

5 Troubles in the Garden and How They Get Resolved: A Young Child's Transformation of His Favorite Story

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One of the enduring legacies of William Wells Newell, the compiler of the classic 19th-century collection of children's folklore, is his insight into children's complex relationship to cultural resources. According to "Newell's paradox" (Fine, 1980), children are both conservative and innovative toward traditional lore. They treat the formulas of play "as Scripture, of which no jot or tittle is to be repealed" (Newell, 1883/1963, p. 22), yet delight in modifying traditions and inventing languages, legends, and games. This paradox applies not only to children's folklore but to other cultural texts, including narratives. Stories of personal experience, family stories, stories from children's literature—all evoke contradictory impulses to conserve and to innovate. Underlying this paradox is the child's intense involvement in particular texts, an involvement which is evident in repeated listenings and spontaneous retellings. The child can't stop telling the story; the parent can't tell or read it to her often enough.

Although children's passionate engagement in stories is recognized by teachers (Paley, 1981; Rosen, 1988) and students of children's literature (Hearne, 1990), developmental researchers have tended to neglect this problem in favor of other aspects of narrative (but see Favat, 1977 and Tucker, 1981). For example, in recent years there has been a strong interest in the developmental origins of narrative talk, and it is now well established that even very young children are able to recount past experiences in conversation (e.g., Eisenberg, 1985; Engel, 1986; Fivush, Gray, & Fromhoff, 1987; Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Miller & Sperry, 1988; Sachs, 1983; Sperry, 1991). However, the emphasis has been on

the content, structure, and social conduct of incipient narratives. How young children invest narratives with meaning, how they use and reuse stories, has received less attention. The present chapter intends to redress this imbalance. We show how one young child appropriated, used, and reused a story during a 4-week period of intense involvement. The story, in this case, is a classic of children's literature, "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" by Beatrix Potter. We document systematic changes across the retellings in how the plot was configured and advance the interpretation that a chief function of the retellings was to resolve the disturbances posed by the written story, disturbances that were personally meaningful to the 2-year-old narrator. Drawing on concepts from Vygotsky and Bakhtin, we propose some explanations for how these changes came about.

PAST RESEARCH ON PERSONAL STORYTELLING

Because the current study evolved out of past research on personal storytelling, this related work is briefly described. A personal story is a story, told in ordinary conversation, in which the narrator recounts a remembered experience from his or her own life. It is a temporally ordered, evaluated account in which the narrator casts himself or herself as protagonist. For several years our research has been concerned with the role that this type of storytelling plays in early childhood socialization. The larger theoretical project has been to develop a discourse model of the socialization and meaning-creation processes. The model that we favor derives from Vygotskian theory (1978, 1987) and from practice approaches to narrative. According to this model, (a) families are organized so as to bring young children and caregivers together recurrently for particular activities, which are mediated by particular forms of discourse; and (b) the social and psychological consequences for the child of routine participation in socializing practices depend on how messages are packaged in discourse. When messages are packaged in self-relevant ways—as they are in personal storytelling—the consequences for the child include not only the acquisition of discursive skills but the creation of self or identity. (See Miller, *in press*; Miller et al., 1990; Miller et al., 1992 for a fuller explication of this model.)

For present purposes it is important to highlight the fact that the model rests on a practice approach to stories. That is, in keeping with recent developments in narrative theory in anthropology, folklore, and sociolinguistics (Bauman, 1986; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Hymes, 1975; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1975; Polanyi, 1985; Robinson, 1981), the model requires that stories be treated not as disembodied texts but as integrated performances, embedded in their immediate contexts of use. In this view, personal storytelling, like literacy, is not monolithic; rather, stories defined in particular ways are told for particular purposes in particular contexts of use. As applied to the socialization of young children, this perspective raises the following questions: Do different cultural groups routinely

engage in personal storytelling in the everyday settings that young children inhabit? How is personal storytelling conducted vis à vis children? At what age do children begin to participate in storytelling? What uses do they make of stories? Does personal storytelling, which is explicitly self-referential, play a privileged role in self construction?

This practice-oriented discourse model has led us to several insights about how stories of personal experience function in the socialization and self-constructive processes, insights that would not otherwise have emerged. Although these insights concern stories of personal experience, whereas "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" is a different narrative genre, it was by this route that we came to appreciate the importance of retellings, to wonder whether the phenomenon applied to other narrative genres, and to begin to see that personal stories and written stories could function similarly in the child's life.

The first discovery has to do with the widespread and recurrent nature of narrative practices. In studies of White, working-class children in South Baltimore (Miller & Moore, 1989; Miller & Sperry, 1988) and of culturally diverse children (low-income African American, working-class White, and middle-class White in Chicago and middle-class Chinese in Taipei), personal storytelling occurred routinely as part of everyday family life, forming an important part of the naturally-occurring verbal environment that young children inhabited (Miller, in press). In addition, the children in these studies were exposed to personal storytelling in three related ways: stories were told *around* young children as copresent others,¹ *about* young children as ratified participants, and *with* young children as conarrators. The latter occurred in ordinary family interaction at median rates of 2.4 per hour for 2½ year olds and 4.7 per hour for 5 year olds in the culturally diverse sample (Miller et al., 1992). Studies by Heath (1983), Sperry (1991), and Scollon and Scollon (1981) provide further evidence that young children from a variety of cultural backgrounds are routinely exposed to and participate early in personal storytelling practices.

The second insight that followed from the practice-oriented discourse model is that the narrated self is a relational self. This is evident at multiple levels of analysis (Miller et al., 1992). When young children conarrated or told personal stories with another person, they located the self in a social nexus. In other words, the child portrayed himself or herself as "being with" another person in some past event. At the same time the child was "being with" another person in the present, that is, in the very act of conarrating the past event. Moreover, these levels of relatedness were connected. This was evident, for example, in the use of social comparison as a means of linking self and other: not only did the majority of social comparisons of self and other occur when a sibling or peer

¹By "co-present other" we mean that the child was present while a story was being told to another person. Although the child was not the addressee, he or she was a potential onlooker and overhearer of the story.

participated in the conarration but the focal child was overwhelmingly compared with siblings or peers in the recounted event. A link is thereby established between the event of narration (who participated in the conarration) and the narrated event (what was talked about). In addition, at times the narrator altered her account of her own past experience, depending on what the conarrator said about the past event.

This brings us to the third insight that follows from the model, namely the dynamic nature of narrative practices. The finding that personal stories recur, hour by hour, in children's everyday home environments, in conjunction with the finding that the version of personal experience that the child creates may change, depending on who is present in the narrating event and what they say, suggests that personal storytelling is an important means by which young children reconstruct and revise their experiences of self in relation to other.

