Beatrix Potter's Mice

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the visual imagery in the mice illustrations of Beatrix Potter (British, 1866-1943), author and illustrator of children’s books. The research focuses primarily on the mouse tales Potter created in the early part of the twentieth century. It takes into account her personal life – including her artistic background, youthful training, and naturalist studies which informs her art. Revelatory evidence sheds light on historical background information and the significant sources that inspired and influenced her work.

Several analytical techniques are utilized -including biographical, formal/stylistic, iconographical, cultural and social history - to explore and find meaning in Potter’s mice images, all within the context of her time. The approach taken here draws on Potter’s personal journal and correspondence, recent research, secondary sources and various data. Taken together with selected images from her sketches, published and unpublished work, picture-letters and books, insight into the varying approaches she took becomes manifest. A clear pattern emerges showing that over a period of time, Potter closely identified with her mice and found her voice in them.

By focusing on her mouse tales, this study is intended to show they are deeply personal, with roots in memories of her own youth, in nursery rhymes, fables, imagery of places she visited and lived in, and the animals and people who figured largely in her life. It is proposed that Potter’s own pet mice – Xarifa, Hunca Munca, Tom Thumb, Appley Dapply, to name the favorites, were her Muses – providing the spark for a plethora of artistic creations.
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

“BEATRIX POTTER’S MICE”

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Art History

By

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Montclair, NJ

2011
I had many mouse friends in my youth. I was always catching & taming mice . . .

-Beatrix Potter, November 27, 1920
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Note on page and cross-references: All the page references for the Tales refer to the reoriginated 1987 editions. FREDERICK WARNE, published by The Penguin Group, London, England
INTRODUCTION

Beatrix Potter (British, 1866-1943) is one of the most celebrated children’s artists of the twentieth century. She is the author and illustrator of the best-selling classic, The Tale of Peter Rabbit (1901) and other ‘nursery masterpieces,’ that have sold over 100,000,000 copies and been translated into more than 35 languages¹ and into Braille.²

Many of the twenty-three Tales in the Peter Rabbit series, as they are known, have been adapted into plays, music, ballets (the Royal Ballet performed The Tales of Beatrix Potter at London’s Covent Garden in 1992), videos, CDs and DVDs.³ The Tales, published in small format and beautifully illustrated, have consistently appealed to new generations of children and adults who have come to know and enjoy the animal characters Potter inventively created. A naturalist-artist in her youth and woman-farmer/conservationist later in life, Beatrix Potter remains a continuing source of fascination.

In 2004, Susan Wittig Albert began writing a series of mystery books based on Potter’s life in England’s Lake District. They have been published by Penguin Books and the eighth title, The Tale of Castle Cottage, is due out in September, 2011.⁴ In 2006 Beatrix’s life was portrayed in Miss Potter, a movie starring Renee Zellweger and directed by Chris Noonan. In 2007, a new biography, Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature, written by Linda Lear was published by St. Martin’s Press. The Beatrix Potter Society, founded in the U.K. in 1980, publishes new scholarship and information on various aspects of Potter’s life and art in their quarterly Newsletter. The Society also publishes the proceedings of its biennial Study Conferences under the title Beatrix Potter Studies.⁵
Potter collectibles, based on the characters and artwork in her books, are eagerly bought and traded. Among the sources collectors consult are: *Beatrix Potter Collectibles: The Peter Rabbit Story Characters*, a price guide written by Debby DuBay and Kara Sewall (Schiffer Books for Collectors, 2005), *John Beswick and Royal Albert Beatrix Potter Figures and Craftware*, edited by Louise Irvine (UK International Ceramics Ltd., 1996), and the website http://beatrtixpottercollectibles.com.6

Potter’s first trade editions are valuable and command high prices. Noted bookseller Bauman Rare Books, New York and Philadelphia, is currently offering for sale (fall, 2010) *The Tailor of Gloucester* (1903) for $7500.00, and *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910) for $1800.00.7

Potter’s stature in the art world has been firmly established. Debby DuBay reports in her article, ‘Children’s Classic’, *Antique Trader*, April 19, 2006, that Potter’s watercolor of a mouse knitting by a globe light sold for close to $30,000 at Bonham’s auction in England in 2005.8 However, this price is negligible in comparison with the enormous sum paid for her watercolor *The Departure*, at Sotheby’s London showroom in 2008. *The Departure* was last in the set of *The Rabbits’ Christmas Party*, created by Potter c. 1892. Measuring just 6 x 6 inches, it was sold to a private collector for 289,250 pounds (approximately $578,700) – the highest price ever paid for a book illustration at auction.9

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which holds the world’s largest collection of Potter drawings, literary manuscripts, correspondence, photographs and related material, maintains the *Beatrix Potter Showcase* which hosts a changing display of her works. In addition, the V & A is currently holding (3 July 2010 through 8
January 2011) an exhibition, "Peter Rabbit – The tale of The Tale."10

Hill Top Farm, the home in the Lake District of England which Potter purchased in 1905, and which was a major source of inspiration, holds many personal artifacts and pieces of furniture, and is today a popular tourist destination. Hill Top was bequeathed to the National Trust with several other farms and four thousand acres upon Potter’s death, reflecting her strong commitment to conservation of the countryside.11 Information for Hill Top Farm is available on the website at http://hilltop@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Many memorable animal characters came to life in Potter’s work – she is best known for her rabbits, Peter, Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail - reflecting her own vision and intense love of nature. However, an examination of her art, which consists of studies, drawings, watercolors, greeting cards, booklets, picture-letters and some unpublished work, reveals a remarkable affinity for mice, “... voles, dormice, wood mice, and little white mice...”, according to Linda Lear.12

Mice are the main subjects in four of the Tales, and they are represented in the most attractive settings and backgrounds: the medieval town of Gloucester in The Tailor of Gloucester, an exquisite pink and white dollhouse in The Tale of Two Bad Mice, a charming country cottage in The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse, and a lush green garden in The Tale of Johnny Townmouse.

Potter’s fondness for mice may be traced to her childhood, when she kept them as pets. An early favorite was “Xarifa” – a dormouse with which she was photographed in 1885. As a result of closely observing mice and diligently studying their anatomy, Potter excelled at capturing their natural poses and activities. It was inevitable then that mice would be a major source of inspiration when she began to conceptualize her stories, some of which had their origin as picture-letters to children.

In Potter’s art, mice are imaginatively illustrated in various configurations in perfect compositions, in which the formal elements are skillfully arranged. Potter’s mice are anthropomorphic, taking on human characteristics and traits. They possess many positive attributes and may be characterized in myriad ways spanning a range from cute to sophisticated. In Potter’s world, mice are often depicted in scenes of domesticity and cleverly, often humorously, portrayed in diverse roles including: expert tailors, ideal parents, impeccable housekeepers, good country folk, and sophisticated bon vivants.

Mice are a recurrent theme in Potter’s work, and several authors have had much praise for her representations of them, with Ruth K. MacDonald claiming that “Potter’s most felicitous and successful animal creations are her mice . . .” Yet a review of publications about her reveals there is no single study that focuses entirely on them. One of the first books published on Potter’s art, The Art of Beatrix Potter by Leslie Linder (1955), includes examples of all aspects of her work, however it is basically organized to reveal her development into a writer and artist. Anne Stevenson Hobbs’ Beatrix Potter’s Art (1989), provides brief descriptions and expert, insightful analyses of her art, including
mice, but is limited in scope. Several authors have devoted single chapters to detailed, scholarly discussions of the topic of mice in her work, but they present primarily literary criticism. These include Margaret Lane’s *The Magic Years of Beatrix Potter* (1978), Ruth K. MacDonald’s *Beatrix Potter* (1986), and M. Daphne Kutzer’s *Beatrix Potter, Writing in Code* (2003).

In contrast, this thesis focuses on the visual elements in Potter’s mice illustrations, with emphasis on the lavish backgrounds and abundant details. Potter’s proclivity for illustrating little mice in diminutive spaces will be explored. Considering these mice illustrations together - using selected images from Potter’s sketches, published work, picture-letters and books, together with research of written materials, which include her private journal and letters – allows an insight into the varying approaches she took, and seen in sequence, one can trace their development and perceive their meaning.

The influence of contemporary theorists and practitioners, such as John Ruskin (1819-1900) and the Pre-Raphaelites is evident in examples of Potter’s early work which exhibit naturalistic fidelity and high levels of detail. Later works, in which Potter invested her mice with a semblance of human intelligence and emotion owe a debt to book illustrator Randolph Caldicott and his contemporaries. A clear pattern emerges showing that over a period of time, Potter closely identified with her mice. In some sense, she found her voice in them. Their lives and tribulations, as well their determination to overcome obstacles, identified them as Potter’s alter ego – the fullest expression of Beatrix Potter.

