johnson family materials and their interpretations offered in prior chapters to reveal some core values related to the Johnson children's transitions from the private to the public realm, from the relatively closed roles of child to the comparatively open choices of adults. Three primary features mark the materials of the play and games of the children in their transitions. Along with the rich historical evidence from the early eighteenth century, these materials tell us much about the contexts and practices surrounding their uses and values in the Johnson home.

A central feature evidenced in the materials is the imperative of linking the cognitive and the social. A second feature relates to the integration of scientific observation and mathematical understanding with language and literacy. The final characteristic demonstrates the point that verbal fluency must go hand-in-hand with attention to the visual and the dramatic. We cannot claim absolute uniqueness for either Jane's nursery library and short story or the philosophical and personal underpinnings behind her elaborate handcrafted pieces. Yet we are compelled to reflect on what they illustrate about mental processes that went into preparing the young for moving from the privacy and intimacy of the home and family to the public spheres of school and professional life in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Building the cognitive through the social

Long-term and close-up familiarity with the Johnson family materials, particularly those created by Jane for the nursery library, allows some curious juxtapositions to emerge. Much discussed in this volume have been her wit and humour, along with her deep religious devotion. She, like others of her day, did not wish the heaviness of moral instruction to cover the joy, delight, and personal rewards of a life of learning. In this

feature, Jane was no particular exception to others creating games of play related to literacy.

But, taken as a whole, Jane's body of work employs unexpected disjunctures and twists and turns. One such twist comes in her infusions of the seemingly trivial and idiosyncratic within deeply cognitive lesson-like materials. She compels children to puzzle through the simultaneities of close-up and distant, fantastic and factual, sacred and profane. Her game materials for literacy bring the children and their neighbours together with animals and angels, all in the presence of Biblical and philosophical quotations and illustrations from the Roman Empire. To be sure, in some sets, she includes only Biblical references, though selected and often paraphrased to meet a child's understanding. Within other sets, she mixes vernacular renderings of sacred scriptural messages with accounts of local events, such as country fairs and market days. She includes pictures of well-known farm animals as well as strange creatures; she portrays singing, dancing, juggling, pantomime, and harlequinades - all part of the stage effects of the life of fairgrounds and other ad hoc playing spaces of provincial theatres that spread throughout England in the early eighteenth century.² These juxtapositions and mixtures within the nursery materials would have ensured some narrative recall of direct entertainment experiences as well as laughter over details of the movements, dress, attitudes, and activities of the bawdry, haughty, and ordinary.

Attention to detail, recall of experiences, and comparison across what appeared to be samenesses as well as differences must have accompanied use of the materials. These sociocognitive behaviours surely would have been foreshadowed in Jane's mind as she created the materials. Keep alert; pay attention; say what you see; interpret illustration and text; see that life embraces the spiritual and the secular. These thought-provoking prompts lie embedded within the elements of construction, as well as within the easily accessible content of the card sets. The playful routines that attended games the Johnson children played with these sets must surely have been conversationally interactive occasions. On these occasions, the ephemera brought about not only the repeated practices that support lifelong literate habits, but also patterns of text-based and life-referenced conversation that mark adults who take their place in the civic and cultural common.

Jane's fascination with puzzles and disjunctures are often underscored through her use of visual illustrations as well as her textual challenges to children to imagine visually what they have never seen. Some illustrative materials extend meanings possibly inherent in their accompanying written texts, while others bear no discernible relationship at all to their accompanying words and sentences. Distant events, such as beheadings or hangings come along with alphabet rhymes and portrayals of quirky or unseasonable appearances in nature. Within mini-narratives of the card sets, as well as in *A Very Pretty Story*, surprising juxtapositions spring up to catch the attention and draw the young into puzzlement as well as laughter and pleasure. In this, her longest text for children, Jane ties what must have been a local spectator event in a country fair with an impossible chariot ride. She blends the real theatrical spectacles of the fair, rich in the thrills of acrobats and harlequins, with the magic of a visually rich imaginative journey to faraway places.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, combinations of spectacles stretched beyond urban areas such as Lincoln to smaller towns. The Johnson children surely witnessed markets (mentioned in several card sets Jane created) that took place in regional towns. To these markets came theatrical diversions along with dramatic performances that included intermissions of spectacular stunts, displays of strange animals, and outrageously costumed pantomime artists. Included in several sets are characters such as a female tight-rope walker (figure 18), male in Oriental costume, male playing a long flute, dancing couples, drunkards, a 'monkey-man,' and a monstrous 'strange' bird 'ugly enough to fright little Misses'.³



Figure 19. Set 21 item 6. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

Thomas Boreman's volume, *A Description of a Great Variety of Animals and Vegetables Extracted from the most considerable Writers of Natural History; and Adapted to the Use of all Capacities, especially for the Entertainment of Youth* (1736) was a supplement to an earlier volume, *A Description of Three Hundred Animals*. Along with sections on plants, fruits, and flowers, are 'four-footed beasts,' birds, fishes, and insects. But within each of these categories, certain 'strange creatures' appear. Figure 7 is of 'The Man-Tiger,' described as

a Beast that participates [sic] much of the subtle and mischievous Nature of Apes and Baboons; but much more bold and fierce. Some Writers have confidently asserted, that some of these Creatures have had the boldness to attack the Chastity of Women. (Boreman, 1736: 5)