The dynamic nature of narrative practices is most apparent when a narrator spontaneously retells a particular story. Our corpus of naturally-occurring personal stories includes spontaneous retellings by children from each of the communities we have studied (working-class White, low income African American, middle-class White, and middle-class Chinese). Although these retellings undoubtedly serve multiple functions, sometimes children seemed to retell stories as a means of gaining relief from or resolution to some distressing past experience. For example, a 30-month-old child from the low-income African-American community told three versions of her experience of being frightened by a movie. In the first she fled from the scene, in the second she sought comfort from her parents, and in the third she was no longer scared. These revisions of narrated experience speak to the issue of the emotional content of early autobiographical memories (Pillemer & White, 1989; White & Pillemer, 1979) and raise the possibility that such contents change across repeated tellings. By recounting or reenacting a troubling experience from the past, the young narrator seemed to regain her equilibrium through a reintegration of experience (Bruner & Lucariello, 1989). In such cases retellings function in a manner that is similar to the heuristic use of stories in adolescent and adult conversation (Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1988; Robinson, 1981) and to the therapeutic use of stories in psychoanalysis (Nye, 1988; Spence, 1982).

In addition, children sometimes used stories of vicarious experience in this manner. Instead of retelling a story of self-experience, they retold a story about someone else's experience. For example, a 32-month-old child from South Baltimore retold a story in which her uncle punched her grandfather. A 31-month-old middle-class child appropriated his mother's story about falling down and hurting herself and recast it as a first-person account, repeating it several times. Both of these retellings were told with marked affect. Vicarious retellings raise some fascinating and puzzling issues that revolve around the Bakhtinian question, whose story is it? Stories in which a child recounts his or her experience are obviously personal stories: the child has recreated in the here-and-now an event

that he or she directly experienced in the past. But there is a broader sense in which a story could be *personal*, that is, in the sense that a child might appropriate and use for his or her own purposes someone else's experience, someone else's story. Framed in this way, any story has the potential to be a *personalized* story, a story that is personally meaningful or useful to the narrator. As we shall see, "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" is personalized in just this way by the 2-year-old narrator.

In sum, our past research on personal storytelling from within a practice-oriented discourse model led us to see that narrative retellings are embedded in and continuous with a complex and dynamic network of narrative practices that mediate family-child relations on a daily basis and that define and redefine the child's experiences of self in relation to other. It also led us to see that retellings may function to resolve or reintegrate distressing past experiences and that vicarious stories can get used and personalized in this way.

THE PETER RABBIT RETELLINGS

The examples cited earlier suggest that retellings are not confined to any of the several communities under study. However, owing to relatively long intervals between longitudinal data points, it was not possible to trace out sustained uses of particular stories. This is precisely the value of the Peter Rabbit retellings, which were collected from the privileged vantage point of a family member. These retellings were produced by the first author's son during a 4-week period of intense involvement with "The Tale of Peter Rabbit." Many of the classic works in the study of child language have been conducted by linguist or psychologist parents who could not resist the temptation to observe the language development of their own offspring. The first author followed in this tradition in that she made video tapes of her son Kurt interacting at home at regular intervals during the second year of his life. She also supplemented these observations with more extensive audio-recorded or hand-written sampling of his play behavior.

Kurt was first introduced to "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" during a 2-week visit with his paternal grandparents. He was 23;05 when his grandmother gave him the collection of Beatrix Potter's (1980) stories. Listening to written stories read aloud was at this point a taken-for-granted part of his everyday life. "Peter Rabbit" immediately became his favorite story and he repeatedly requested that it be read to him over the next several weeks. His family accommodated his interest, reading it daily, sometimes several times a day. In these readings his parent or grandparent read the story while he listened attentively and looked at the pictures. Thus, Kurt's retellings of the stories coincided with fairly constant exposure to the written story. Although the changes that occur across the retellings are reminiscent of the reconstructive and personally-flavored processes of remembering described by Bartlett (1932), the task was not a memory task of the

usual sort in which recall is tested after a single exposure to the stimulus materials.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SPEECH CORPUS

The corpus of Peter Rabbit talk consists of five retellings produced on five different days. The collection of these texts predated and perhaps helped to inspire the first author's interest in narrative: At the time of recording she assimilated them to her then current interest in children's play, thinking of them as fantasies, which, in a sense, they are. The first, third, and fourth retellings were audio-recorded; the second and fifth were hand-written, with accompanying notes about context. Any sustained talk about Peter Rabbit that Kurt produced with his mother was recorded. She was not prepared for Kurt's first retelling and hence the opening segment of that retelling, initiated by him, was not recorded. Once Kurt's intense interest in Peter Rabbit became evident she occasionally introduced the topic of Peter Rabbit at a time when she was already recording his talk. There is no way to know what, if anything, Kurt said about Peter Rabbit in her absence.

There was a discernible temporal patterning to the retellings. The interval between Kurt's first exposure to the story and his first retelling was 1 week; between retellings 1 and 2, another week; between retellings 2, 3, and 4 only a day or two; and between retellings 4 and 5, a week. In other words, the retellings were not spaced evenly over the 4 weeks but formed a temporal cluster at the point at which Kurt had had about 2 weeks of exposure to the written story.

The Peter Rabbit retellings were sandwiched between two of the regular video recordings of Kurt's speech. These occurred 8 days before the first retelling and 14 days after the final retelling. The first half hour of each of these video recordings involved everyday interaction between Kurt and his mother, thus providing a baseline comparison with the retellings. Basic descriptive information about the video-recorded baseline samples and the retellings is provided in Table 5.1.

Mean length of utterance (MLU) in morphemes, a widely used measure of language level, was computed according to Brown's (1973) guidelines. Kurt's language level, as assessed in the baseline speech samples, was in the advanced normal range, although not as advanced as Nelson's (1989) Emily.² The MLU

²The MLU values for Kurt are roughly comparable to those for Eve, the most advanced of Brown's (1973) three subjects; Bloom and Lahey's (1978) subjects had an average MLU of 2.54, with a range of 2.30–2.83, at 25 months, whereas Kurt's MLU was 4.0 at 24½ months; Nelson (1989) reports that Emily's MLU was 3.61 in dialogues and 5.40 in monologues during the period from 21 to 22½ months; Kurt's MLU was 2.8 in the baseline sample at 23 months and 4.0 in the first retelling at 23½ months.

TABLE 5.1
Description of Speech Samples

<i>Samples</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>MLU^a</i>	<i>Utterances</i>		<i>Turns</i>	
			<i>Child</i>	<i>Adult</i>	<i>Child</i>	<i>Adult</i>
Baseline Sample I	23:04	2.8	240	278	144	149
Retelling 1	23:12	4.2	62	60	41	47
Retelling 2	23:21	6.4	60	2	1	2
Retelling 3	23:23	6.5	20	28	13	14
Retelling 4	23:24	4.8	142	123	77	79
Retelling 5	24:02	6.1 ^b	30 ^b	5 ^b	6 ^b	4 ^b
Baseline Sample II	24:16	4.0	212	261	136	145
			Total 766	757	419	440

^aMean length of utterance in morphemes.

^bExcludes digressions.

values also indicate that the Peter Rabbit retellings occurred during a period of rapid language development, with Kurt's MLU increasing more than a point over the 6-week interval between the two baseline speech samples.