In this study I concentrate on the visual imagery in Potter’s mice illustrations in the context of her personal life, and in the context of the cultural and social history of the
Victorian/Edwardian era. Account is taken of her artistic background, youthful training and various influences.

Among the factors considered in Potter’s personal life are the significant relationships she enjoyed with Nurse Ann MacKenzie, who took complete care of Beatrix from birth until the age of six, nurturing governesses, close relations, especially Rupert, her father, and brother Bertram, (who became an artist), tutor and friend Annie Carter Moore and her children, important mentors, and publishers F. W. Warne & Co. Ltd.

Nature’s large presence in the work of Beatrix Potter is related to the wider culture in the nineteenth century and its fascination with the study of Natural History. In this broader context I discuss the habits and values of the upper middle-classes, to which Beatrix belonged, and the wide popularity among its members of field visits, collecting, classifying and studying specimens, the use of the microscope, sketching, photography, and the resultant growth of related books, journals, societies and museums. Also noted is the formation of the Conservation Movement and The National Trust, founded in 1895 to protect the open spaces and natural resources of the English countryside, which were threatened by growing industrialization. Additionally, the role of women in society is discussed in Chapter 3, as Beatrix was directly and indirectly affected by the restrictions placed on women.

My primary sources include Beatrix Potter’s books, published by F. W. Warne & Co., unless otherwise noted; The Journal of Beatrix Potter, 1881 – 1897, transcribed from her code writings by Leslie Linder, (Frederick Warne, 1966, revised edition 1989); A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter, edited by Leslie Linder (Frederick Warne, 1971); and Beatrix Potter’s Letters, edited by Judy Taylor (Frederick

To complete this research, I have consulted manuscript collections held by the following institutions: The New York Public Library and The Morgan Library, New York, and The Free Library of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A chronology of the life of Beatrix Potter is added as an appendix. A list of books by Beatrix Potter is included, together with a bibliography.
NOTES

EPIGRAPH

"I had many mouse friends": Taylor, *Beatrix Potter’s Letters*, 266.

INTRODUCTION

6 DuBay, 24.
8 DuBay, 24.
11 Lear, 444.
12 Ibid., 128.
15 Lear, 33.
Helen Beatrix Potter was born in London, England on 26 July 1866. Parents Helen (née Leech) and Rupert Potter, a barrister, were upper middle-class residents of London, and members of the Unitarian sect. They had inherited their wealth from family fortunes made in the cotton-spinning trade in the north of England in Lancashire. The family history is impressive and illuminating as it sheds light on the artistic abilities the following generations evidently inherited.

Rupert’s father, Edmund (1802 – 1883) was a successful businessman, politician and activist on behalf of education and the arts for the working classes. He married Jessy Cromption in 1829, and she, according to biographer Lear, held views that “would influence her husband’s practices and attitudes as an employer, as well as his views on the necessity of educating the lower classes.” In the 1830s, after initial failure, and with much determination, Edmund started and built up his calico printing business in Dinting Vale, known as Edmund Potter and Company. This prosperous manufacturing company remained under family control until the 1890’s. Potter eventually became prominent in public affairs, attaining the office of Liberal Member of Parliament for Carlisle, serving for twelve years. In 1855, Edmund published a pamphlet, *Schools of Art*, which extolled the benefits of art education. In this same year, and through 1858, he served as President of the Manchester School of Art. Beatrix, Lear notes, “inherited much of his artistic talent, entrepreneurial ability and intellectual curiosity”.

Helen’s father, John Leech (1801-1861) was a prosperous businessman, head of the John Leech Company. Helen’s mother, Jane Ashton, was the daughter of a wealthy
family in the cotton trade, when she married John in 1832. Both the Potter and Leech families acquired original British art and were involved in supporting the arts and sciences in their communities. It was natural then that art was an important part of the lives of Helen and Rupert. Helen’s artistic ability is clearly revealed in a lovely, early watercolor painting that is suggestive of a Constable landscape, complete with grazing cattle. It is a harmonious composition which reveals a refined hand skilled in perspective. Rupert’s artistic talent found an outlet in drawing and the newly-invented art form of photography (ca. 1838) in which he became highly skilled, joining the Photographic Society of London. He often photographed family and friends, London scenes and country landscapes. For his friend, the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais (1829-1896) Rupert photographed special background views and important sitters, such as Prime Minister Ewart Gladstone, whose image was simultaneously captured on canvas by Millais and through Rupert’s lens.

In the Victorian era, it was the convention for affluent families to employ nannies to care for young children and the Potters engaged Nurse Ann MacKenzie when Beatrix was born. Nurse MacKenzie, a native of Inverness, Scotland, was an important early influence in the life of Beatrix, looking after her physical, intellectual, and spiritual development until the age of six. Biographer Linda Lear has noted that during that impressionable period, MacKenzie stimulated Beatrix’s imagination with stories of Scottish tales and fairies. When Beatrix actually experienced Scotland during summer vacations around the age of five or six, she was “comfortably certain that the countryside was filled with fairies . . . and later governesses had only to build upon the already rich repository of fantasy and folklore, nature study, and love of drawing that Nurse
MacKenzie uncovered".  

Beatrix’s early life at No. 2 Bolton Gardens, Kensington, was quiet and secluded, until the birth of her brother Walter Bertram in 1872. Her two favorite toys were a “dilapidated black wooden doll called Topsy, and a very grimy, hard-stuffed, once-white flannelette pig.” Beatrix listened to stories from the Old Testament and enjoyed adventure books such as Walter Scott’s *Waverly* novels (1814-1819) with over 200 quotations from Shakespeare; Miss Edgeworth’s books,9 Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*; and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. She was very fond of fairy tales written by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen as well as Aesop’s Fables.10 *The Tale of Johnny Townmouse* (1918) Beatrix’s fifth mouse book, was based on Aesop’s fable *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*.11

It seems likely, in addition to those previously mentioned, that Beatrix had access to many fine books in her father’s personal library.12 Among the important works in his collection was William Yarrell’s *A History of British Birds (1871-85)*, a topic he found of considerable interest.13 He encouraged Beatrix to undertake the study of birds and on the occasion of her tenth birthday in 1876 presented her with a gift of an edition of *Birds Drawn from Nature*, by Jemima Blackburn.14 Beatrix absorbed her father’s interest in birds and they would eventually become part of her artistic repertoire, making appearances in several of her works.

Beatrix especially admired the children’s picture books created by the most innovative and successful illustrators of the day, Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway and Randolph Caldicott.15 She found their books fascinating and their effect on her would be nearly a revelation. Caldicott, an enormously popular, multi-faceted and brilliant talent,
was her favorite. Further, his work was held in high esteem by father Rupert. He purchased some of Caldicott's original artwork and hung a selection of his pictures in Beatrix's room, where she was able to enjoy and study them. These three illustrators contributed to the development of her own style (footnote) and Beatrix unhesitatingly borrowed from the works of her predecessors. She admitted in later years that she "did try to copy Caldicott; . . . but did not achieve much resemblance." 

Literature of pure fancy including Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*, and most importantly, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll, exerted a particularly profound and lasting influence on Beatrix. She found the limericks, poems, rhymes and riddles contained in these books especially intriguing. In years to come she would include rhymes and riddles in *The Tailor of Gloucester* (1903) her first mouse book, and *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903). Two books were to be devoted exclusively to rhymes and riddles: *Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes* (1917) and *Cecily Parsley's Nursery Rhymes* (1922). Carrollian influences can also be seen for instance, in *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse* in which Beatrix utilized the opening dream sequence, and appropriated and transformed the "rabbit-hole" into a "mouse hole."

The illustrations depicting anthropomorphized animals, created by John Tenniel for *Alice's Adventures*, were particularly fascinating to Beatrix. She was inspired to create some of her own interpretations of Carroll's story in the 1890's, when she was in her twenties and had acquired several of the animals mentioned in the text. The designs are among her most exquisite works and provide insight into her artistic output.

For example, she created 'The little Lizard, Bill', 1893 (figure 1). This design was based on a passage in chapter IV of *Alice's Adventures*. The White Rabbit - dressed
in waistcoat - attending to Bill, is conceivably the model for her own *Peter Rabbit*
character. The Guinea-pigs who are assisting, will appear in *Appley Dapply’s Nursery Rhymes* and *The Fairy Caravan* (1929). Three guinea hens, drawn in fine naturalistic
detail, look on with Mouse, who is standing in the center foreground. Mice, as previously
noted, were among Beatrix’s personal favorite animals -along with rabbits -and in them
she found subject matter that would occupy her for much of her artistic career.