Boreman believed, as Jane no doubt did, that such descriptions would not only 'delight and please young Persons,' but would also be 'undoubtedly [...] a fresh Motive to engage their Attention' (Boreman, 1736: np). There is good evidence that Boreman, Johnson, and others of the spectator-readers of their day also endorsed the view that materials of 'natural history' represented an 'inexhaustible Subject' and served to advance learning in ways 'vastly superior to the Tales, Fables, and Stories of Love, used in Schools' (ibid). These 'natural' materials were therefore deserving of considerable attention by parents wishing both to entertain their children and to prepare them for the leisurely pursuits that would continue to be available to them as adults.

Child's play for private and public life

Jane includes the natural and the 'odd' in card sets that also portray such mundane activities as lying down on the ground, watching robins, commenting on the coaches of the rich, and remembering street cries of the milkmaid. Thus there is a constant back-and-forth movement, compare-and-contrast, see-and-remember quality to the game sets of Jane's materials. In one set (Set 17),⁴ number 27 is of a milkmaid, while number 26 is of a linnet and thrush, and number 30 is of a peacock. In the centre of each card of this set - generally after the first two lines - is pasted one or two colour cut-outs of the central item(s) noted in the text (e.g. birds in a tree, peacock, etc.):

A linnet, and a
Thrush. Sitting in a Bush.
For three Months in the Spring, They
most sweetly do Sing. (Set 17, item 26)

Of all the fine Birds
that fly in the Air,
None can with the Peacock, for beauty
Compare. (Set 17, item 30)

Yet number 29 takes up little George Johnson's friendship with what must have been a neighbour child:

O! had I wings I would
Fly like this Dove
To Visit Miss Wrighte
Who so dearly I Love. (Set 17, item 29)

Beneath these lines is written in carefully printed letters: George Johnson. Here with her use of the deictic (or pointing) pronoun of *this*, Jane departs from her usual pattern of third person pronouns (such as *they*) to point to details of her illustrations. Furthermore, on this card, she adds George's full name to ensure that the 'I' of the quoted wish is clearly identified.

Along with such innocent and light-hearted friendship hopes of young children come some reminders of behaviours and characters not generally included in polite conversation. As was customary in other materials for children of the early eighteenth century, some of Jane's game sets do not sidestep the matter of defecation, body parts, unseemly sexual behaviours and characters, and cruelty to animals and

children. One item of a vocabulary-development set leads off with 'breast' and ends with 'guts'. A set of rhyming sounds includes 'shit,' while another lists 'slut'. Within one set, a hungry eagle carries off a child in a cradle, and the cries and screams of the child were 'in vain, For his Life, was soon ended' (Set 16, item 1).



Figure 20. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

These juxtapositions and contrasts, based on both the seen and unseen of everyday hopes and fears, signal Jane's own approach to taking care that her materials would give good exercise to the inquiring minds of her children. In Robert's journal, as well as Barbara's letters, we have ample evidence that the giggles, slight taunts, joys of entertainment, and habits of inquiry stayed with Jane's children into their adulthood. Barbara's letters as an adult indicate that she longs to know more of the foreign places to which George travels. Robert, George, and Barbara seek out books that will bring them news from afar, familiarity with the strange, and materials for deeper reflection and meditation, and even challenges to their customary ways of seeing the world.

Science and mathematics in the everyday world

Materials printed for children in the eighteenth century often urge the young to observe and know the 'natural world' through taking note of features that appear in the here-and-now and often for functional purposes. Yet the young must also be prepared to see these features within abstract shapes. Jane's eye for design reflects this dual

understanding. Moreover, many of her card sets illustrate a sense that core activities of the world of science - typologising, identifying, and describing - must be habituated from an early age. She juggles triangles, squares, and their arrangements in several mobiles, making these arrangements sure prompts for counting as well as discriminating shapes, sizes, and their possible re-arrangements. She lays out lists whose items are bound by common features; she sets out definitions and identifications, illustrating the underlying grammatical principles of these core scientific practices through reference to everyday people, places, and objects known from the children's experiences and observations.

Within many of the sets, she reflects in her designs a perception of the simultaneity of the abstract and the concrete. A box is a box with many functional purposes, but it also may be a square that will, as a result of its physical features and measurements, rest in a parallel line against only objects that have at least one straight edge. Rotation of the square for parallel alignment is possible only when another object has at least one corner with a 90-degree angle. The mobiles Jane created illustrate such abstract notions of the arrangement of geometric forms, and the tiny box created to hold one set of cards each no larger than a fingernail and more than seventy in number is an almost perfect square that holds tiny rectangular bits within. Jane thus created materials that would have allowed her to illustrate through manipulation principles of alignment, size comparability, and commonalities across figures her children would later come to know in their studies of mathematics.