What is more interesting is that the MLU values for the 5 retellings were considerably higher than for the baseline speech samples. Kurt operated at a more advanced linguistic level within the context of narrating the Peter Rabbit story than he did at other times within the same developmental interval. Nelson (1989) found a marked discrepancy in length between Emily's dialogic versus monologic speech in favor of the monologic. The corpus of Kurt's speech included no direct parallel to Emily's monologic crib speech, that is, speech that occurred in the absence of an interlocutor. Yet there was considerable variation across the retellings in the extent to which Kurt's talk was structured monologically versus dialogically in the presence of an interlocutor. Retellings 2 and 5 were highly monologic, with Kurt holding the floor for long stretches of uninterrupted talk. (Properly speaking, these monologic retellings are soliloquys, a term that more accurately captures their complicated addressivity, which is discussed more fully below.) By contrast, retellings 1, 3, and 4 were dialogically organized, as Kurt and his interlocutor exchanged multiple brief turns. The average MLU in the monologic retellings was 6.4, compared with 4.8 in the dialogic retellings, thereby confirming Nelson's finding for Emily.

Another possible factor contributing to longer utterance length in the retellings was the narrative form of the retellings. In order to explore this possibility further, narrative utterances were compared with nonnarrative utterances in the baseline speech samples (see Table 5.2). For this analysis, all utterances that occurred within stretches of temporally-ordered discourse that was displaced from the here-and-now (in the past, hypothetical, or future) were treated as narrative utterances. All other utterances were counted as nonnarrative utter-

TABLE 5.2
Length (MLU) of Narrative Vs. Nonnarrative Child Utterances

<i>Samples</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Nonnarrative</i>
Baseline Samples		
I	4.1 (41)	2.6 (199)
II	6.1 (28)	3.7 (184)
Retellings		
1	4.2 (62)	—
2	6.4 (60)	—
3	6.5 (20)	—
4	4.8 (142)	—
5	6.1 (30)	—
	<i>M</i> = 5.4 (383)	<i>M</i> = 3.1 (383)

ances. Narrative utterances were longer on average than were nonnarrative utterances within both baseline speech samples.³

These analyses, thus, suggest that the monologic mode and the narrative form contributed to longer utterance length in the retellings. It is likely that interest in particular topics motivated Kurt's use of both the monologic mode and narrative speech—two tools for thinking about and reordering experience. As mentioned earlier, Kurt's interest in Peter Rabbit was expressed not only in his repeated tellings of the story but in his repeated requests to listen to the story. This raises the question, Why was he so interested in this story? Let us table this question for the moment and turn to the story that inspired the retellings (Potter, 1980).

THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT

Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were—Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, and Peter. They lived with their Mother in a sand-bank, underneath the root of a very big fir-tree.

'Now my dears,' said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, 'you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden: your Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor (p. 8).

Mrs. Rabbit then leaves to go to the baker's and Peter, who is "very naughty," (p. 9) runs directly to Mr. McGregor's garden. There he proceeds to stuff himself

³This finding echoes research on writing that shows that narrative is mastered earlier and more easily than other discourse genres (Crowhurst, 1991; Perera, 1984).

on lettuces, French beans, and radishes until discovered by the fearsome Mr. McGregor, who gives chase. Peter gets caught in a gooseberry net, hides in a watering can, and narrowly avoids being stomped by Mr. McGregor. Mr. McGregor goes back to work but Peter finds that he is lost. “. . . (H)e was out of breath and trembling with fright, and he had not the least idea which way to go” (p. 13). Eventually, after an unsettling encounter with a white cat, he spies the gate, escapes through it, and doesn’t stop running until he gets home to the big fir-tree. Peter is not very well that evening and his mother doses him with camomile tea. But his siblings—Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail—have bread, milk, and blackberries for supper.

This story is told in pictures as well as words, and it has had enormous appeal to children and their parents since its first publication in 1901. The “Tale of Peter Rabbit” has been rated the bestselling children’s book of all time in the United States (Smith, 1990). Beatrix Potter herself explained the story’s appeal in terms of its origins, the story having been written originally as a picture-letter to a 5-year-old boy (Linder, 1971). She said, “It is much more satisfactory to address a real live child; I often think that that was the secret of the success of Peter Rabbit, it was written to a child—not made to order” (p. 110).

Critics have commented on the tension in the story between social conformity and individual freedom (Nikola-Lisa, 1990). According to Taylor, Whalley, Hobbs, and Battrick (1987), “It is the classic tale of the naughty child, flying in the face of authority, deliberately disobeying instructions—and getting his just deserts” (p. 99). The story thus exemplifies one of the basic properties of narrative, namely that it poses some departure from a canonical cultural pattern, leading to conflicts and difficulties that need to be resolved (Bruner, 1990; Burke, 1945; Goffman, 1959). The first departure from the canonical—Peter’s flouting of his mother’s prohibition—is followed by another: Upon entering the garden, Peter proceeds to indulge his oral desires to the point of sickness. As a consequence of these mischievous deeds, he finds himself in a series of life-threatening predicaments involving Mr. McGregor, human enemy of the rabbit family. Moreover, his misbehavior not only separates him physically and morally from his mother but dramatizes how different he is from his good siblings. Deviation from the moral code leads to mortal danger and to disruption of familial relationships.

On the face of it, the little rabbit as chief protagonist caught up in this particular plot would seem to have a great deal of resonance for a 2 year old. Issues of orality, security, attachment, obedience, and independence come into play, issues that one or another developmental theory regards as basic to early development. This makes the story a good candidate for emotional investment by a young child. Returning to the question raised earlier, one factor that may contribute to Kurt’s interest in the story is its thematic relevance to his developmental level.

But there is another factor worth considering. There is evidence that the

particular embodiment of these issues, especially the fact that the story is set in a garden, is congruent with Kurt's idiosyncratic experience, knowledge, and interests. He had spent many enjoyable hours in his grandparents' gardens. In the preceding month his maternal grandparents had told him about the mother rabbit who had a nest of babies in their garden, and his paternal grandmother had written him a small book about the woodchucks who ate the flowers in her garden. In addition, in the first baseline speech sample, Kurt produced two linked stories of personal experience about her garden. The first was a story about a past event in which Kurt helped his grandmother to plant the garden. The second was a hypothetical narrative in which Kurt excitedly imagined what kinds of flowers and plants he might see in his grandmother's garden when he visits her the following day. (On the following day she herself gives Kurt the Peter Rabbit storybook, and his first retelling, a week later, occurs in proximity to her garden.) Thus, Kurt's familiarity with and keen interest in gardens predated and perhaps primed his interest in Peter Rabbit's adventures in Mr. McGregor's garden.

ANALYSIS OF THE RETELLINGS: STORY CONTENT AND PLOT

Some of the most obvious features of Kurt's retellings and of changes in the retellings occur at the level of story content and plot. These are described first, followed by micro-level analysis of how Kurt deployed communicative resources to narrate and renarrate the story.

As in the written story, the retellings are set in a garden. Plants are growing or getting stepped on or planted or watered, and, invariably something gets eaten. Some walking or running in, to, or from the garden occurs in every retelling. In addition, three of the retellings (1, 2, and 5) occur in close proximity to a garden; the real garden provides a stage on which the story is projected.

Fictional characters are also appropriated from "The Tale of Peter Rabbit." There is one obligatory character—Peter Rabbit himself. Mother Rabbit is the only other character who appears repeatedly (in 2, 4, and 5). There is a gradual increase across the retellings in the number of characters invoked, from one (Peter Rabbit) in the first retelling to the full cast of main characters (Peter, Mother Rabbit, Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Mr. McGregor) in the final retelling. Not surprisingly, given Kurt's repeated exposure to the written story, his memory for the characters becomes more complete across the retellings. Despite these changes, however, the centrality of Peter Rabbit and of his relationship to Mother Rabbit remains fairly constant and is further supported by the fact that Kurt refers to the retellings as "talk about Peter Rabbit" or "talk(ed) about Peter Rabbit and the mother."