When the acclaimed *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1881) was
introduced into England in the early 1880’s, Beatrix, who was in her teens, was among
the large audience who heartily enjoyed reading about the antics of *Br’er Rabbit* (a
contraction of “Brother Rabbit,”) the spirited hero and central character. This book, and
five successive collections, were based on the folklore of the American south and written
by Joel Chandler Harris (1845-1908) in colloquial language.

The *Uncle Remus* books humorously explored the dynamic relationships *Br’er*
Rabbit had with other, bigger characters such as *Br’er Fox, Br’er Bear and Br’er Wolf.*
Despite his smaller size and limitations, very often *Br’er Rabbit* outwitted and outsmarted
his larger adversaries. Harris’s works strongly resonated with Beatrix who had a pet
rabbit and had completed studies of rabbits. The concept of the weak overcoming the
strong, and some of the jargon, would be most useful to the future author of *The Tales.*

Beatrix’s education took place in the home under the supervision of governesses,
as was the custom for young girls of her status in the Victorian era. After the departure of
Miss MacKenzie, Miss Florrie Hammond was employed in 1872 to teach Beatrix basic
subjects, including Latin. Miss Hammond appears to have nurtured Beatrix’s interest in
drawing and nature which was fully awakened when the family began spending holidays
in the Scottish countryside. Beginning in 1871, and continuing through 1881, the Potters rented Dalguise House for summer vacations.\(^{24}\)

Unlike London, Beatrix came nearer to nature at Dalguise, becoming acquainted with the flora, fauna and large variety of wildlife indigenous to the area. In Scotland, Beatrix’s interest in natural history soared. Her first sketchbook from Dalguise, dated 1875, contains a study of caterpillars with descriptions and notations on their habits.\(^{25}\)

When brother Bertram was old enough, he accompanied Beatrix on regular excursions into the surrounding woodlands. Together they went exploring, observing, and gathering a large variety of small creatures, such as bats, birds, frogs, insects, lizards, snails, etc., which formed an interesting menagerie for their London home. When dead specimens became available, they dissected them and closely studied their anatomy under a microscope. Beatrix and Bertram took careful measurements, sketched, and occasionally stuffed the remains.\(^{26}\)

Victorians of all classes enthusiastically engaged in the study of Natural History which has been defined as “the study of the natural world. Specifically, it is the observation and study of all living organisms, including plant life, their life cycles and the relationships between species.”\(^{27}\) Adherents, like Beatrix, were considered ‘naturalists’ who generally organized field trips to study, sketch, and collect “fossils, seaweeds, mosses, ferns, fungi, butterflies, and other insects.”\(^{28}\) Naturalists of independent means embarked on ambitious journeys, often traveling to foreign countries in search of new specimens. Valuable scientific information was gathered and widely disseminated through newspapers, books, magazines, journals, clubs, societies and museums, which added to existing knowledge and led to the formation of new scientific disciplines.
Beatrix began formal art training in November, 1878, at the age of 12 under the tutelage of a Miss Cameron for five years. In 1880, Beatrix was prepared to sit for examinations which qualified her for the Second Grade Art Student’s Certificate issued by the Science and Art Department of the Council on Education at the National Art Training School. Beatrix acknowledged her debt to Miss Cameron in her private journal (written in secret code, and later translated): “I have great reason to be grateful to her, though we were not on particularly good terms for the last good while. I have learnt from her free-hand, model, geometry, perspective and a little water-colour flower painting.”

Beatrix’s first contact with the Lake District of England came in 1882 when the Potter family rented Wray Castle in Windermere for summer vacation. Like many of her contemporaries Beatrix was captivated by the sublime scenery of mountains, lakes and rivers, and felt an intimate connection with the land and its inhabitants. For the following nine years the Potter family vacationed there, thereafter returning intermittently, and its effect on Beatrix’s art and life was considerable. The natural simplicity and idyllic setting inspired sentiment and nostalgia for a pre-industrial era, qualities which found expression in her timeless art.

In the Lake District, Beatrix made the acquaintance of Rev. Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley (1851-1920) Vicar of Wray. Rev. Rawnsley was also an author and conservationist, dedicated to preserving the customs and natural beauty of the Lake District. He had studied under John Ruskin at Balliol College, Oxford and according to Linda Lear, “was deeply influenced by his philosophy of nature and art.” In 1895 Rawnsley became a co-founder of the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty. His passionate views on conservation, as well as his interest in geology
and archeology, would have an enduring effect on Beatrix. Rawnsley took a genuine interest in Beatrix’s art and was instrumental in securing a publisher for her books.

The year 1883 is significant in Beatrix’s background as this was the period when she first attended the Winter Exhibition at the Royal Arts Academy, received a new governess, visited the Millais’s for the first time and took lessons in oil painting. Attending the Winter Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters was a formative event for Beatrix. She was seventeen years old and enthusiastically recorded her favorable impressions in her journal on January 13th. Some of her comments are revealing and noteworthy: “I never thought there could be such pictures . . . five magnificent Van Dyck’s side by side . . . Reynolds’ . . . five figures seem to me far the highest art in the Exhibition . . . The finest portrait of the Exhibition, if not the most beautiful picture, was Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, by Titian . . . [The Exhibition] . . . has raised my idea of art and I have learnt some things by it . . . That picture [Design] by Angelica Kaufmann is something, it shows what a woman has done.”

In addition to the Royal Arts Academy exhibitions, the Potters often visited museums, various art galleries, private collections and auction rooms. Beatrix attended along with her parents and began serious studies and copying of the old masters. Her journal contains many detailed notes and critiques of works she viewed: There are numerous passages in which she analyses such elements as color, expression, background, composition, and drawing skills. At the Fine Arts Gallery in Bond Street, Beatrix recorded her enthusiastic response to Hablot Knight Browne’s (1815-82) drawings. She would base some of the landscape backgrounds in her first mouse book,
The Tailor of Gloucester, on his design of the “City” created for Dickens’ Bleak House (1852-3).38

In a subsequent journal entry Beatrix referred to a visit to the National Gallery where she observed “Swarms of young ladies painting, frightfully for the most part, O dear, if I was a boy . . . the drawing as a rule seems pretty good, but they cannot have the slightest eye for colour . . . what I have seen today gives me courage.”39 Mrs. Potter’s decision in the Spring of 1883 to hire Miss Annie Carter, a new governess, would prove to be a providential event.40 Miss Carter taught German and Latin and was a companion to Beatrix. Close in age, they developed a friendship that would continue after Miss Carter left in June 1885 to marry Mr. Edwin Moore and start a family.41 Annie Carter-Moore and her children would play an essential role in the launching of Beatrix’s career.

On November 11, 1883, Beatrix visited Millais’s home and studio with her parents. John Everett Millais was an impressive figure - a founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood movement and the most popular painter in England at the time. The “P.R B.,” formed in 1848, challenged the artistic Establishment’s “basic principle of idealization” which essentially decreed that “art should improve upon nature.”42 The “P.R.B.” had found significant inspiration in the philosophy of the influential art critic John Ruskin. His famous work, Modern Painters, encouraged artists to “go to nature in all singleness of heart, selecting nothing, rejecting nothing.”43

Beatrix was directly influenced by Millais and the “P.R.B.” She was loyal to many of their artistic principles, particularly their penchant for painting abundant detail, followed their careers, attended many exhibitions of their works, and wrote numerous passages in her journal praising, and sometimes criticizing, their art. Millais was quite
kind and supported young Beatrix’s developing artistic talent. He offered advice and encouragement and may be considered an important role model and mentor figure.  

In November, 1883, Beatrix continued art studies, twelve ‘expensive’ lessons, under the instruction of “Mrs. A,” referred to Mr. Potter by Lady Eastlake. Beatrix confided in her Journal (24 November 1883): “I don’t much like it, which is rather disappointing... will it even do me harm? Don’t much like the colours, why should I not use English ones. Linseed oil horrid stucky stuff... I do wish these drawing lessons were over so that I could have some peace and sleep of nights.”

A later journal entry reveals the depth of Beatrix’s passion about art. Confessing that she possessed “an irresistible desire to copy any beautiful object which strikes the eye,” she wondered “why cannot one be content to look at it? I cannot rest, I must draw, however poor the result, and when I have a bad time come over me it is a stronger desire than ever, and settles on the queerest things, worse than queer sometimes.” On 27 October 1884, she wrote “I don’t want lessons, I want practice... it cannot be taught, nothing after perspective, anatomy, and the mixing of paints with medium...”