This sense of get-ready-for-later-learning-challenges comes as well in the fact that Jane's materials indicate to the young that curiosity about the natural world will lead to a desire to read not only more widely but also more deeply. The other value of 'natural history' and its links to the sciences and mathematics comes in the fact that core scientific principles are played out in the everyday and the common. One such principle (co-occurrence) appears in her numerous recountings of events and animals that appear in certain seasons of the year, especially Spring. She often illustrates cause-and-effect 'laws' at work in the world of nature. And she does so in her mini-narratives on the

behaviour of children as well. Consider the following rhyme:

A Boy and a Girl did
eat Sugar and Plumbs
Till they made their teeth
ake, and fall from their gums;
And then they could eat,
no-thing but bread crumbs.
(Set 18, item 1)



Figure 21. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

Certainly, many of these 'mini-lessons' also illustrate ways in which nature and natural events demonstrate not only the cause-and-effect principles of sciences and mathematics, but also the power of God and the resulting call to observers and readers to honour God for his 'works of perfection' (see the introductory materials to Boreman, 1736, for expression of these values). Jane's card sets were no exception to this idea, but once again, she adds to the power of 'natural history' the narrative appeal of personal history.

As noted earlier, she designs her materials in ways that call upon the children to be alert to the abstractions reflected in the everyday order of things. Furniture, houses, beasts and birds, foods and tools - either as wholes or in parts - reflect morphology and invite categorisation. For

example, one page of the little book created for George confines itself to food and items used in setting a table: plate, dish, fork, knife, spoon, salt, meat, beef, veal, mutton, lamb, pork, bread, cheese, pudding, table, cloth, mug, cup, glass, wine. These are not random, however, for they suggest an order or sequence to their use in setting a table and taking part in a meal.

One set of twelve cards (Set 19) includes only definitions or identifications. These open the learner to understanding that one way of organising the world is to compile lists of items arranged according to their core or most defining features. For example, one such list of Jane's is of objects or items that are inanimate and have been constructed (for example, plates, glasses, bread, pudding); another is of items derived from natural or formerly animate matter (for example, meat, beef, or veal). Yet another way of managing items in the world is to offer definitions or identifications that lead to categorisation. All of Jane's cards that are definitions offer a single noun (common or proper), followed by a comma, and a definition. For example, 'A Bustard, a great sluggish Fowl that is good to eat' (Set 19, item 1). On this card, the definition appears on the front, and on the reverse is a coloured picture of a bird that could only loosely be construed as a 'bustard'.

Jane's items constructed as identifications open with the person or event (often a proper noun) to be identified; this naming is then followed by a comma and descriptive material. For example, one member of this set offers the following identification: 'Lady Margaret Mordaunt, Daughter to the Earl of Peter-Borow, in a Red Lustring [sic. intended to be Lutestring] Coat' (Set 19, item 2). Here again, Jane is not insistent that the picture on the reverse side of the card reflect precisely the detail of the identifying description; the picture accompanying Lady Mordaunt's identification is of a woman in a pink ballgown, but she wears no coat. Yet another such identification is of 'Miss Cherry Lily, dress'd in a blue Sattin Coat; walking with a Fan in her hand, to Church' (Set 19, item 5). The accompanying tiny picture is of a woman dressed in blue carrying a fan in her hand, but she wears no coat.



Figure 22. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

Jane's descriptions include not only proper nouns, but also everyday items. However, all of these named in this set are specifically contextualised in spaces and often with people the children must have known. For example, the following three cards are included:

A Tulip, and a Sun-
Flower; that grew in the Dutchess of Ken-
dal's Garden, at Hickling in Nor-folk.
[pictured on the reverse are two flowers, a tulip and small sunflower]
(Set 19 item 11)

Two very pretty
Chickens, in an Or-
chard, of Thomas
Pelham's Duke of
Newcastle at Farn
in Northumberland.
[pictured on the reverse are two chickens, one yellow, one grey]
(Set 19, item 12)

One card is highly local and must have referred to a garden the children saw on their family trips to Lincoln: 'A Rabbet, and an Ash tree, in Dunnington Warren in Lincolnshire' (Set 19, item 9). Others refer to common animals, such as a cow or deer, and their identification places these in relation to named individuals as well as geographic locations. Advancing achievement in mathematics and sciences has always depended upon a learner's facility in both recognition and production

of definitions and identifications. Innocent as Jane's writings appear, their design reveals an underlying systematicity that cannot be overlooked.

Jane returns again and again in the sets of her materials to the need to draw the attention of her children to ordering members of a class or set, perceiving cause and effect, and discriminating among phenomena that might, on the surface, appear to look alike. She arranges animals into groups of the familiar and the fantastic, offering different types of descriptions of each, drawing in the first case on what the children already knew and in the second on their need to have metaphors to create images of creatures they have never seen. Lists of insects include only pests and familiar animals of the household, rather than the usual alphabetical compulsion used by other authors of her day to include both the exotic and familiar in such lists.