TABLE 5.3
 Troubles and Their Resolution in the Retellings

<i>Trouble</i>	<i>Retellings</i>				
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
P. R. violates rules of garden	X	X		R	R
Conflict between P. R. and Mother Rabbit		X,R		R	R
Conflict between rabbit and human worlds		X	X	X	R
P. R. afraid of natural world			X	R	R

Note. P. R. = Peter Rabbit; X = trouble was invoked; R = trouble was resolved.

In addition to the continuities between the written story and the successive retellings, there are also striking successive alterations of the written story, culminating in a remarkable reconfiguration of the plot. As can be seen in Table 5.3, Kurt appropriates from the written story four “troubles” (Bruner, 1990) or deviations from the canonical: Peter Rabbit’s violation of rules of the garden, conflict between Peter Rabbit and Mother Rabbit, conflict between the rabbit and human worlds, and Peter Rabbit’s fear of the natural world. Each of these troubles is systematically posed, reposed, and resolved across the retellings. Once a trouble is resolved, it remains resolved. In the final retelling an inclusive resolution is achieved.

In the first retelling Kurt describes Peter Rabbit as “naughty” (the same word that is used in the written story), indicating that Peter Rabbit has violated certain conventions for being in the garden.⁴ Specifically, he eats plants (e.g., iris, marigolds) that should not be eaten. In retelling 2 Peter Rabbit continues to violate rules of the garden by stepping on stalks. But it is the resulting conflict between Peter Rabbit and his mother that gets foregrounded in this retelling: It is elaborated and replayed at length and eventually resolved. In contrast to the written story, this resolution is achieved by bringing Mother Rabbit into the garden with Peter. Conflict between the rabbit and human worlds is also invoked in retelling 2 in a brief episode in which Peter Rabbit and his mother are killed by a car. Retelling 3 forefronts dangers in the garden: Peter Rabbit is afraid of a wheelbarrow and a blue jay, and scuttles under the bushes to sleep.

Whereas the introduction of troubles takes precedence in retellings 1 through 3, the process of resolution is most apparent in retellings 4 and 5. In retelling 4 Peter Rabbit and his mother are aligned with one another from the start. Mother Rabbit holds the hands of the little rabbits as they water the plants, and mother

⁴A concern with the way in which the garden “works,” a canonical representation of what gardens in general are like, provides the background against which Peter Rabbit acts upon the garden. For example, in the course of narrating Peter Rabbit’s actions, Kurt asserts various “facts” about gardens, “pine trees get all sticky/,” and “broccoli’s green/.”

and the “bunnies” plant seeds together. This is the first retelling in which the bunnies behave constructively in the garden. In addition, although Peter Rabbit encounters potential dangers in the garden (e.g., a buzzing bee), he is not frightened. By retelling 4, then, three of the four troubles have been resolved: Peter is abiding by the rules of the garden, amiable relations between Peter and Mother Rabbit have been restored, and Peter is no longer afraid in the garden. However, conflict between the rabbit and human worlds is still evident as the bunnies stomp granddaddy’s car. In the final retelling the processes of resolution, already in play, are brought to completion. Harmony is achieved not only among the rabbits but with their former enemy, as Mr. McGregor joins the rabbits in planting parsley in the garden.

ANALYSIS OF THE RETELLINGS: HOW THE RETELLINGS WERE NARRATED

Thus, dramatic changes in plot occur across the retellings, culminating in an original resolution to the disruptions appropriated from the written story. The chief theoretical challenge is to provide an explanation for how these changes came about. We believe that one factor that facilitated Kurt’s reworking of the story was his familiarity with it. It is unlikely, however, that increased familiarity alone could account for the kinds of changes that occurred across the retellings. Were familiarity the only factor, one would expect to see progression toward a more complete, detailed, and veridical account of the story actions. We believe that at least two other factors were involved, both of which have to do with how the retellings were narrated.

The analytic tools that we draw upon derive from a Bakhtinian framework (Bakhtin, 1981; Wertsch, 1991). Bakhtin was a Soviet literary scholar, philosopher, and discourse theorist. He is perhaps best known for his analyses of novelistic discourse, but his conceptualization of language as culturally shaped and socially situated has much broader application. Unlike traditional linguistic conceptions of language, Bakhtin took the utterance, rather than the sentence, as his unit of analysis. Every utterance involves the invocation of a speech genre, a form of social speech associated with a particular situation (e.g., dinner table conversation, military commands, bookreading with a young child). Although speech is never free from generic constraints, Bakhtin indicates that speakers can achieve some individuality of expression by creatively appropriating and re-orienting existing genres, and by orchestrating particular voices.

Kurt’s retellings thus exemplify a fundamental property of speech genres, namely that they are prepackaged ways of organizing speech, which simultaneously offer a set of resources for creating emergent performances. Any particular performance involves both the voice type of the speech genre and of a concrete individual. In Bakhtinian terms, Kurt appropriates “The Tale of Peter

Rabbit” and uses it to create a series of unique performances; he populates it with his own intention.

The retellings also exemplify another key Bakhtinian concept, namely the inherent dialogicality or multivoicedness of speech. According to Bakhtin, every utterance is not only expressed from the perspective of a particular voice or speaking personality, but it is addressed to another particular voice. In addition, every utterance has a history of ownership by previous voices. Bakhtin thus emphasized the multiple ways in which voices come into contact with other voices. One way in which this happens is called “ventriloquation,” the process by which one voice speaks through another voice or voice type.

These perspectives led us to organize the analysis of narrating talk in terms of two questions. First, who is Kurt talking to in these tellings? This requires an analysis of the circumstances of the telling, including who the interlocutor is and how she responds to Kurt’s narrations. Second, what stance does Kurt, as narrator, take toward the narrated event? These questions are addressed in turn.

The Dialogic Context of the Retellings: Who is Kurt Talking to?

On first glance, the question of who Kurt is talking to seems quite straightforward. In all of the retellings his mother is present as interlocutor and, for the most part, she is the only interlocutor. Kurt is thus talking almost exclusively to his mother in a private context in which they are unlikely to be interrupted. However, a closer look reveals that the issue of who Kurt is addressing is more complicated. As described earlier, retellings 2 and 5 were structured as soliloquys, rather than dialogic exchanges. Kurt seems to be talking not so much to his mother as to himself in her presence. He thus commands a high degree of control or authorship of the retellings.

Even the retellings (1, 3, 4) that are organized dialogically share this quality. Although Kurt’s mother launches two of these retellings by introducing the topic of Peter Rabbit, Kurt quickly volunteers new information about Peter and elaborates on his actions. Although his mother is attentive and responsive to what he says, she takes a nondirective role, mirroring back to Kurt what he has just said, either in the form of confirmation queries or repetitions of his contributions. This mode of interaction is reminiscent of the contingent responding that characterizes American middle-class mothers’ participation in pretend play with young children (Haight & Miller, 1992; Kavanaugh, Whittington, & Cerbone, 1983). Kurt is thus allowed to retain control of the narrative topic.