Beatrix drew incessantly and many examples of her work dating from this period include microscopic studies of “insects, spiders, butterflies and moths.” This entomological work would prove advantageous in later years when Beatrix was illustrating the Tales - many examples are found in The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse.

While Beatrix developed her drawing and painting skills by continuous practice, she experimented with various media. However, she preferred pencil, pen and ink and watercolor. She produced many botanical drawings, still-lifes, animal subjects, interiors, exteriors and landscapes were in this medium. Hobbs has noted that “mice populate the
early rhyme pictures. They are painted in wash, stippled in miniature, or sketched with a more supple brushstroke suited to their quicksilver movements.\textsuperscript{50} Portable watercolors were ideal for Beatrix who traveled often on vacation in summers. Her interest in color and light was well served by the transparency and spontaneity of watercolor.

By the spring of 1890, when she was twenty-four, Beatrix revealed greater artistic confidence, preparing and submitting six rabbit designs, based on her pet rabbit Benjamin, to commercial printers Hildesheimer & Faulkner. She was galvanized by brother Bertram and her uncle, Sir Henry Enfield Roscoe, who gave her the idea and accompanied her to their office.\textsuperscript{51} The firm accepted her illustrations and Beatrix celebrated her first paid artistic venture.\textsuperscript{52}

Soon after, she received additional commissions for work and some of the designs featured a mouse in its nest, mice in a coconut, and guinea pigs in a basket.\textsuperscript{53} For the German firm of Ernest Nister and Co., in London, Beatrix designed a ‘Jackdaw sweep’ (1892) and frog drawings (1894) which were inspired by Caldicott and based on an illustrated letter she had sent to Eric Moore, second son of her former governess, Annie Carroll Moore.\textsuperscript{54} Energized by her success, Beatrix produced numerous designs based on fantasy, well-known fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and fables. As her prospects for work expanded, she anticipated the future, albeit with apprehension: “One must make out some way. It is something to have a little money to spend on books and to look forward to being independent, though forlorn.”\textsuperscript{55}

The Potter family spent the summer of 1892 in Scotland, returning for the first time since 1881. While vacationing there, Beatrix sought the advice of Charles McIntosh, a retired postman and naturalist who lived in Inver. McIntosh’s expertise lay in ferns and
fungi and Beatrix had developed a compelling interest in the latter.\textsuperscript{56} McIntosh became a mentor to Beatrix. He supplied the correct scientific names of the various fungi and helped improve her drawings by recommending that she make “separate sketches of sections showing the attachment of the gills; the stem if it be hollow or otherways, or any other details that would show the characteristics of the plant more distinctly.”\textsuperscript{57} When Beatrix returned to London, McIntosh sent her specimens for microscopic study.\textsuperscript{58}

With time and creative energy to spare, Beatrix began a period of extensive field visits in which she focused on photographing, collecting, classifying, and drawing fungi. By 1895, according to Anne Stevenson Hobbs, Beatrix “had the skill of a fully-fledged scientific illustrator.”\textsuperscript{59} Because her approach to mycology was scientific as well as artistic, Beatrix began to experiment and formulate a working hypothesis regarding the reproduction of fungi. Her immersion in mycology would bring her into contact with experts at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, result in the production of 300 fungi watercolors, and culminate in a scientific paper on the subject which she submitted to the Linnean Society of London.\textsuperscript{60} It would also involve intense observation and concentration, and result in Beatrix’s complete mastery of articulating the natural phenomena found in untamed nature. She excelled at rendering fungi, usually in habitat, and often including leaves, grasses, ferns, twigs, mosses or lichen. The exceptional skills she painstakingly acquired as a naturalist artist would be effectively utilized in years to come in creating many of the attractive landscape backgrounds for the \textit{Tales} – which helped to account for their enormous success. One of the finest examples is found in a design for \textit{The Tale of Johnny Town Mouse} (figure 2). In this illustration, Timmy Willie -
the country mouse – is shown surrounded by flourishing vegetation in which the varying forms and textures have been beautifully delineated.

By the late 1890s Beatrix was in a transitional stage – an artist who had not yet found herself. The laborious study of mycology was behind her and an uncertain future lay before her. Providentially, it was Annie (Carter) Moore, her former governess and good friend, who helped to shape her future.61

Over the years, the Moore children were the happy recipients of illustrated letters written by Beatrix. With childlike enthusiasm she composed imaginative, amusing stories largely based on her pets and activities. In one letter sent to Noel, the first-born son, she created the now-famous classic story of her pet rabbit Peter. In another letter to Frida, the second oldest daughter, she composed a story based on folklore about a tailor that she had heard during a visit to her Hutton cousins in Gloucestershire.

The children had saved the correspondence and Mrs. Moore made the astute observation that –conceivably - the letters the children so enjoyed might be converted into books and made suitable for publication. She suggested the idea to Beatrix, who acted upon it, choosing the letter about Peter rabbit. After transforming it by adding additional text and illustrations, she initiated a plan to submit it to several publishers.62

By 1901, when no publisher responded affirmatively, Beatrix proceeded to have the story that she titled ‘The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor’s Garden’ privately printed for circulation among family and friends. At that critical juncture, Rev. Rawnsley interceded on her behalf and contacted commercial printers Frederick Warne & Co., located in London. After a period of negotiation Beatrix entered into an agreement with
the firm to publish her *Tale*\(^{63}\) and began a professional, as well as personal relationship, with the Warne family that would last her entire life.
NOTES

1 BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

3 Ibid., 11.
4 Ibid., 15.
6 Lear, 29.
7 Ibid., 30.
9 Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), Anglo-Irish novelist.
10 Lear, 30.
12 Lear, 35.
13 Ibid., 77.
14 Ibid., 32.
15 Ibid., 33.
16 Lane, *Tale of BP*, 56.
18 Lear, 34.
19 Ibid., 30-35.
21 Ibid., 66-67.
22 Lear, 44.
25 Lane, *Magic Years*, 22.
26 Lear, 38.
29 Lear, 44.

31 Lane, *Tale of BP*, 44.

32 Lear, 7.

33 Ibid., 52.

34 Ibid., 140.


37 Hobbs, 11.


39 Ibid., 117.

40 Ibid., 36.


45 Ibid., 54-55.

46 Ibid., 106.

47 Ibid., 107.

48 Lear, 77.

49 Hobbs, 14-15.

50 Ibid, 22.

51 Lane, *Magic Years*, 61.


53 Hobbs, 44.

54 Linder, *Writings of BP*, 175.


56 Lear, 81-2.

57 Ibid., 87.

58 Ibid., 83.

59 Hobbs, 11.

60 Lear, 109.


62 Lear, 142.

THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER

BEATRIX POTTER

The original and woodcut illustrations
The Tailor of Gloucester was Beatrix Potter's first 'mouse book,' a fairy tale set in the Regency period in England, in which mice are the principal characters and behave like good fairies. In The Tailor, the mice have been depicted in correct physical form - reflecting Beatrix's mastery of mouse anatomy. They are characterized as charming, cultivated creatures, with an appreciation for rich fabrics and the ability to sew them into beautiful garments for themselves – and others. The Gloucester mice also have a gift for singing, and a remarkable capacity for expressing gratitude.