When she writes of birds, she goes repeatedly to her local favourites - the robin, linnet, thrush, and hawk, but she illustrates their individual characteristics of appearance as well as their different capabilities. She directly and indirectly encourages her children to observe birds and animals in relation to their lives at different seasons of the year. In 1747, Jane composed the ballad inviting Barbara back from London to enjoy the countryside in early May, filled with nature's abundance of Spring. She writes:

The Gold Finch, Linnet, and the Thrush
Now charm our ears from every Brush:
The shrill larks soaring to the sky,
Most sweetly singing as they fly.
The nightingale with tuneful song,
Enchanting Warbles all night long.⁵

This level of detail and description mark many of the genres she produced, inciting the children to connect activities of animals and birds with seasons and specific locations. Bits of geography, local farm life, and seasonal rituals mingle in the natural history of Jane's materials with the far more abstract tasks of learning classification systems and grasping the relationship of parts to the whole in the morphology of the human anatomy.

The Verbal, visual, and dramatic

The variety of verbal means taken up in the sets of cards that Jane created offers several contrasts with the uses of language in other children's materials of her day. The list of genres reflected in her extant writings include: aphorisms, maxims, fable, short story, street cries, retelling of children's antics and familiar events, action-scripted conversational observations, moral summative statements, Biblical quotations and paraphrases of verses, as well as personal letters, letters of complaint, and, of course, her commonplace book (see earlier chapters for more detail on each of these genres). To be sure, many of these genres incorporate language in ways familiar also in the writings of her contemporaries. However, the full corpus of her texts reveals some differences that show her persistent tendency to push boundaries beyond the given from other texts written for children that she must have been reading and consulting.

Most evident is her use of complexly constructed sentences that include everyday material and direct quotations of speech. One way of thinking about her approach to syntax or combinations of ideas in grammatical form is to imagine this mother's action-scripted conversation with one or more of her children during walks through the nearby countryside or in household chores.⁶ One set in particular (Set 16) touches on the descriptive or the identificational features noted above, but the cards of this set include syntactically complex sentences that combine utterances that Jane might have said to any one of her children. For example, one card notes on the front the following sentence: 'Roger Bowyer, with a Sheep that has its Legs tied together, hanging over his arm; he is going to sell it, at Colebrook Market, and as he walks along, he hears the Cuckoo Sing, which makes him lift up his hand in great surprise, it being in the month of March' (Set 16, item 5). The picture on the back of the card is of a man who carries a sheep over his arm.



Figure 23. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

Though this card begins with an identification, the next portion is explanatory of the action (walking to market to sell an animal) and also of an expression of emotion (surprise at the early sign of spring). One can hear an adult answering the question of a child 'why is he carrying the sheep?' with the response 'He is going to sell it at Colebrook Market'. The child responds: 'why is he holding his hand up like that?' The adult answers 'I think he must be surprised to hear a cuckoo sing so early in the spring'. Yet the combination of this string of oral utterances into a single highly literate written sentence brings about a highly descriptive and syntactically complex description. Note that this is a narrative, for it moves action and character forward in time, but it is also an example of description in *literate* style embedded in a very simple short recount.

She often inserts a conversational interactive framework within her alphabet-patterned collections, but sometimes these are of ordinary talk and at other times of literary formal writers. After a string of observations or descriptions, she will insert a highly formal and literary line, such as 'D was a Drawer, Pray, Sir, do you call?' (Set 5, item 2).

One set of cards in particular (Set 18) lends itself to interpretation of her mixture of styles and referents of language. This set includes nine items. The cards are made of white paper, doubled with Dutch gilt paper backing, often with narrow strips of the richly coloured Dutch

gilt paper also encasing the large central black and white etching, which is usually of a single figure. Lists of vocabulary items are placed along the sides and sometimes at the bottom. Some are more ornate than others and include verses at the top and bottom with the Dutch paper frame going out at each corner to a pasted corner brace made of the same type of paper. A set of green threads attached at the top indicates the cards were made for hanging. Several of these sets can be read as containing internal ironies, but one is particularly notable. The central verse reads:

There was an old Sow, and she had but one Pig;
And one day she gave her some grapes and a fig
And the next day she gave her some good milk and whey

[central picture is of a book with the inscription in Latin: *DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA* (The lord is my Light)]

And did Dress her with Flower all over gay
Then bid her take care and keep out of the dirt
For her ears she would box if she should prove a slut. (Set 18, item 6)



Figure 24. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

The list of words that runs along one side include: King, Queen, Prince Duke, Lord, and on the other: Sir, Miss, Madam, Lady, Master. Though inferring motive for such juxtapositions must be done cautiously, it is difficult to believe that given the extraordinary care that Jane used in the construction of so many items of her nursery library, she was unaware of the ironic combination of characters and actions in the verse and word lists on this card and others of this set. All have an

undertone of irreverence about them, with several picturing harlequins, circus-like figures, and entertainers. One of these includes the central illustration of a figure dancing with a battledore in the right hand; the figure is in front of what appears to be large public buildings in the background. Yet another pictures a man with a basket dancing in the street also in front of a public official building. It may simply be that these illustrations were Jane's way of indicating that the public stage in the provinces was indeed just that: highly public and open to ad hoc performances.