In Vygotskian terms, the retellings qualify as egocentric speech in the sense that they function simultaneously as speech for others and speech for oneself (Vygotsky, 1934/1987). Wertsch (1985) describes the transitional and undifferentiated nature of egocentric speech as follows,

The appearance of egocentric speech, roughly at the age of three, reflects the emergence of a new self-regulative function similar to that of inner speech. Its external form reflects the fact that the child has not fully differentiated this new speech function from the function of social contact and social interaction. (p. 111)

Wertsch goes on to cite evidence that the presence of a supportive listener is especially conducive to the use of egocentric speech.

However, in contrast to much of the research in which egocentric speech accompanies and assists the child to solve a problem or cope with a cognitive task that has some physical representation in the here-and-now, Kurt used egocentric speech to resolve the troubles posed by the Peter Rabbit story itself. In Watson's (1989) terms, his problem solving was more representational than enactive. Nelson (1989) argued that Vygotsky's conception of egocentric speech did not accurately characterize Emily's presleep monologues, either functionally or formally. By contrast, Kurt's retellings seem to provide a good fit with Vygotsky's account of the functions of egocentric speech. From a formal standpoint, however, our findings are consistent with Nelson's: Kurt's speech in the retellings was more complex and explicit than his ordinary talk, rather than more abbreviated as Vygotskian theory predicts. This suggests that what Vygotsky called *egocentric* speech emerges earlier in linguistic development than he believed. But more importantly, it points to the inadequacy of Vygotsky's formulation of the emergence of inner speech in light of contemporary evidence that children are able to use displaced speech, including incipient narrative, from an early age (e.g., Eisenberg, 1985; Fivush, Gray, & Fromhoff, 1987; Miller & Sperry, 1988; Sachs, 1983; Sperry, 1991). The theoretical challenge, then, is to integrate Vygotsky's account of the differentiation of speech functions with an account of the development of narrative and of other verbal genres.

In sum, the dialogic context remains constant across the five retellings of Peter Rabbit. Kurt speaks both to his mother and to himself in her presence in a manner characteristic of egocentric speech. In addition, the self-regulative function of egocentric speech is evident in his use of narrative speech to resolve the disturbances and conflicts posed by the Peter Rabbit story. The more general "problem" that Kurt attempts to solve across the retellings is to create a coherent mapping between his own experiences and the written story, a mapping in which the experiences of Peter Rabbit and the other characters line up with his experiences of gardens and relationships. The interested but nondirective mode of his interlocutor permits him maximal latitude to concentrate on his train of thought and to author the narrations himself. Under these circumstances, Kurt was able, at barely 2 years-of-age, to successfully use a story heuristically, and, indeed, to work with that story repeatedly over a sustained period of time.

The Narrator's Stance: Whose Voice Is It?

Let us turn now to the problem of the narrator's stance toward the narrated event. By stance we mean not just the narrator's perspective on the story but the degree

of his affective involvement or commitment to that perspective. For example, does Kurt, as narrator, see the story from the standpoint of an observer and if so, is the observer a neutral or interested observer? Does he insert himself into the story, enacting the voice of a character or speaking directly to the characters? Does he step out of the story entirely and comment on it at a meta-level? To answer these questions requires micro-analysis of how specific communicative devices are deployed in the retellings, included first-, second-, and third-person person point-of-view; affective marking (e.g., explicit emotion terms, paralinguistics, repetition) to create vicarious participation in the story; quoted speech and other means for enacting or envoicing the story in the here-and-now; importation of real-world persons into the story; and explicit metalinguistic references to the telling itself. Wolf (1990) has recently argued that during the second year of life children become able to adopt a range of stances toward events and to articulate and mark them linguistically. The following analysis of the retellings supports this claim. Further, we suggest that Kurt's ability to inhabit multiple stances toward the story enabled him to take control of the plot, thereby restoring canonical order.

In the analysis that follows, each retelling is considered in turn. Owing to space restrictions, only retelling 2 will be analyzed at length. Retelling 2 was selected for this purpose because it is a highly complex and affectively marked retelling and because Kurt alternates among several stances in the course of this single retelling. See Appendix A for a verbatim transcript of retelling 2.

Retelling #1

Kurt's first retelling occurred while he was seated in a highchair gazing out at his paternal grandmother's flower-filled garden. The talk is dialogically organized, and the content is simple and straightforward: Kurt appropriates the character of Peter Rabbit, projects him into the real-world garden, and attributes to him two classes of actions that are central to the written story: eating prodigiously and walking from the woods into the garden.

The retelling is structured in terms of a series of parallel episodes each of which describes a different plant that Peter devoured (e.g., iris, little pine tree, broccoli, flowers, plants hanging on the sycamore tree). Although Kurt takes an observer or spectator's stance toward Peter's actions (Wolf, 1990), he, like the narrator of the written story, is not a neutral observer. Early in the retelling he characterizes Peter as "naughty/" and later he exclaims "uh oh!/" and "THAT Peter Rabbit!/", and yet his manner of delivery conveys not censure but excitement about Peter's mischievous deeds: many of his utterances are marked by excited intonation ("Peter Rabbit ate the iris!"), emphatic stress ("Peter Rabbit ate the IRIS/"), and evaluative intensifiers ("ate them *all* up/"). Throughout this retelling Kurt seems to side subtly with Peter Rabbit, to enter into Peter's experience vicariously, while preserving some distance between himself and Peter through third-person, past tense narration.

Retelling #2

The second retelling also took place in proximity to a garden. Kurt is standing on his maternal grandparents' front porch next to the flower garden. He has been fantasizing that a crow built a nest in the marigolds. The topic of Peter Rabbit is introduced by his mother, who says, "I wonder if Peter Rabbit ate any of these marigolds last night? (1).⁵ This overture triggers an outpouring of soliloquized talk to which his mother contributes only one additional utterance.

Although the interactive mode differs dramatically, retelling 2 begins in a manner that is similar to the first retelling. Kurt projects Peter Rabbit into the real-world garden and describes his actions from an observer's perspective. Early in this retelling, however, Kurt appropriates a second character from the written story, namely Peter's mother. In contrast to the written story, he brings Mother Rabbit into the garden with Peter, and it is the conflict between these two characters that provides the central problematic. This conflict is occasioned by Peter Rabbit's violation of the rules of the garden—stepping on a stalk (9)—and is conveyed primarily through enacted speech, which is discussed shortly. However, the first mention of Mother Rabbit establishes the conflict from an observer's perspective ("his mother didn't help him/" 10), and it is followed immediately by a contradictory statement ("his mother helped him/" 11). This inconsistency is carried through the first half of the retelling: At times Peter Rabbit and his mother are in overt conflict; at other times they are aligned with one another. Complicating matters further, they encounter danger from the human world ("some cars came and killed them/" 28). Thus the first half of retelling 2 establishes the three related troubles described earlier (Table 5.3): that Peter Rabbit violated the rules of the garden, that he and his mother are in conflict, and that the human and rabbit worlds are in conflict.

