

Orality and Children's play and games

Call for Proposals for Les *Cahiers de littérature orale*

Coordinated by Steven Prigent and Thierry Wendling

No doubt everyone knows from experience that in childhood play and orality are closely linked. Just thinking of songs like “eensy weensy spider,” of riddles, counting games and rounds will bring back to the minds of most adults sounds and words, verbal and playful attitudes that belong to another time in their lives. Yet on closer inspection, terms like play, childhood and orality raise a number of questions: How does one define play? What meaning do children attribute to their games in the “here and now” of the performance? How are these playful “texts” indexed to contexts (from the context of utterance to the cultural environment)? When does childhood end? What relations exist—in situations of play—between orality, gesture, writing, rhythm and music?

In launching this call for papers revolving around the notions of childhood, play and orality, the *Cahiers de littérature orale* invite contributions based on a close connection between theory and in-depth observation, description and interpretation.

Childhood can be interpreted, depending on the author's point of view, as extending to the mastery of writing, to puberty or initiation, or even to adulthood (legal majority). Hopefully the perception of childhood should remain flexible while at the same time taking into account the differing conceptions that a variety of social actors (adults as well as children) may have of the first years of life.

A comparable flexibility can be applied to talking about play. Children's play takes a variety of forms, some of which can be practiced alone, others with playmates of the same age or older, with relatives, adults or educators. Many of them give pride of place to orality. Jingles, nursery rhymes and riddles, singing and clapping games, rock-scissors-paper, jumping rope games, string games (like cat's cradle) and others all belong to a popular, oral culture and are examples of one (or several) cultures of childhood. One is also reminded of forms of verbal play (puns, poking fun, jokes), of emerging forms like the making of Internet videos by children, of the comments that children, or adults talking to children, make about what is a game, a rule, a “swear word”.

This link between orality and childhood play and games is expressed in many ways. There are those that function on the basis of orality (like riddles), but also those that involve the use of words to accompany play (verbal interaction and negotiation during play; storytelling related to play; verbal inventiveness to describe the elements of a game, to underline the rhythm). In play, through play, children speak, sing, chant, shout, whisper, reason and rave... Gestures, rhythm and words get mixed up, all staying in tune and keeping time. Words become dance, movement, choreography, while the pleasure of “acting out” becomes living language. There is an oscillation between poetics and kinesics, between spontaneity and normativity.

This issue of *Cahiers de littérature orale* will publish studies devoted to these games and forms of play that involve words and movement, verbal and motor activity, these words in action (including their possible reflexive dimension) in which children play a major role.

Proposals for articles (including a title and a text of 2,000 to 3,500 characters maximum, including bibliographic elements) accompanied by a brief Curriculum Vitae, should be sent to steven.prigent@u-bordeaux.fr and to thierry.wendling@cns.fr before **November 15, 2021**.

Proposers will be notified by December 31, 2021.

A workshop is currently being considered to bring together participants in early 2022.

Articles must be submitted by **June 30, 2022** and will be reviewed by two independent reviewers.

The publication of the special issue on Orality and Children's Play and Games is planned for early 2023 (no 93).

Indicative bibliography

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