One of the cards of this set contains a verse that echoes the language of earlier sets in that it is a reminder to the children that the scene captured in the verse is familiar to them. Here the message may be that the animals manage their needs in complementary distribution and perhaps in a more harmonious manner than do humans.

A Horse, and Mare,
a Buck, and a Doe,
Did all live in a park
And so did a Crow;
The Crow eat the worms
the rest eat the grass.
It was not far off
where this came to pass. (Set 18, item 3)

A tone of irreverence and jabs at the foibles of humans, even those in high places, also characterised other materials written for children during the period in which Jane was composing her nursery library. But these other materials consistently make fun of those distant from the young learner and not next door, on the way to market, or down the road.⁷ Her verses hit the high and the low. She calls attention to the dishonesty of the miller near the end of town, the slow pace of the cobbler at work, and the hunter who accidentally shoots his dog. She also points out the false pride and illicit passions of those of lineage and wealth.

Beyond her conversational tone in language that is by no means simplified for child listeners is her presentation of both current 'standardised' prestige forms of English and well-known regional and common forms. Here she once again shows juxtaposition - both conservation and innovation - in her literacy instruction.

Writing and its transmission through literacy acquisition are often considered as means of conserving, transmitting, and enforcing 'standard' or prestige language varieties. In Jane's case, she played the gamut from the most 'bookish' to the most colloquial. The predominant discourse and style features of published works for children of the period include, along with word lists, sing-song combinations of lines, Biblical quotations, or short moral tales. Though these features also appear in Jane's corpus, other portions indicate Jane's adoption of ordinary conversational segments (such as 'The Eagle flies high, but can't touch the sky' or 'A duck and a drake jump into the water, and all the young ducks did paddle in after' - from Set 17) along with lexical items that are highly regional and border on the archaic. Yet, unlike other nursery materials of her time, Jane's materials rarely include words such as *thou*, *shalt*, *thee*, or abbreviated literary forms, such as *where'e'er* or *go'st*, sure to pull children's sense of language away from ordinary conversational language within their own families. She sometimes directly quotes Biblical texts, but she also often paraphrases these, often in connection with an illustration from everyday life (see also Chapter 4).

Attention to word patterns comes through in the arrangements of items in several series. Within even the most boring bits of the English language, such as function words (prepositions, pronouns, articles, and the like), Jane manages to introduce intrigue and humour. Son George finds his name embedded within such a list: *from, most, must, take, wick, wild, which, George, good, thought, Strength, lip* (Set 17). The boy was most certainly called on to create with some of these words a short recounting of at least one of his antics. For the above list of vocabulary items, we can imagine young George creating a sentence in which he is the young actor, jumping *from* the bank in a *most wild* manner, causing his dear mother to *take* all her *Strength* to recover him (see Barbara's account of this event in Chapter 1).

Alongside her switches within the materials that help ensure attention to verbal shifts in style and conventions, Jane's cards and letters to her children also indicate her insistence on their visual attentiveness. The aesthetic qualities of the nursery library stand out as the most obvious evidence on this point. However, numerous other aspects of her work underscore her sense of not only the visual supports to the written word

that come through illustrations, but also the need for 'reading' illustrations or having visual literacy. The latter relates directly to the conversational nature of many of her card sets, for the illustrations provoke conversations of interpretation that depend on seeing and linking details within the art as well as tying the entire visual illustration to the written words on the single card within the set.

Jane's writings, especially her card sets, open her perspective on children as performers in like households of the English countryside. Though filled with reminders about behavioural strictures of polite society and 'good boys and girls' (as well as 'proper' men and women), the card sets (and Jane's story) let us know some of the ways in which the Johnson children most frequently misbehaved. Lying, showing disrespect, and displaying pride and selfishness appear most frequently in her little lessons and admonitions. The downfall of the fated child in Jane's story centres around lying and selfishness, falsehood and greed, and her admonitions against lying run the gamut from parental disapproval to 'Hell's Torments'.

Noted throughout earlier chapters of this volume has been Jane's care to include within her materials references to both the wealthy and the poor. However, within her materials, and often through cards that portray either the rich or the poor, Jane also inserts in quite distinctive genres certain sub-texts that must reflect other levels of awareness she wished to pass on to her children. Primary among these is her care to reference women (and tradesmen) in their work. Tasks and obligations range from begging for one's children (illustrated in a street cry: 'Give some Bread to my Children I beg and I pray Or they will be starved having had none to day') to stopping fights in public places. Often within these cards, her sub-texts are layered. For example, in the beggar's street cry, the illustration is composed of two separate pasted cut-out pictures, one of a woman richly clothed responding in a haughty manner to a separate but facing illustration of a poorly dressed woman with two children by her side reaching out toward the woman of wealth (Set 17, item 15). Her unspoken commentary through her selection of illustrations points to the needs of wealthy women as well as those of poverty. Jane seems to be 'saying' in her illustrations: see the evidence of attitude, mental state, background, and need of these individuals.