In this highly complex and emotionally charged retelling, the conflict between Peter Rabbit and his mother is forefronted and elaborated as Kurt takes multiple stances toward the conflict. Beginning in line 12, this conflict is enacted or replayed in the here-and-now via the device of quoted speech. Kurt as narrator aligns himself with the voice of rabbit authority by rendering in direct quotation Mother Rabbit's prohibition to Peter, "'don't step on this little stalk,' mother said/" (12). He repeats and varies this prohibition five times (14–17). Kurt thus takes a participant's stance toward the past event by animating or envoicing the character of Mother Rabbit. Moreover, there is a shift across the quoted prohibitions from past to historical present tense in the framing verb of saying (*said* in 12 and 14 to *says* in 15). Such tense shifts are characteristic of oral narrative genres of personal experience (Bauman, 1986) and mark movement toward an even more participatory stance toward the past event. In this case, the shift to the

⁵Numbers in parentheses refer to the corresponding lines in the transcript of retelling 2 in Appendix A.

present tense collapses Kurt's voice as narrator and Mother Rabbit's voice. The two voices, in effect, merge.

Interwoven with the quoted prohibitions are threads from Kurt's real-world personal experience, rendered in the third person. First, people who ordinarily populate the actual garden, namely Grandma (18, 19) and Kurt himself (20) are incorporated into the narration and brought into contact with the fictional characters. Specifically, Grandma's and Kurt's actions of planting flowers in the garden are offered as explanation for Mother Rabbit's prohibition: "Don't go in there/ Grandma planted some flowers in there/ Grandma planted some flowers in there/ Kurt did help/" (17–20). The blending of Kurt's voice as narrator with Mother Rabbit's voice thus becomes even more apparent. The boundary between the quoted prohibition and the subsequent explanation is not clearly marked: It could be spoken by Mother Rabbit or by Kurt himself. Kurt's concern that Peter Rabbit not trample the newly planted flowers is ventriloquated through the voice of Mother Rabbit (Bakhtin, 1981).

Second, real-life events that Kurt had experienced the evening before in the company of his mother and grandmother (going to see the boats, going in the grocery store cart, buying oranges and cat food, 30–32) are attributed to Peter Rabbit and his mother. In other words, Kurt's identification with Peter Rabbit is expressed by casting Peter Rabbit as the subject of Kurt's own past actions. Thus, in these two ways Kurt has brought his real-world experience together with the storyworld of Peter Rabbit; he has personalized the story of Peter Rabbit by incorporating into it bits and pieces of his experience. More specifically, he has used his personal experience—of amicable relations between himself and a mother/grandmother figure—to create a particular voicing of the narration, one in which the perspectives of Peter Rabbit and Mother Rabbit are brought closer together. This is accomplished by invoking Kurt and Grandma's joint actions in support of Mother Rabbit's prohibitions and by attributing directly to Peter Rabbit and Mother Rabbit the shared activities of Kurt and his mother and grandmother.

Later in the retelling the conflict between Peter Rabbit and his mother intensifies ("mother smacks Peter/" 45) as Kurt replays again and again Mother Rabbit's prohibition (37, 39, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48), framing each repetition in the historical present tense. The pivotal moment in the retelling occurs immediately after the final quoted prohibition. Kurt says, "mother's a rabbit/ mother jumps in there with Peter/" (49–50). With these two utterances the narrator brings Mother Rabbit and Peter together, acknowledging Mother Rabbit's identity as a rabbit, like Peter, and reversing her prohibition by having her jump in with Peter. Kurt as narrator then does something very interesting: he steps into the frame of the story and directly addresses the characters, "no, no, get out mother, get out Peter/" (51). His concerns are not ventriloquated through the voice of Mother Rabbit but are claimed as his own.

That is, there is a microgenetic shift across this soliloquy in the narrator's

participant stance toward the characters, and, concomitantly in the characters' relationship to one another. Kurt initially aligns himself with Mother Rabbit's point-of-view, against Peter, literally speaking in her voice. Having done so a dozen times—while invoking, in repeated juxtaposition, the amicable relations between Kurt and his mother/grandmother—he makes her voice his own and at the same time brings the formerly estranged characters together. It appears that his participation in the story in the character of Mother Rabbit has enabled him to appropriate the voice of rabbit authority and to thereby gain control over the characters by means of the same participatory mode, that is, by stepping into the story itself.

Immediately after these developments Kurt's father and then his grandmother fortuitously appear on the porch, and Kurt turns to each and provides a concise summary of the central action of the story. In this summary Peter Rabbit and Mother Rabbit enter the garden together. Having resolved the conflict between Peter Rabbit and Mother Rabbit, he does not replay the conflict for his new audience. In contrast to the earlier part of the retelling in which Kurt's stance alternated between interested observer and participant in the story action, Kurt now takes what Wolf (1990) has called an executive stance toward the past event: He explains at a meta-level what he did ("Kurt *talked about* Peter Rabbit and the mother/," 52; "*talkin about* Peter Rabbit and the mother/" 59), explicitly noting his role as narrator and recapping the resolution ("mother did help Peter/ and the mother got out too/" 61–62). In other words, after intervening in the story and appropriating the voice of authority, he steps out of the story entirely and reflects back upon it. His resolution of the conflict appears to have given him some distance on the events in the garden.

Retelling #3

The third retelling, unlike the first and second, took place indoors at Kurt's home, not in proximity to a garden. It was preceded by discussion with mother about a letter from Kurt's paternal grandmother in which she recounted how the woodchucks had eaten her marigolds.

Retelling 3 is structured as two parallel episodes in which something in the garden frightens Peter Rabbit, and he hides in the bushes. In the first episode it is the wheelbarrow that scares him, in the second, the blue jay. In both cases Kurt explicitly characterizes Peter's mental state as "scared." It is as though he is narrating within the consciousness of Peter Rabbit. Like retelling 1, Kurt consistently assumes a stance of interested, involved observer, but unlike retelling 1, he now has access to Peter's internal state. Kurt's affective engagement with the frightened Peter is indicated by the manner in which the relevant utterances are delivered: they are marked by emphatic stress ("and the wheelbarrow SCARED Peter/") and stuttering ("and the and the and the and the blue jay scared Peter/"). In addition the frightening blue jay is not only described but envoiced "and the blue jay flew in the tree and 'caw' said him/."

In the written story Peter Rabbit's prevailing emotion is fear once he is

discovered by Mr. McGregor, and this feeling is explicitly acknowledged twice—immediately after Mr. McGregor starts to chase Peter (“Peter was most dreadfully frightened . . .” p. 11) and immediately after the chase ends (“Peter sat down to rest; he was out of breath and trembling with fright.” p. 13). Thus, there is a strong parallel between retelling 3 and the written story in terms of Peter Rabbit’s feelings and in terms of the narrator’s access to those feelings. However, the sources of fear differ. In this connection it is interesting to note that a wheelbarrow and some blackbirds are mentioned and depicted on page 15 of the written story. On this same page Peter Rabbit’s reaction to the sound of Mr. McGregor’s hoe is described, “Peter scuttered underneath the bushes.” Note the similarity in Kurt’s account of Peter’s reaction to the blue jay, “he scuttered right under a bushes to take a nap/.”

