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 **Prickles Under the Frock**

Seth Sicroff

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Prickles Under the Frock

Seth Sicroff (bio)

Beatrix Potter's prose style bears a resemblance to Mrs. Tigglywinkle's plain print frock; underneath the deceptively simple dress there are prickles. The apparently simple, guileless point of view of the narrator is

betrayed by an understated humor which depends on the complications of word games and the interplay between details of text and illustration. The premise of anthropomorphism is not accepted and ignored, but continually recalled to mind by sly references and incongruities. To see the importance of the deliberately bland and aphoristic sentence structure, one need only compare the taut understatement of Potter's "your Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor" with the wordy French translation: "Un accident affreux arriva a votre pauvre père dans ce maudit jardin. Il fut attrapé et mis en pâté par Madame McGregor." In this case, less is more.

Beatrix Potter has a feel for unusual words, which glow "with a hard and gem-like flame" against the backdrop of deliberate simplicity. In most of the books, there are one or two of these elegant words: Tommy Brock snored "apoplectically" in The Tale of Mr. Tod, and in The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies, the effect of the lettuce is very "soporific"¹ In these passages, the word draws attention to an important idea. The soporific effect of eating lettuce is responsible for the rabbits' capture; Tommy Brock's deceptively apoplectic appearance encouraged Mr. Tod to risk setting the booby trap. In most cases, these incongruously elegant words are used in such a way as to emphasize the incongruity of the characterization. Jemima's high aspirations move her to complain of the "superfluous hen." The technical language in Ginger and Pickles suggests the awesome complexity of the problems besetting the dog and the cat: "Send in all the bills again to everybody, 'with compts', replied Ginger."

Potter indulges in a number of little games which remind the reader of the ambiguous position of her inventions, between man and beast. An important trick is juxtaposition, as in Mr. Tod:

Mr. Tod was coming up Bull Banks, and he was in the very worst of tempers. First he had been upset by breaking the plate. It was his own fault; but it was a china plate, the last of the dinner service that had belonged to his grandmother, old Vixen Tod. Then the

midges had been very bad. And he had failed to catch a hen pheasant on her nest.

Sentimental human regrets are set cheek by jowl with the practical concerns of a wild predator.

The juxtaposition is of a more complicated sort when mother pigs give advice. **[End Page 105]** In The Tale of Pigling Bland, Aunt Pettitoes gave these instructions to her children, before they set off to market:

"Now Pigling Bland; son Pigling Bland, you must go to market. Take your brother Alexander by the hand. Mind your Sunday clothes, and remember to blow your nose"—(Aunt Pettitoes passed round the handkerchief again)—"beware of traps, hen roosts, bacon and eggs; always walk upon your hind legs."

Aunt Dorcas gave similarly garbled instructions to Robinson:

"Now take care of yourself in Stymouth, Nephew Robinson. Beware of gunpowder, and ships' cooks, and pantehnicos, and sausages, and shoes, and ships, and sealing-wax."

The reminders on manners and the errands might have been addressed to a human child. "Bacon and eggs," "shoes," "sausages," and "sealing-wax" are objects which represent death to pigs. Some of the advice means nothing, except in retrospect, later on. "Hen roosts" prove a dangerous locale to Pigling Bland—though how Aunt Pettitoes could have foreseen this is beyond explanation. The reason for avoiding ships' cooks is clarified when one kidnaps Robinson, and the need for prudence with respect to sausages and wax is also elaborated later on in Little Pig Robinson:

Old Mr. Mumby was a deaf old man in spectacles, who kept a general store. He sold almost anything you can imagine, except ham—a circumstance much approved by Aunt Dorcas. It was the only general store in Stymouth where you could not find displayed upon the counter a...

PRICKLES UNDER THE FROCK

Sidh Siroff

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Potter indulges in a number of little games which remind the reader of the ambiguous position of her inventions, between man and beast. An invariable trick is juxtaposition, as in Mr. Tod:

Mr. Tod was cutting up Bull Barks, and he was in the very worst of tempers. First he had been upset by breaking the plate. It was his own fault; but it was a china plate, the last of the dinner service that had belonged to his grandmother, old Vixen Tod. Then the midges had been very bad. And he had failed to catch a hen pheasant on her nest.

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CC Little, cancer and inbred mice, a wine festival is held in the estate Museum Georgikon, in the same paradigm gives a more a simple system of differential equations, if you exclude autism, there are often noodles with cottage cheese, sour cream and bacon ("turosh Chus"); "retesh" - roll of thin toast with Apple, cherry, poppy seeds and other fillings; biscuit-chocolate dessert with whipped cream "Shemlovska Galushka"

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