Jane points out numerous 'occupations' of women - some vocational as well as avocational, and the roles or functions that women serve in maintaining a quality of character within the society. One card (within Set 17) includes the statement: 'How wicked these men are to Quarrel and Fight: They surely forget that they are in God's sight' (Set 17, item 19). The illustration is of a woman trying to stop a fight between two men. Living in respect for and obedience to God falls to women often in Jane's verses and illustrations. One card, for example, states: 'They that fear the Lord will obey his word [sic. for *word* must have been intended here], and they that love him will keep his Laws' (Set 15, item 3). The illustration is of a woman standing by a tree and staring into the distance. Other verses of this type, such as those reminding readers to 'love the Lord' or acknowledge all wisdom from Him, come in association with illustrations only of women. To be sure, some illustrations are of males, but most often those asserting goodness come with portrayals of women, and often with women attempting to halt or call attention to the misdeeds of men.

Jane also seemed eager to point out the hard labour that many women had to endure. One set of cards (Set 17) includes several cards devoted to the occupations of women (as well as tradesmen) and their diligent work. One reads:

At a house by a Gate,
Did live without state
A little old woman
and man.

[central illustration of a woman and a man, each with a garden tool,
pictured on a background farm scene]

They did work for
their bread, And were
very well fed, and the
old woman's name, it
was Nan. (Set 17, item2)

Another card in this set illustrates again Jane's contempt for wealthy

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women who appear to disdain those in need or who must work hard.

Good Girl make
haste and have
done with your broom

[pasted in the centre are two separate pictures; one is of a girl with a broom, and the other is of a mistress clad in rich-looking garments and bearing a haughty manner]

Of all things I hate
such a dust in the
Room. (Set 17, item 16)



Figure 25. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

Street cries appear in contemporary materials for children of Jane's time, but once again, her personal concerns and interests are reflected in her patterned selection of these. All her women provide the most sustaining of foods - milk and fruit - for their buyers (for discussion of street cries in children's literature, see Gumuchian, 1941). One card pictures a woman with two large milk pails, each at the end of a bar

laid across her shoulders; the woman cries out:

Maids will you
buy any Milk, will
you have some or
no, Unless you
come quickly, away
I must go. (Set 17, item 27)

Another is of a woman with a cart of oranges, issuing the familiar cry of 'Two for a penny, Oranges, all sound and sweet; come try them and buy them of me in the street' (Set 17, item 41).



Figure 26. Courtesy of the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana.

Language always works as a primary force to indicate not only our intended meanings, but our unspoken and unrealised subtexts as well. Jane's materials reflect this truism in many ways. Pious, observant, dedicated mother and wife, as she must surely have been, she had views and talents of her own that she chose to insert judiciously and discretely into a set of literacy materials that appear to parallel many other literacy materials of her day. Yet by reading closely and comparatively across this rich set of Jane's ephemera, we learn more than she might think we as distant outsiders could possibly know of

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how her mind worked and what her aspirations were for the types of adults she wished her children to become.

So what?

At the end of any process of historical research, arduously and painstakingly carried out, often over thousands of miles and through piles of correspondence, the ultimate question of 'so what?' has to be asked. Those 'possessed' in the process of historical inquiry understand perfectly well why the pursuit of bringing 'back to life' an historical figure, period, or item can occupy scholars for years. Others never caught up in such pursuits may, however, deserve some explanation of what the stories of Jane, her children, and their writing, reading, and playing with ephemera mean.

The British novelist, A S Byatt, explained the beginning of the prize-winning 1990 novel, *Possession*, in a way that sums up the intent of all historians and, most certainly, of those involved in bringing Jane's tale together. Byatt recounted the naming of her novel and its core purpose as follows:

The beginning of *Possession*, and the first choice, was most unusually for me, the title. I thought of it in the British Library, watching that great Coleridge scholar, Kathleen Cobun, circumambulating the catalogue. I thought: she has given all her life to his thoughts, and then I thought: she has mediated his thoughts to me. And then I thought 'Does he possess her, or does she possess him? There could be a novel called *Possession about the relations between living and dead minds*'. (emphasis not in the original; Byatt, 1990).

It is just this relationship - that of minds across the years engaged in similar activities with surprisingly common materials and mean - that explains 'possession' by an historical figure and his or her time. For in no search of an individual's history can a scholar avoid being drawn also into the social and cultural activities of the period.

In the case of all ephemera, and especially for children's toys, games, and literacy-related artefacts, it may seem strange to assert that their makers create them, and their users take them up 'to conceal a deeper game'. However, it is in the very nature of all play, and most markedly within literacy supports in play, that these ephemera are about much

more than their surface appeal. No strategy of a children's book illustrator is without purpose, and authors of works for children know that their greatest strength is in the ambiguities of their language and pictures, allowing imagination to take their readers to a host of possible interpretations. Children outstrip most adults in their powers to fantasise, parody, and riddle in wild and unpredictable directions. It is precisely their engagement in play that fuels the imaginations of the young.