Retelling #4

The fourth retelling began in Kurt’s bedroom and continued in the bathroom as he got ready to take a bath. It is occasioned by a toy rabbit, which his mother refers to as “Peter Rabbit.” The shift from one room to the other is marked by intervening talk unrelated to Peter Rabbit, thereby providing a natural division of the retelling into two segments.

In the first segment Kurt takes an observer’s perspective toward the actions of the “little rabbits.” This segment of the retelling is bounded by parallel episodes in which it is explicitly established, through third-person, past-tense narration that Mother Rabbit helped the little rabbits, first, to water plants and second, to plant seeds. There is only one moment of conflict, namely when the rabbits stomp granddaddy’s car. In general, Kurt’s narrating stance is that of a more neutral observer than he has been in the previous retellings: This is evident in the lack of explicit references to emotions, emotion-charged verbs, or affectively marked paralinguistics.

The second segment of retelling 4 begins with a shift in narrative stance, as Kurt announces his intention to talk about Peter Rabbit (“want to talk in bath, Peter Rabbit in bathroom/” “want to talk about Peter Rabbit/”). As in retelling 2, Kurt makes explicit metalinguistic reference to the retellings from outside the storyworld. Kurt then shifts back to an observer’s stance, narrating the actions of Peter Rabbit and the mother, namely that they were walking or coming somewhere. Then, for the first time in any of the retellings, Kurt explicitly refers to himself as observer, “Kurt saw them coming/.” Several turns later, he recycles again through the walking of Peter Rabbit and his mother, again explicitly describing himself as observer, “Kurt was peeking out the front door/ . . . (saw) Peter Rabbit and the mother/.”

Retelling #5

The setting of the final retelling was the same as that of retelling 2, namely Kurt’s maternal grandparents’ garden. The retelling is immediately preceded by pretend play with a toy tractor on the theme of baling hay.

The interactive form also resembles retelling 2 in that it is organized as a soliloquy to which Kurt's interlocutor contributes only four turns. However, this retelling does not have the driven quality of retelling 2. Kurt digresses twice to comment on happenings in the here-and-now garden (e.g., he sees a dove perched on the wire, notices when it flies). It is as though his vision has expanded to encompass the real garden for its own sake—not just as a stage for Peter Rabbit.

The retelling is structured in terms of a series of actions by Peter Rabbit and the other story characters. They appear and re-appear in different combinations, all amicable. No sooner is Peter Rabbit introduced than Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Peter's mother appear. They walk around the garden. Mr. McGregor joins the little bunnies. Mother Rabbit and Mr. McGregor plant parsley. Mother Rabbit and Mr. McGregor and the three little bunnies plant parsley. Thus, the one disturbance that remained in retelling 4, namely the conflict between the rabbits and the human world, is resolved. A harmony more inclusive than that offered at the conclusion of the written story has been achieved.

Moreover, the behavior of the rabbits is, in other respects, beyond reproach. The first action attributed to Peter is one of obedience, "Peter not stepped in this stuff right here/." Note that the wording here is virtually identical to the prohibition attributed to mother rabbit in retelling 2 (see lines 37, 46). Kurt as narrator is speaking through the voice of Mother Rabbit in a process of ventriloquation (Bakhtin, 1981). He has adopted the perspective of the rule-enforcing Mother Rabbit, a perspective that is carried through this retelling. The rabbits sniff the strawberries but do not eat them. When Peter does eat something, it is parsley, an appropriate food for a rabbit, and there is no suggestion that he eats immoderately.

Thus, although Kurt as narrator does not take a neutral observer's perspective toward the characters, he seems less affectively engaged. Retelling 5 continues the pattern noted in retelling 4 in that it is devoid of explicit affective content. (Unfortunately, the recording of retelling 5 did not include paralinguistic information.)

There is another revealing omission in the final retelling. In contrast to retellings 2, 3, and 4 Kurt does not incorporate himself or any other persons from his real world experience into the storyworld. In this respect retelling 5 resembles the first retelling. Having succeeded in reconfiguring the story line in a way that restores canonical order, he has receded into the observer-author's role.

In sum, three patterns can be discerned from this analysis of narrative stance. First, Kurt inhabited multiple stances toward the story world, including vicarious observer, participant in the story action, and commentator about the story. Second, there was a gradual differentiation and elaboration across the retellings within given stances. Within the vicarious observer stance, Kurt eventually gained access to Peter Rabbit's internal states; as commentator, Kurt eventually differentiated author and observer roles. And finally, there seemed to be a gradu-

al *cooling* of affect in the later retellings, evident in a more consistently distanced stance toward the story.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we shall bring together the major results of these several analyses. The Peter Rabbit retellings seem to have been motivated by Kurt's intense interest and involvement in the "Tale of Peter Rabbit." This interest was evident both in the retellings and the relistening. The characters and plot of the written story, insofar as they parallel the ordinary emotional experience of a 2-year-old and the idiosyncratic gardening experience of this particular 2-year-old, posed for Kurt multiple threats of disruption to the canonical order of *his* world—that he might disobey his mother, that he might behave destructively in the garden, that secure relations with his grandmother might be disturbed, that he might encounter dangers in the garden. It is these highly personalized problems that fueled Kurt's repeated use of the story—his persistent efforts at formulating, reformulating, and resolving—and enabled him to muster linguistic resources that exceeded his usual linguistic level.

In a recent paper on the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, Briggs (1991) describes how one 3-year-old child was socialized through participation in recurrent *dramas* in which a caregiver teased or challenged the child about personally relevant, affectively charged issues. Although the Inuit dramas do not originate in a written source and the caregiver's role is much more prodding and directive, Briggs' account, like the current one, points to the child's involvement with cultural texts as a major mechanism of meaning creation:

My notion is that the kernal questions, [posed in the dramas], frequently repeated and often dangerous from the point of view of the child, will be perceived by the child as important problems to be solved. The child will focus on questions when they occur, and they will act like magnets, drawing his or her attention to any events that might provide clues to their meanings, and to appropriate ways of dealing with the problem. The plots, themselves often dangerous, constitute such events, and I suggest that every time the question occurs, it will resonate with other occurrences, so that each plot will provide additional clues to how to deal with the problem. Meanings will cumulate, and in this way, little by little, children will create for themselves worlds that contain variants of the plots of their parents' worlds. (p. 147)

The analyses of the Peter Rabbit retellings reveals a high degree of systematicity in the creation of variant plots. Four troubles were posed in the early retellings, and each was resolved in turn; the order in which the troubles were taken up paralleled the order in which they were introduced in the written story; and an ever more inclusive resolution was achieved.

Moreover, with the multiple resolutions attained in retelling 5, the retellings ceased to occur. In baseline speech sample two, which occurred 2 weeks after the last retelling, the topic of Peter Rabbit was introduced into the conversation twice by Kurt's mother. First, when Kurt talked about a real rabbit that he had seen, she asked whether it was Peter and he said, "no/ . . . it was a cottontail/." Later, she asked whether he had seen Peter Rabbit lately. He answered affirmatively but, upon further questioning, did not pursue the topic.