Beatrix’s expertise in drawing mice, which were among her favorite subjects, may be traced to her youth when they were kept as pets. An ardent naturalist, she closely observed and studied them. She drew them in a variety of ways and became adept at capturing their natural poses, as seen in Studies of Mice, (figure 3). In the course of time, she carefully articulated their skeletons,1 which she saved in a bone-cupboard.2 Beatrix enjoyed depicting mice on greeting cards (figure 4), Christmas gifts (figure 5), and picture-letters (figure 6). A dormouse named “Xarifa” was an early favorite of Beatrix’s. An 1885 photograph shows nineteen-year old Beatrix holding Xarifa in her left hand, (figure 7). When Xarifa died the following year, Beatrix poignantly reflected in her Journal: “I wonder if ever another dormouse had so many acquaintances, Mr. Bright, Mr. J. Millais, and Mr. Leigh Smith had admired and stroked her, amongst others. I think she was in many respects the sweetest little animal I ever knew.”3

The Common Dormouse (Muscardinus Avellanarius), an attractive, affectionate mammal with a furry tail, was a favorite pet in Victorian England. According to
information provided by Young People’s Trust for the Environment (http://ypte.org.uk.),
dormice were popularized through the Mad Hatter’s Tea-party in Lewis Carroll’s classic novel, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865). The popularity of these small creatures helped lead to the formation of the National Mouse Club in 1895. The NMC, still in existence, sets standards for the different varieties of mice and supports and encourages the breeding and exhibition of fancy mice.4

The Common Housemouse (Mus musculus) was another matter. Largely considered vermin in the culture, they were pests – carriers of disease – to be exterminated and disposed of. However, Beatrix held an enlightened view, rescuing them from traps and taming them.5 She may have been influenced by the prolific writer, Mrs. Mary Haelis. In her popular book The Art of Housekeeping (1889), she stated that [rats and mice] were “nice, pretty, clever little things . . . They . . . are our friends, acting as scavengers, and are to me in no wise repugnant.”6 Mice were also versatile and entertaining. In the Harrod’s 1895 Catalogue, there is a listing under the Entertainments Department for “Performing Birds, Cats, and Mice.” A description states “two clever Cats in their Boxing Match, and Holding the Pole for their two little friends the White Mice, who have a Race for the Flags, Tight-Rope Walking &c.” 7

The Tailor of Gloucester was originally conceived during the 1890’s as a picture-letter for Freda Moore, the ten year-old daughter of Beatrix’s former governess. When Beatrix embarked on a career as a writer/illustrator of childrens’ books, the letter was carefully adapted and transformed into a book for publication.8 Beatrix actively pursued this profession at the turn of the twentieth century when she attempted to extend the range of her art beyond the service of the natural sciences. For many years (1892-1897)
she had focused most of her attention and energies on conducting field trips for the collection, classification, scientific illustration and painting of fungi. As an amateur mycologist, she achieved a high degree of expertise which culminated in a scientific paper that was submitted to The Linnean Society. 'On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricinea by Miss Helen B. Potter' was read at the Society’s April 1 1897 meeting.⁹

Regrettably, since the Society and its meetings were closed to women, Beatrix was unable to attend. The paper was “well received” but not printed, as it required more work. However, Lear affirms that the Society “discounted her research and ignored her conclusions” - which were eventually proved correct. The Society, which consisted of all male professional scientists, was ill-disposed to consider the work of a female amateur. A century later, in 1997, The Linnean Society issued a posthumous apology to Beatrix Potter for their discriminatory behavior.¹⁰

Although Beatrix continued her work on fungi and produced more microscopic drawings, eventually she changed direction and began to consider other vocational possibilities. A combination of factors motivated Beatrix, in her mid-thirties, to seek an occupation: personal ambition; need for creative expression; a longing to achieve a level of independence;¹¹ and a persistent urge for “something to do” as she phrased it in a letter to her publisher.¹² Beatrix, like many young women of the privileged upper middle class whose servants freed them from domestic chores, faced the dilemma of how to be productive and fill leisure time. The difficult quandary was typified - and the ennui brought into sharp focus - in Charlotte Bronte’s social novel Shirley (1849):

“Caroline,” demanded Miss Keeldar abruptly. “don’t you wish you had a profession – a trade?”
“I wish it fifty times a day. As it is, I often wonder what I came into the world for. I long to have something absorbing and
compulsory to fill my head and hands, and to occupy my thoughts."\textsuperscript{13}

Florence Nightingale, considered one of the most important women of the Victorian era, and one of the most courageous and outspoken voices on the plight of women wrote in mid-century, “Very few people lead such an impoverishing and confusing and weakening life as the women of the richer classes.”\textsuperscript{14} In the rigid social system of the Victorian era, unmarried women of the upper middle class, like Beatrix, were generally confined to the home sphere under the protection of fathers or brothers.\textsuperscript{15} They were prohibited by societal convention to seek employment, for to do so would mean a loss of status. To protect their identity, women who worked from their homes – like those whose work was published – did so under assumed names or merely signed their piece “By a Lady.”\textsuperscript{16} Although Beatrix faced obstacles – among them opposition from her parents who, even in this late Victorian period, held firm objections to their daughter’s wish for a career - she was likely inspired by changes in the broader culture and encouraged by the success of women writer/illustrators like Kate Greenaway and Helen Bannerman.\textsuperscript{17}

The scientific and technological progress achieved in transportation, manufacturing, mining and communication during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Great Britain radically transformed the country. During this period, known as the Industrial Revolution, the nation went from a rural, agricultural economy to a bustling industrial one with a majority of the population - which rapidly increased - concentrated in major cities. Advances in the production of steel, iron and steam power facilitated the growth of the railways, steam-powered ships and overall industrialization. Mechanization of production of textiles helped to spur growth by increases in capacity and exportation.
Techniques were perfected for the mining of coal, which was the major source of energy fueling the Revolution. The rise of newspapers in mid-century and refinements and improvements to the telegraph led to a phenomenal acceleration in the transmission and dissemination of information, crucial to economic and social expansion. Sir Charles Petrie writes that with the expansion, London assumed the prestige of being the “financial center of the world” and “chief port of the British Isles.”

The increased demand for labor created employment opportunities and many new career options for women. The 1860’s saw the emergence of renewed discussions of women’s rights and a strong push for educational, employment, legal and voting reform. Influential works like John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*, 1869, (written with the help of his wife, Harriet Taylor) spurred the debate and contributed to furthering the goals of equality.

In 1894, Beatrix began visits to the home of her cousins, Caroline and Mary Hutton. The journeys had a profound influence on Beatrix’s career and mark an incredibly inspired and important stage in her personal and artistic development as this is where *The Tailor of Gloucester* was conceived. The Huttons lived at Harescombe Grange, Stroud, near the ancient city of Gloucester. Leslie Linder has noted that it was there, that Beatrix heard a story - “from Miss Caroline Hutton, who had it of Miss Lucy, of Gloucester, who had it of the tailor” - that captured her imagination. Beatrix was inspired to create an illustrated book based on the story for ten-year old Freda Moore. According to Linder, John Prichard, the tailor, had placed a waistcoat in his shop’s window on Westgate St., and next to it, a sign which read, ‘Come to Prichard where the waistcoats are made at night by the fairies.’ A full explanation of the story, was provided
“many years later” by the tailor’s wife. In Mrs. Prichard’s account, the new mayor of Gloucester had ordered a waistcoat from the tailor for the annual procession from Guildhall to Shire Hall of the Root, Fruit and Grain Society. Because the tailor had many orders to fill for this occasion, he was behind in his work and it appeared he would be unable to complete the waistcoat in time. When he left his shop before the weekend, the material was spread across the worktable in pieces. Unbeknownst to him, his helpful assistants returned to the shop to finish it, except for one buttonhole, as they ran out of thread. When the tailor returned to his shop on Monday, to his astonishment, he found the finished waistcoat with a note attached to the unfinished buttonhole that read ‘No more twist.’ This account provides the principal direct source of *The Tailor of Gloucester*.

It is evident, however, that Beatrix drew on other sources when she created the text for *The Tailor of Gloucester*, e.g., William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, traditional songs and nursery rhymes, and according to M. Daphne Kutzer, Charles Perrault. Beatrix borrowed from two of Shakespeare’s works; *Richard III*, (c. 1591), a history play, and *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream* (c. 1595), a romantic comedy. Beatrix appropriated a line from the first work for insertion on the title page - “I’ll be at Charges for a looking-glass, and entertain a score or two of tailors.” From the second work, she adopted the wedding scene and two of the characters, Puck, a mischievous fairy, and Robin Starveling, a tailor. Beatrix revealed many years after the book was written that “the mice [in *The Tailor*] working for humans at night were an honest imitation of Puck, Robin Goodfellow and the Scottish Brownie” [alternate names for Puck].
Beatrix’s use of Shakespeare may be traced to the year 1894, in which she pursued an intensive study of his works, and may be directly related to her visits to the Huttons, which began that year. Judge Crompton Hutton, father of Caroline and Mary, was “much in the habit of quoting Shakespeare . . .” Beatrix wrote in her Journal that year, “and expects people to be acquainted with what he quotes, . . .”23 Thereafter, Beatrix committed several Shakespeare plays to memory, including MND and kept a detailed progress sheet.24

The influence of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* - which Beatrix had long been familiar with – is apparent in the seasonal setting, carols, and the solitary figure of the tailor, who like Ebenezer Scrooge, experiences a life-changing conflict and finds a happy resolution on Christmas day. Beatrix’s decision to include Christmas in the story may be a reflection of her own desire to celebrate Christmas, a day that was not considered holy in the Potter household. As members of the Unitarian church, which rejected the concept of Jesus as God and the Trinity, the Potters viewed Christmas as merely an ordinary day.25 The Unitarians trace their dogma to the work of a Spanish priest, Father Michael Servetus (1511-53) who authored *De Trinitatis Erroribus* (Errors of the Trinity) in 1531. He was burned at the stake, in part, for his beliefs.26

M. Daphne Kutzer points out that similarities exist between Perrault’s cat in *Puss In Boots* and Simpkin, the cat, in *The Tailor*. Kutzer claims “both cats are successful hunters and are sly and clever; both have impoverished masters; both cats use clothing in their schemes . . .”27

The origin of some of the nursery rhymes used in *The Tailor* was revealed to Freda by Beatrix in 1901: “Some of the verses are the Scottish version (Chambers).
[Beatrix was likely referring to *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* written by Robert Chambers and published in 1870.] Most of the rhymes are from J. O. Halliwell’s collection [*Nursery Rhymes of England*]. According to Lane, rhymes from “Walter Crane’s *The Baby’s Opera* and *The Baby’s Bouquet*” were also used by Beatrix.