This idea and others that became prominent in child development, school reform, and literacy studies in the twentieth century appear evident throughout the nursery library of Jane. In many ways, Jane's nursery library reflects theories of learning that came to prominence only in the twentieth century. Yet the core of most of these ideas lies within the writings of John Locke and some of his contemporaries. For example, she demonstrates the cognitive underpinnings of 'the educated mind' proposed throughout the 1980s by Kieran Egan, Canadian scholar (see especially Egan, 1997). He asserts the importance of bodily understanding, the drawing in of information and skills to one's own person. He further argues the power of what he terms the 'mythic,' or that which includes opposites, parody, metaphor, and rhyme. And, like Jane, he pushes for the 'romantic,' that which links the exotic and heroic across contexts and persons. He also does not leave aside the philosophical or the principle-driven understandings of the tenets by which cause and effect, change, contradictions, and separations of facts and truth govern our world. Finally, he proposes for the 'educated mind' engagement with the 'ironic,' surely a quality embraced in Jane's work.

Certain 'truths,' 'discoveries,' or 'theories' (note that educators use all these terms and often to refer to the same concepts) seem to have to be discovered and rediscovered. Such truths have to be newly announced and claimed every few decades. Such is the case for much within the socio-historical work of Lev Vygotsky and his teachers as well as his followers. The case is the same for imagination, creativity, and experiential learning, as well as many other ideas in education that became 'current' in recent decades. John Dewey, Howard Gardner, David Perkins, and proponents of the Reggio Emilia approach would all understand that what appear to be redundancies across centuries are in fact good evidence of the sustained importance to human beings of

the learning of the young and the role that adults can and must play in promoting this learning in the best possible ways. These scholars would also know that their urgings repeat time-worn arguments surrounding how 'best' to make the learning that occurs beyond school more pleasurable and intimate than that within school can generally be (cf. Boreman, 1736). All such arguments rest in large part on the obvious need to take into account motivation, and investment in role engagement for the young learner.

Less well-known and certainly less 'current' than those ideas about education noted above is one other that is evident within Jane's work and that of the most celebrated authors and illustrators of children's literature. That is the power of role and performance combined. And here it is necessary to make what may seem a divergence to note a particular contextual feature of the time in which Jane and her children, Robert and Barbara, were writing - the linkage of stage and page, of the visual and the verbal of public performance spaces. This contextual feature surely figured strongly in the background of the creative artistic work of Jane and in her uses of the materials with her children.

Throughout Jane's materials are both direct and indirect references to eighteenth-century 'readerly theatre' (Fishman, 2005). Moveable scenery entered the public stage only in the second half of the seventeenth century. From that point on, stage effects and complements to the mainpiece plays spread throughout the provinces from the British playhouses in London. For a five-act play, the occasions between scenes and even after the main play allowed for all sorts of new characters (see, for example, Bevis, 1970). These newcomers were just that - *characters* often in the sense of caricatures and not real persons playing the parts of real people whose speeches had been scripted. These entertainers were jugglers, pantomimists, dancers, singers, and harlequins, and contortionists. Plays became the vehicles of 'gallantry and trick' - both highly entertaining.

On stage, during the mainpiece plays, actors took on new forms of silent expression. All these innovations moved away from the auditory entertainment orientation of the early modern stage. Audiences were no longer mere listeners, but they were pulled toward the role of spectator-reader. The facial, gestural, emotive expressions, and person-centred role interpretations of characters had to be 'read' rather than heard.

Long scenes in which an actor said little or nothing often centred in that actor and depended on the fact that onlookers would 'read' his intentions, motives, and backgrounds of actions (for more on this phenomenon, particularly through pantomime, see Sawyer, 1990). Pantomime depended on visual elements that had to be 'read' in an actor's body for a performance to be interpreted in the context of the ongoing script realised only partly in the words of other actors. Moreover, with pantomime and greater focus on indications of motive and intention through gesture and facial expression, actors had to attend to one another on the stage, creating what came later to be called 'the fourth wall' between the stage and the audience/onlookers.⁸

Perhaps best known among actors who forced viewers to read this form of acting was David Garrick, known to Robert and Barbara Johnson, no doubt, not only through his prominence in the theatre, but also as a member of the Bath group of 'poets' (see chapter 6). Before Garrick was Charles Macklin, who made his debut in 1741 and, unlike Garrick, travelled widely to regional playhouses with troupes of travelling players before taking to London stages. It was as a pantomimist that Macklin began his career (Appleton, 1960). He and others who relied on mime enjoyed the support of scenery that attended provincial public stages, including makeshift performance spaces in country markets and on fairgrounds. All these together supported onlookers in being entertained as well as in gleaning the drama's narrative through what they could see rather than through the words they surely could not hear in such public spaces.

The 'so what?' of the stories of Jane and her family has then many answers. Foremost among these is the endurance of play and 'the play of it all' in certain basic human interactions that young and old alike enjoy. Jane's placement of her illustrations - character facing character, each precisely cut from two different sources so as to illustrate the narrative behind the card's intention - imitate what she saw on the public stage in actors' and entertainers' uses of their bodily postures, facial expressions, and backdrops to tell the stories. Moreover, many of Jane's illustrations are themselves of the strolling players and the assorted entertainers who accompanied them: acrobats, dancers, musicians, etc. In many of her cards, Jane takes her cue from the mix of the between-acts and after-play characters along with the core narrative of the mainpiece play. Entities within this mix need not be all

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of a central theme or even related in their purpose; each has its entertainment 'to delight' value. It is also telling that the rewards for virtue in the 'Castle of Pleasure and Delights' in Jane's *A Very Pretty Story*, include watching puppet-shows and plays.

