Children's Folklore

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This book began when the late Sue Samuelson, my first teaching assistant in 1977 for the children's folklore course at the University of Pennsylvania, told me that it would not be possible to do a thesis in children's folklore because there was absolutely no interest in children either at the American Folklore Society (AFS) or in the Folklore Department at the university. Whatever the truth of her indictment, it led me to approach Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Tom Burns (also of that department) with the proposal that we begin a Children's Folklore Society within AFS. And we did just that. The society continues with admirable autonomy, now issuing its own journal, *Children's Folklore Review*, under the editorship of C.W. Sullivan III.

The idea for the second phase, which became the present work, emerged one evening in 1980 at the annual Folklore Meeting. Jay Mechling, Tom Johnson, and I decided that the next step in assisting children's folklore to academic credibility would be the development of a handbook for course use. It took about five years to find the authors and get the first outlines of the present work on the table. For the next five years I used the outline as a text in my children's folklore course and benefited immeasurably from the student critiques of it. During those ten years the manuscript wandered in and out of the University of Pennsylvania Press and the Smithsonian Press, finally coming to rest at Garland Publishing, owing to the zest of Garland editor Marie Ellen Larcada. From 1990 to the present, we all suffered the vicissitudes of trying to get all this material into the computer.

Ultimately we were saved by Felicia R. McMahon of Syracuse University, who undertook the prodigious work of scholarly editorship to bring the work to fruition—as well as to add materials from her own research. Along the way it was decided that our work was not comprehensive enough to be a handbook, but that it was a step in that direction and a useful first sourcebook. Her efforts were aided greatly by the assistance of Dr. Nancy
Shawcross of the University of Pennsylvania and Professor Susan Wadley of Syracuse University.

For my part, all of this was originally made possible because Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett had once suggested that a course I had taught for ten years at Teachers College, Columbia University, which I entitled "The Psychology of Childlore," be called "Children's Folklore" and brought to the University of Pennsylvania. I did that for a year and then joined the University of Pennsylvania with appointments in both education and folklore, a move made possible by the support of Kenneth Goldstein and Henry Glassie of the Folklore Department and Dell Hymes and Erling Boe of the Education School. I owe to all these people—and particularly to Barbara—a distinct debt of gratitude for the good life I've found and the interdisciplinary flavor that became possible in my scholarship after that career change.

Brian Sutton-Smith
CHILDREN’S FOLKLORE