The *Tailor of Gloucester* illustrations, for which Beatrix visited the South Kensington Museum and made follow-up visits over a period of several years to Gloucester, as well as to her tailor in Chelsea to photograph and sketch, reveal the influence of some of the finest artists that Beatrix admired and emulated in her formative years: English painters William Hogarth and John Everett Millais, and book illustrators Hablot Knight Browne (‘Phiz’), Walter Crane, Randolph Caldicott, and Kate Greenaway.

In her version of the story, Beatrix depicted the tailor as unmarried and living alone, but invented a companion cat for him named Simpkin. She retained Gloucester as the setting, but altered the period in which it occurred to the early nineteenth century, with the applicable antiquated language and costumes. This may reflect Beatrix’s admiration for Jane Austen, as well as an appreciation for her favorite English illustrators, whose stories were also set in the early nineteenth century. MacDonald notes that Crane, Caldicott, and Greenaway “set a new standard for detailed and careful draftsmanship in their artwork for children’s books.” Further, she notes that Greenaway’s influence is clearly seen in *The Tailor* with its concentration on the intricately detailed Regency tailcoat and waistcoat, which are the focus of the story. Greenaway is famous for her beautiful illustrations of youth carefully dressed in elegant, Regency-style costumes in country settings.
Beatrix’s substitution of mice for fairies was likely related to a rhyme she had illustrated in 1892, *Three Little Mice Sat Down to Spin*, in which the fourth line reads: “Making coats for gentlemen.” It is probable that Beatrix recalled this illustration and its allusion to Prichard’s sign at the time she heard the tale, which may explain the formation of the story. Beatrix eliminated the “annual procession of the Root, Fruit, and Grain Society,” and substituted for it the wedding of the Mayor of Gloucester, arranged to take place on Christmas Day in the morning.

After completing the story and crafting it according to her personal concept, Beatrix put it into a “stout exercise book with twelve [vignetted] watercolours pasted in,” and sent it to Freda Moore along with a note that read in part:

*Christmas, 1901*

My dear Freda,

Because you are fond of fairy-tales, and have been ill, I have made you a story all for yourself—a new one that nobody has read before.

And the queerest thing about it—is that I heard it in Gloucestershire, and that it is true! at least about the tailor, the waistcoat, and the “No more twist”

There ought to be more pictures toward the end, and they would have been the best ones; only Miss Potter was tired of it! Which was lazy of Miss Potter.

Yrs. aff. H.B.P.

In the following months Beatrix borrowed the picture book back from Freda in order to revise it for private publication—just as she had recently done with her first rabbit book, (which was also based on a picture letter she had sent to Freda’s brother Noel). In November, 1902, Beatrix paid £40 to the printers Messrs Strangeways for 400
Subsequently, with the help of family friend Canon Rawnsley, Beatrix entered into serious negotiations with F. W. Warne and Co., a prominent London publisher that had been founded in 1865. They agreed to publish her rabbit book after she provided revisions of her privately printed edition. By June, a contract was signed, and by October, 1902, her first book, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published in small format (approximately 4x6 inches), a size suitable for young children. After its immediate success, Warne’s then agreed to publish *The Tailor of Gloucester* in 1903, in small format, pending alterations to the privately printed version. *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*, also in small format, in two separate editions, was published at the same time.

With Warne’s editorial assistance, Beatrix made further revisions to *The Tailor*, completing a new cover, frontispiece and seventeen additional colored illustrations in pen and ink and watercolor. “The illustrations,” M. Daphne Kutzer claims, “are by far the most detailed and gorgeous of any to appear in her novels.” They are based on “authentic details,” Hobbs has noted, providing a factual basis, enhancing the work. Twenty-two of the original illustrations are in the collection of the Tate Museum, London, England.

Beatrix’s design for the cover of her privately printed book (figure 8) is a plain composition in black and white. She drew an arrangement of three small mice facing each other in a circle, sewing. By contrast, the cover of the Warne edition (figure 9) features a single mouse in color. Beatrix relied on her earlier paintings for inspiration; *A Dream of Toasted Cheese* (1899), and *The Day’s News* (1892). Both images depicted a seated mouse, wearing spectacles, reading. Beatrix adopted this pose for the new cover. The tailor mouse is directly facing the viewer, sitting on a pink bobbin.
next to the tools of his trade - a thimble and a pair of scissors. He wears spectacles and is reading *The Tailor and Cutter*, an actual trade newspaper. In a letter to Norman Warne dated November 22, 1904, Beatrix proudly related that they had printed an enthusiastic review of *The Tailor* in their December, 1903 edition.

The frontispiece to *The Tailor of Gloucester* sets the joyful tone of the tale. It was copied from Hogarth's 1738 engraving "Noon" (figure 10). The illustration (figure 11) depicts a happy couple, presumably the Mayor of Gloucester and his new bride, in formal dress, proceeding hand-in-hand along a cobbled street, to the admiring glances of local townspeople. Beatrix's idea to copy a Hogarth work was almost certainly borrowed from Millais. In a Journal entry dated May 4, 1884, Beatrix referred to Millais' painting, titled *Drummer* (1845), and how the "uniform was copied from Hogarth's *March of the Guards to Finchley,*" 1750. Beatrix's Journal from 1882-85 has over forty references to Millais.

Rupert Potter's close relationship with Millais (he took photographs that Millais used as aids for his pictures) enabled Beatrix to observe first-hand the methods and techniques employed by the leading English painter of the day. Furthermore, Millais offered guidance on painting materials and encouraged Beatrix by taking a personal interest in her artistic progress. Young Beatrix was very pleased when Millais inquired, "how are you getting on with your drawing?" When he died on August 13, 1896, she reflected on his life in her Journal. She recalled "... he really paid me a compliment for he said that 'plenty of people can draw, but you and my son John have observation'.” This affiliation helped to build her self-assurance and confidence.

Also important to her formative artistic experience was regular attendance at Academy Exhibitions, museums, and various art shows – where Beatrix closely studied
the great masters (and lesser known works of art), conscientiously recording impressions in her Journal, and refining her esthetic sensibility. This splendid background, along with her innate talent, fortuitous connections and capable publishers, enabled her to make the transformation from greeting card designer and naturalist artist to brilliantly successful children's book author and illustrator.

_The Tailor of Gloucester_ begins:

"In the time of swords and periwigs . . . there lived a tailor in Gloucester. He sat in window of a little shop in Westgate Street, crosslegged on a table, from morning to dark . . . – a little old man in spectacles, with a pinched face, old crooked fingers, and a suit of thread-bare clothes."51 (9-10).

The first illustration (figure 12), _The Tailor of Gloucester at Work_, shows the tailor in his shop, as described in the text. In order to achieve an accurate representation, Beatrix observed an actual tailor at work, studying his posture and surroundings.52 Many years later, she disclosed in a letter that “the Tailor’s shop was copied from a print of houses in old London city . . .”53 Unbeknownst to the tailor, there are two small, brown mice - in the left foreground, scurrying away with tiny ‘snippets’ (10) of fabric. According to Margaret Lane, Beatrix used “her own tame mice . . . as working models.”54 A closer look at mid-ground reveals three other mice on the table, two behind the tailor and one behind the iron. The reader is entering what Kutzer has referred to as a “hidden, interior, miniature world that is entirely real and far more interesting than our own everyday world.”55

“He cut his coats without waste, according to his embroidered cloth; they were very small ends and snippets that lay about upon the table- “Too narrow breadths for nought-except waistcoats for mice,” said the tailor.” (10). The picture on the
opposing page (figure 13), depicts an incredible scene, one that the tailor explicitly alluded to in his lament: a waistcoat for mice. Light emanates from the right corner of the room in this close-up of six mice, who are arranged in two groups. All eyes are fixed on the mouse in midground, who is gazing at himself in a mirror. His expression is one of delight as he is wearing a newly made waistcoat that has been crafted from the ‘very small ends and snippets that lay about . . . ’ (10). The other mice concentrate on the fitting, attending to him while holding pin cushion, mirror, and finished top coat.