In some ways, Jane also creates her children as part of a 'home stage' and the dramas of that place. They perform, play roles, and act against backdrops within her cards. No doubt, the games and play that went along with the uses of the cards called further on the performative abilities of the children.

Authenticity, reality, and rigor need their mediations, as does the learning of skills and subjects that have marked academic pursuits for centuries. Reading, writing, classifying, observing, and reflecting in pursuit of understanding mathematics, botany, zoology, philosophy, and theology: central to all of these is finding one's way into and through the 'lessons' of both play and school. Jane reminded her children thusly in the familiar verse:

This is Jack Woodhouse
a Riding to School,
To Play with the
Boys, and Learn
Latin by Rule. (Set 17, item 37)

Jane links wonder and play with dogged persistence. Her writings echo the sentiment she enters in the couplet 'Reasons, whole pleasures, all the joys of sense, lie in 3 words - health, peace, competence'. Along with these, she adds imagination and empathy, qualities essential to sustaining a vitality in and for life that carries one from the private to the public, from childhood to adulthood, from child's play to the 'deeper game' of growing up.

Notes

1. This chapter was completed while the author was a Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, LaTrobe University, Melbourne, Australia, August-October, 2005. The author acknowledges the Institute with gratitude for its commitment to scholarship and recognition of the need for seclusion to speed the conclusion of projects. Immeasurable appreciation goes also to Jen Fishman, Department of English, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for her help in tracking down possible sources for

- the entertainment references and illustrations used by Jane Johnson and in providing her expertise in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drama in a substantial way throughout this chapter.
2. Records of the activities of strolling players, including scenery that accompanied them, are extensive for some areas of the provinces. See chapter 3, footnote 21, of Fishman (2004) and Rosenfeld (1939).
 3. Points made throughout this chapter, and especially in the final section, illustrate Jane Johnson's awareness of the array of public entertainments increasingly popular throughout the eighteenth century. Many of these included the scatological. Some of these caricatures may have been based on actual figures, but their 'performers' and 'performances' endured. Jane's illustration of a monkey man defecating and her mention of this character provide an example of her inclusion of elements of such public characters in her nursery library. Both Francis Coventry and Oliver Goldsmith have characters called Monkeyman. In Coventry's *The History of Pompey the Little: or, The Life and Adventures of a Lap-Dog*, the Count explains, 'I am obliged to call on lord Monkeyman, who desires my opinion on some pictures he is going to buy' (1751: 194). In Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World; or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London, to his Friends in the East* (London, 1762), a fictional Englishwoman writes to a fictional woman correspondent from the east, describing a colonel thus: 'As I live, my dear Charlotte, I believe the colonel will carry it at last; he is a most irresistible fellow, that's that. So well dress'd, so neat, so sprightly, and plays about one so agreeably, that I vow, he has as much spirits as the marquis of Monkeyman's Italian greyhound' (p165). The woman is describing a man, indicating that the 'marquis of Monkeyman' may have been a colloquial reference to men who exhibited certain kinds of behaviours. In Colley Cibber and Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Husband*, a character identified as 'Mask' names some of the men to be found at the masquerade, and his list includes 'Sir Powder Peacock,' 'Beau Frightful,' and 'the marquis of Monkey-man' (London, 1728: 92). There is also a reference to the 'monkey-man' in a book of entertainment entitled *The Juvenile Roscius: or, Spouter's Amusement. Being a Collection of Original Prologues, Epilogues, ... Imitations* (London, 1770). There, in a 'Prologue in the Character of a Reforming Constable,' the monkey-man appears 'bedaub'd with lace,' and he is possessed of 'mincing step' and 'round unmeaning face'. He appears to be a French fop, and the scatological overtone (*bedaub'd* recalls Swift and characters covered in shit). See also footnote 34 in Chapter 3.
 4. All references to lesson cards, sets and numbers are from the Manuscript Nursery Library, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
 5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Don.c.190 fol 1.

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6. See McCarthy (1999) on Anna Barbauld and conversation and the work of Michèle Cohen on the relationship between domestic education, conversation and the construction of the dramatic from the page.
7. See, for example, primers that contained rhymes such as 'C was a Captain all cover'd with Lace, D was a Drunkard, and had a red Face, J was a Joiner, and built up a House, K was a King and governed a Mouse...' quoted in Gumuchian (1941: 341).
8. Though the term 'the fourth wall' did not come into use until the beginning of the nineteenth century, its scenic elements as well as shifts from the auditory to the spectacular of the stage began at the end of the seventeenth century, see Hunt (1807). See especially Stephens (1998) and Fishman (2004) on the history of the competition of the visual and verbal, the image and the word.