The cessation of the retellings, in conjunction with the temporal patterning described earlier, indicate that the retellings peaked at 2 weeks of exposure to the written story—with retellings 2, 3, and 4 occurring in rapid succession—and then declined to zero. This pattern corresponds with the emotional trajectory of the retellings, in that the peak of affective marking occurred within the temporal peak. Retelling 2 was the most affectively marked retelling and the only retelling in which the narrator inhabited a sustained participatory stance. Retelling 3 was the only retelling in which Peter Rabbit's emotional state of fear was articulated. Affective marking began to decline in retelling 4 and continued in retelling 5. This pattern raises the possibility that in repeatedly telling the story, Kurt recreated the emotional experience associated with the written story—the build-up to a peak of suspense and its diminution. Were this pattern corroborated with other children, it would suggest that the narrative form itself provides a tool for emotion regulation.

In attempting to explain how the changes in plot came about, we proposed three factors that are plausibly involved. The first factor was Kurt's familiarity with the story. The second centered on the social circumstances and interactive mode of the retellings, which supported Kurt's heuristic use of narrative. A sympathetic interlocutor was always present; Kurt's concentration was not disturbed; and he was allowed to exercise authorship of the narrations.

The third factor was more complex and required micro-level analysis of how linguistic resources were used to create narrative stances. We found that despite his limited linguistic resources, Kurt was able to establish multiple narrative stances by aligning himself as narrator with the interests of various fictional characters whom he had appropriated from the written story. He accomplished this in several ways: by using words and affective markings that betrayed his vicarious participation in the actions that he recounted, by enacting the voices of particular characters, and by incorporating himself and other persons from his real life into the story and bringing them into contact with the fictional characters. In addition, in two of the retellings, he stepped out of the story entirely to reflect back on what he had just said. In both cases, this meta-commentary occurred after he had inhabited and reinhabited various intrastory stances. Our claim is that Kurt's ability to inhabit multiple stances toward the storyworld enabled him to take control of the story characters, thereby transforming the plot and creating a coherent mapping between his own experiences and the Beatrix Potter story.

Although this claim may seem to overstate the cognitive capabilities of such a young child, it is consistent with Wolf's (1990) description of young children's growing ability to adopt a variety of stances toward events during the second year. It is also compatible with Dunn's (1988) account of the social awareness and decided lack of egocentricity that young children show within the complex emotional world of the family. Dunn reports, for example, that in the third year children were more likely to reason in disputes that had earlier caused them most distress and anger. She argues that there may be special learning potential in "emotionally urgent situations that occur within the family" (p. 180). What our study adds is that young children may also be highly motivated to apply their reasoning powers to stories, especially those that invoke emotionally urgent family situations.

Any study of a single case, particularly a study of the author's own child, is subject to obvious limitations of generalizability. Without investigating other cases in the same detail, we cannot know whether the processes of narrative appropriation and transformation that we have identified apply to other 2-year-olds. However, the several examples cited earlier from culturally diverse children suggest that narrative retellings are not unique to Kurt.

There are two other limitations of these data that ought to be acknowledged. First, there is no way to check whether the corpus of Peter Rabbit retellings is comprehensive. Perhaps Kurt produced other retellings, which his researcher-mother simply did not notice. Second, there is a significant omission in the data in that the repeated readings of the written story were not recorded. Were we to undertake another case study, we would remedy this omission, so as to be able to track correspondences between the rereadings and the retellings. Of course, that would lead to an even more overwhelming quantity of data. The greatest strength of the in-depth study of single cases, namely the wealth of detailed material for analysis and interpretation, is also the greatest obstacle to its more widespread use (Nelson, 1989). In the present case, we are aware that there are many other analyses, especially of specific linguistic features, that could be fruitfully undertaken.⁶ Despite the difficulties involved, we believe that additional studies of this sort are worth doing, for there is no better way to reveal the actual process by which children recreate and improvise meaning out of cultural resources. This is socialization from the child's perspective.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preparation for this article was supported, in part, by a grant from the Spencer Foundation, awarded to the first author.

⁶For example, Hoogstra (1992) has conducted an analysis of the way in which repetition of words and phrases functions within the retellings to convey affective tone and temporal/spatial movement.

We wish to thank Kristin Alexander, Nancy Baym, Lois Bloom, Jean Briggs, Cindy Clark, Betsy Hearne, Barbara O'Keefe, and James Wertsch for stimulating discussions and constructive criticisms of earlier drafts. We also appreciate Charles Nelson's thoughtful editing. We are grateful to Cindy Clark for help with transcription.

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APPENDIX A

Retelling 2

- 001 *Mother*: I wonder if Peter Rabbit ate any of these marigolds last night?
 002 *Kurt*: ate that one/ (points to marigold)
 003 Peter Rabbit came around the path/ (gestures toward walk)
 004 Peter Rabbit came around the walk/
 005 ate this marigold right there/
 006 he came up on the porch/
 007 he came around the bend/
 008 he walked/
 009 he stepped on that stalk right there/ (gestures toward garden on left side of porch)
 010 his mother didn't help him/
 011 his mother helped him/
 012 "don't step on this little stalk," mother said/
 013 mother helped him/
 014 mother said, "don't step on this pile"/
 015 "don't walk in there, don't step in there," mother says/
 016 "don't go in there"/
 017 "don't go in there"/
 018 Grandma planted some flowers in there/
 019 Grandma planted some flowers in there/

- 020 Kurt did help/
 021 Peter did run/
 022 Peter did walk/
 023 Mother and Peter did walk/
 024 them came in this grass/
 025 them were some where/
 026 them were down this road/
 027 them were way down the street/
 028 some cars came and killed them/
 029 Peter Rabbit and mother went in the yellow car/
 030 went in the car to see the boats/ (Kurt did the previous evening)
 031 Peter Rabbit went in the grocery store cart to get groceries (Kurt did the previous evening)
 032 Peter Rabbit and mother went to grocery store to get oranges and cat food/ (Kurt did the previous evening)
 033 *Mother:* They went to get food for the kitty cat?
 034 *Kurt:* them walked way down the street to get kitty cat food/
 035 them walked down the street/
 036 mother caught a rabbit/
 037 mama says, “don’t step in that stuff right there”/ (gestures toward garden on right of path)
 038 right there sitting at the corner/
 039 mother says, “no, no, don’t step in that”/
 040 mother says, “Peter, don’t step in that”/
 041 starting get a green flower in it/ (refers to plant in garden)
 042 mother says, “no, no don’t step in that, Grandma planted that stuff right there”/
 043 Grandma used a trowel/
 044 mother says, “no, no, don’t step in that”/
 045 mother smacks Peter/
 046 mother says, “no, no, don’t step in this stuff right here”/
 047 Grandma planted other stuff/
 048 mother says, “no, no, don’t step in there, Peter”/
 049 mother’s a rabbit/
 050 mother jumps in there with Peter/
 051 no, no, get out mother, get out Peter/

(Kurt’s father appears on the porch)

- 052 *Kurt to Father:* Kurt talked about Peter Rabbit and the mother/
 053 came around the path/
 054 up to the porch/
 055 up to the house/

056 they came/

057 step in that stuff/ (refers to flower box)

058 Grandma planted flower/

(Kurt's grandmother appears on porch)

059 *Kurt to Grandmother:* talkin about Peter Rabbit and the mother/

060 Peter Rabbit and the mother/

061 mother did help Peter/

062 and the mother got out too/