

CRITICAL COMMENTARY - DRAFT

The project I have endeavoured to create did not occur straightaway and it was with some difficulty and hard thinking that anything surfaced at all. But surface it did in the form of verses for children and from that start it proved to be an enjoyable task. The original nursery rhymes were news items commented on but hidden from authority especially if they were deemed treasonable. As most of the population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were illiterate they were put into verse form for ease of remembering and ultimately for passing on the news.

So it was from this beginning that three alternatives were envisaged. One: write a play about one, or more of the original rhymes. Two: Pick the rhymes with hidden histories, choose a relevant word and write a modern story from it, for instance, *Ring-a-ring-a-roses* was deemed to be about the plague, so plague became the chosen word. The story could then have been about technology its rapid growth and how it can infect and plague the world's population. The third option was to write nursery rhymes with a modern twist and it was this last option that was chosen.

Today, as then, we are bombarded with news every day, not always happy reading or listening; the media seem to take delight in giving us all the bad news, especially about Brexit and our tussle with the EU. Put that side by side with the horrors that are happening in other parts of the world like the genocide of the Rohinghas and the starving in Yemen and they appear trivial in contrast. So I have tried to inject some humour especially into the political scenarios by using irony and satire. There are also comments on other news items that I deemed needed mentioning like the murder of baby Elsie by her adoptive father and the incarceration of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in an Iranian prison. The whole collection could have been quite dark but as the book is for children most of the verses are quite lighthearted, making fun of serious subjects, not to belittle the seriousness of some of the situations but to make them more palatable and for young readers to be able to understand them.

The jingles are purely for entertainment, some of them originally thought of from snippets read in newspapers or books. For instance the verse about the spaceship was influenced by the astronaut Tim Peake; Nellie, Maud and Joan arose from a friend recounting a scene in a cafe of three ladies of a certain age and their interactions. In fact anything and everything I have seen, heard or imagined that has appealed to me, I have tried to put into verse.

I have always enjoyed nonsense verse and one of my favourite authors was Spike Milligan especially his silly song, *I'm walking backwards for Christmas*, also *Jabberwocky* in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* conjures up many happy hours reading as a child. So if these verses of mine achieve anything it would be a fervent wish that the young readers carry on reading, maybe even being motivated to peruse the original nursery rhymes. I do hope so as there is so much pleasure in finding adventure in poetry and literature.

The verses are not in any particular order nor do they strictly adhere to rigid metres. I have included pen and ink illustrations of some of them as there is nothing so disappointing to a child as a book without pictures. It could be said that illustrations are not strictly creative writing but I will argue that an illustration is a 'drawn' word and therefore creative writing. It is hoped that the finished article will be of a size that will fit into a pocket or bag; paperback rather than hardback, purely so that the price will be affordable for most buyers.