“One bitter cold day near Christmas-time the tailor began to make a coat . . . for the Mayor of Gloucester. The tailor worked and worked, and he talked to himself . . . “No breadth at all, and cut on the cross; it is no breadth at all; tippets for mice and ribbons for mobs! For mice!” said the Tailor of Gloucester.” (10-13). Accompanying this passage is the fantastic illustration, Lady Mouse in Mob Cap, (figure 14), which may be seen as a parody on Millais’s 1879 painting, Cherry Ripe (figure 15). Cherry Ripe is a charming portrait of an innocent young girl wearing a very large mop-cap. Beatrix certainly knew the painting, referring to it twice in her Journal.56

In Lady Mouse, Beatrix excels in the rendering of textures of costume. Lady mouse is seated against a background of green, intricately beaded fabric - which appears to have Art Nouveau influence as it is highly stylized, with flowing curvilinear forms. She is shown wearing a two piece ruffled dress complete with ‘tippets’ and elaborate mob cap adorned with ‘ribbons’ – all sewn from the tailor’s leftover material. She is gazing at herself in a mirror that she is holding. Possibly to add an element of surprise and interest, appearing behind her in the upper left background, barely visible, and peering out from a slight opening in the fabric, is a small mouse whose tiny eyes echo the beaded, luxurious
fabric. Beatrix developed great dexterity for rendering the minutest of detail. This may be traced to her early use of the microscope, which she used to make careful studies of flowers, insects, and small animals. Roger Sales has stated that Beatrix’s many studies and paintings of fungi, completed during the 1890s, for which she used a microscope, “had enabled her to focus and clarify her small-scale meticulousness . . .”

“... the tailor had done his day’s work; all the silk and satin lay cut out upon the table . . . everything was ready to sew together in the morning, all measured and sufficient-except that there was wanting just one single skein of cherry-coloured twisted silk . . . the tailor came out of his shop, and shuffled home through the snow.” (13-17).

Beatrix was directly inspired by Hablot Knight Browne (‘Phiz’), an artist she greatly admired, when she created the outdoor scenes (figures 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20) for The Tailor of Gloucester. In her Journal entry for December 15, 1883, she commented enthusiastically on the Browne drawings she saw on Exhibition at Fine Arts: “These drawings and some others of the same kind were simply marvelous.” For these outdoor scenes, Beatrix appears to have drawn on Browne’s Tom’s all alone (figure 21), an illustration created for Dicken’s novel Bleak House (1852) and one Beatrix thought was “most striking.” She particularly liked the “sense of lone, dismal solitude the artist has given it,” and declared “what a sermon that little drawing preaches.” Gloucester Cathedral, where Beatrix attended church service during one of her visits to Stroud, dominates the scene and the viewer’s eye is taken into the far recesses of the composition to create a compelling sense of depth. Beatrix reveals an interest in architecture - in the structure of the scene, as well as in picturesque details of buildings, of cut stone, and architectural ornament. Browne’s illustration, The Asylum for the Houseless, created for
Augustus Mayhew’s novel *Paved With Gold* (1857), may have inspired Beatrix’s snow-covered gabled rooftops.

“... the tailor was so poor he only rented the kitchen. He lived alone with his cat; it was called Simpkin.” (17). The charming illustrations (figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29) for the scenes of the tailor’s kitchen reflect Beatrix’s life-long interest in china, furniture and interiors. In her Journal (June 10, 1884) she described visiting a shop of “furniture, china and every kind of old curiosity... I particularly admired a cupboard (with a wish to possess), ... If ever I had a house I would have old furniture, oak in the dining room, and Chippendale in the drawing room. It is not as expensive as modern furniture, and incomparably handsomer and better made.”

In the illustration *Simpkin Housekeeping*, (figure 22), the cupboard is filled to capacity with ‘crockery and pipkins, willow pattern plates, and tea-cups and mugs’ (22). Simpkin uses the tea-cups to hold the mice he has caught in traps, which are lying about in front of him. They easily blend in with the grain of the wood of the chair and cupboard. The tailor sends Simpkin out to buy food and “one penn’orth of cherry-coloured silk.” He cautions him, “do not lose the last penny of the fourpence, Simpkin, or I am undone and worn to a thread-paper, for I have NO MORE TWIST.” (8)

In *The Tailor by the Hearth* (figure 23), Beatrix has clearly delineated the lines of the large fireplace and perfectly captured the warmth of the quiet scene. In April, 1903, she wrote to her editor, Norman Warne, “I have been able to draw an old fashioned fireplace here [the home of her cousin, Ethel, Lady Hyde-Parker], very suitable for the tailor’s kitchen...”
In the following illustration, *The Tailor Hears Noises* (figure 24), light radiates from the fireplace and casts a soft glow on the room and the tailor who is standing at the cupboard. The light touch and soft colors enhance the intimate effect. The low-beamed ceiling, handsome long-case clock, china and crockery on the cupboard, the chairs, as well as the empty mouse traps in the lower right foreground, are all suffused with light. The scene showcases Beatrix’s extraordinary skill in handling color and light, resulting in one of the book’s loveliest images.

*The Lady Mouse Curtseys* (figure 25) and *The Gentleman Mouse Bows* (figure 26) are among the most appealing illustrations in the book. The tailor has freed mice from under the tea-cups and two of them greet him in a courtly manner. In the first example, lady mouse curtseys; in the other, gentleman mouse bows. Lady mouse, wearing “an open cotton gown, red silk quilted petticoat, apron and linen mob cap,” has put one foot forward, bent her knees, and bowed her head. Gentleman Mouse “wears court dress, with a tricorne hat. The teacups date from about 1800.” Beatrix revealed the source for the china in correspondence dated September 28, 1910: “The china was borrowed from the cobbler’s wife at Sawrey, it had been in her mother’s family, some of it was very old, especially the cup without a handle, beside the lady-mouse. One with a pattern inside the rim was a good one, they were not marked but looked like Bristol china.”

It was customary during the Regency period to greet people with a curtsey and/or bow as a sign of respect and esteem. This period, which is the setting for *The Tailor*, has been described as one of great refinement and culture, when good manners prevailed in society. Regency etiquette was exemplified in the brilliant, classic novels of Jane Austen (1775-1817), whose works were much admired by Beatrix. Austen makes several
references to the curtsey and bow in her famous works: In *Persuasion*, written between 1811-16, and read at least twice by Beatrix. Austen describes in chapter 7, how “a bow, a courtesy passed” between Anne Elliott and Captain Wentworth, the two main characters; in *Pride and Prejudice*, chapter 30, “Elizabeth merely curtseyed to him, without saying a word.”; in *Northanger Abbey*, chapter 22, “She curtsied her acquiescence,” and chapter 23, “Wherever they went, some patterned girl stopped to curtsy, or some dishabille sneaked off.”

The passing of the formal Regency period saw the decline of the traditional curtsey and bow, nevertheless these courteous gestures continued, especially in theater and dance, and were considered *de rigueur* for greeting royalty. The curtsey and bow continued to be subjects in Victorian literary and artistic culture. Both Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll, two of Beatrix’s favorite authors, make references in some of their works: *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens’ first historical novel, 1841; *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and the sequel, *Through the Looking Glass*, Carroll’s masterpieces of late mid-century. Millais, co-founder of the Pre-Raphaelites, whose works were well known to Beatrix, depicted the curtsey in a lovely 1852 *Sketch of a young woman curtseying in front of a mirror.* She is thought to be Effie, his future wife. In 1869, he painted Effie, his young daughter, curtseying, in a picture titled *The Minuet.*

At the end of the Victorian period, the curtsey and bow were slowly disappearing from the culture. Beatrix recorded with some nostalgia in her Journal on March 3rd, 1893, that while visiting neighbors – the Paget’s – a guest, “Lady Bligh (?) honoured me with a bow as she went out. I was rather pleased with her, it does one good to see such old-fashioned ton . . .” [style, or vogue]. In 1897, Mrs. Humphy, who wrote *Manners for
Women, lamented that “Girls are never taught to curtsey now, as they used to be. A real, old-fashioned “courtsey” as it used to be spelled, is quite an elaborate performance.” She observed that “the only trace of this old-fashioned and very graceful bit of deportment is the very deep reverence made by the ladies of Her Majesty’s Drawing Rooms. Some of them preform [sic] it with practiced aplomb. Others never achieve it.”

And out from under tea-cups and from under bowls and basins, stepped other and more little mice who hopped away down off the dresser and under the wainscot. The tailor sat down, close over the fire, lamenting – “One-and-twenty button-holes of cherry-coloured silk! To be finished by noon of Saturday: and this is Tuesday evening. Was it right to let loose those mice, undoubtedly the property of Simpkin? Alack, I am undone, for I have no more twist!” The little mice came out again, and listened to the tailor . . . (26-29).

In The Mice Listen to the Tailor’s Lament (figure 27) and Where is My Twist? (figure 28) contrasting surfaces and textures are realistically rendered. Beatrix obviously took special delight in painting the various pieces of china: several patterns are shown in different colors on assorted shapes and sizes, and particular care has been taken with the pagoda seen on the Willow Pattern sugar bowl (figure 27). For this composition, Beatrix employed a conventional Albertian device of drawing the viewer in: a lady mouse looks directly out of the picture plane, while a second mouse points to the tailor, who is warming his hands by the fire.

And then all at once they all ran away together down the passage behind the wainscot, squeaking and calling to one another, as they ran from house to house; and not one mouse was left in the tailor’s kitchen when Simpkin came back with the pipkin of milk! (29-30).

For the image of Simpkin as seen in figures 28, 29 and 30, Beatrix relied on an earlier design (figure 31) she had created for a book cover or title page for Puss In Boots
in June, 1894. Kutzer has noted that both Simpkin and Perrault’s cat “are illustrated as having large boots and heroic stances.”

Simpkin noticed the mice were missing from under the tea-cups and became angry with the tailor. Acting spitefully, he hid the twist from the tailor in a teapot.

Simpkin . . . came out of the tailor’s door, and wandered about in the snow . . . From the tailor’s shop in Westgate came a glow of light; and when Simpkin crept up to peep in at the window it was full of candles. There was a snippeting of scissors, and snappeting of thread; and little mouse voices sang loudly and gaily . . .

“Three little mice sat down to spin,
Pussy passed by and she peeped in.
What are you at, my fine little men?
Making coats for gentlemen.
Shall I come in and cut off your threads?
Oh, no, Miss Pussy, you’d bite off our heads!” (38-46).

Beatrix integrated the above six lines of the nursery rhyme, *Three Little Mice Sat Down to Spin* into the text of *The Tailor*. For the illustrations of the mice at work in the tailor’s shop, she created *The Mice at Work: Threading the Needle* and *The Mice Sewing the Mayor’s Coat*. Additionally, she repeated with minor variations, two illustrations from her unpublished booklet produced in 1892. The first glimpse of the Mayor’s “cream-coloured satin waistcoat” (10) is provided in *Threading the Needle* (figure 32). Three brown mice are shown engaged in the process of working on it as they look directly out at the viewer. Their superb craftsmanship – and Beatrix’s - is evident in the exactness of the finely detailed flowers. In *The Mice Sewing the Mayor’s Coat* (figure 33) five mice are sitting in a small space, sewing by candlelight. Careful attention has been paid to the individualizing of the faces and actions of the mice in the scene. In the re-created illustrations (figures 34 and 35), Beatrix repeated the poses and scale of the mice, as well as the candle-lit room, of her earlier compositions (figures 36 and 37). This rhyme
undoubtedly resonated with Beatrix, as cotton spinning was the source of the family’s wealth. Beatrix’s paternal grandfather, Edmund Potter (b. 1802), built up a small textile business in Dinting Vale, and by 1862 became the leader in the calico printing industry.73

Simpkin returned home to the tailor, remorseful that he had hidden the twist from him. He retrieved it from the teapot, and in the morning, the tailor awoke to find the twist on his bed.

The sun was shining on the snow when the tailor got up and dressed, and came out into the street with Simpkin running before him . . . “Alack,” said the tailor, “I have my twist; but no more strength-nor time-than will serve to make me one single button-hole; for this is Christmas Day in the Morning! The Mayor of Gloucester shall be married by noon-and where is his cherry-coloured coat?” (53-54).

The final illustrations in the book, *The Finished Coat, No More Twist*, and *The Mice Stitching Button-Holes*, feature three different views of the Mayor of Gloucester’s magnificent wedding coats. Beatrix’s approach to the task of representing the coats, was to turn to her local museum, where she made exacting studies of eighteenth century clothing. On March 27, 1903, she wrote to Norman Warne, her editor, “I ought to make something good of the coat; I have been delighted to find I may draw some most beautiful 18th century clothes at S. Kensington museum, I have been looking at them for a long time . . .”74

Figure 38 shows a waistcoat of “ivory satin embroidered in colored silks, front edges laid with cotton net edged with chenille” in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, (formerly the South Kensington Museum) that has been identified as the one Beatrix used as a model for the Mayor of Gloucester’s waistcoat. It was featured in the V & A’s *The Tailor of Gloucester Exhibition, 20 October 2003-12 January 2004*, curated by Emma Laws, Frederick Warne Curator of Children’s Literature.75
He unlocked the door of the little shop in Westgate Street... upon the table—oh joy!... there, where he had left plain cuttings of silk—there lay the most beautifullest coat and embroidered satin waistcoat that ever were worn by a Mayor of Gloucester. There were roses and pansies upon the facings of the coat; and the waistcoat was worked with poppies and cornflowers. (54-56).

In *The Finished Coat* (figure 39) the Tailor and Simpkin express surprise and delight at finding the Mayor of Gloucester’s completed coat – and waistcoat - set out on the worktable. The coats are folded and fill the foreground and midground of the illustration. Beatrix altered the scale of the coats to suggest perspective and create the illusion of recession into space. Through the open door and window in the background, the viewer sees walkers stroll along the street outside the shop.

Beatrix demonstrates her technical virtuosity in *No More Twist* (figure 40), rendered with great precision. This illustration shows a close-up view of the waistcoat in which a small note has been pinned to the last unfinished buttonhole stating, “No More Twist.” (57). The exquisitely observed details of “poppies and cornflowers” (56), are evocative of Millais’ Pre–Raphaelite style, which was characterized by “minute, all-over detailing.”76 Millais, for example, produced a number of portraits in which the sitters are dressed in finely embroidered clothing, elaborately worked out: *Vanessa, dated 1868; Clarissa Bischoffsheim*, dated 1873; and *Louise Jopling*, dated 1879. Beatrix referred to *Vanessa* in her Journal on March 19, 1884, writing: “the brocade being particularly well painted, I thought it was very powerful...”77 In his Art Review column in *The New York Times*, dated March 14, 2003, John Russell acknowledged Beatrix’s extraordinary expertise in creating scientifically accurate and detailed botanical illustrations, stating she
“could master the full gamut of the blossom, the petals and the leaves of any given plant.”

“Never were seen such ruffles, or such embroidered cuffs and lappets!” (59). The final illustration, *The Mice Stitching Button-holes* (figure 41) shows a detail of the Mayor's coat and four small brown mice - that animate the composition - within its folds. The various textures are carefully explored and accurately rendered – the “corded silk” (10); raised, embroidered flowers; delicate lace ruffle; and soft fur of the small mice. “But his button-holes were the greatest triumph of all . . . The stitches of those button-holes were so small – *so* small – they looked as if they had been made by little mice!” (59). THE END

Warne’s published *The Tailor of Gloucester* in October, 1903, and a glowing review of *The Tailor of Gloucester* appeared in the 24 December, 1903 issue of *The Tailor and Cutter*:

A Xmas Fairy Tale – We have just reviewed with as much interest as any child ever read a fairy tale, a delightful little story entitled *The Tailor of Gloucester* by Beatrix Potter, and we think it is by far the prettiest story connected with tailoring we have ever read, and as it is full of that spirit of peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men, we are not ashamed to confess that it brought the moisture to our eyes, as well as the smile to our face. It is got up in choicest style and illustrated by twenty-seven of the prettiest pictures it is possible to image as illustrations of the story . . . Perhaps some of our readers will have got past such fairy tales; but we like them, and if there are others like us we strongly advise them to get this book . . .

Although *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* became Beatrix’s most famous and successful book, she always maintained that *The Tailor* was her “favorite book.”

Margaret Lane, Beatrix’s early biographer, has contended that “many people regard . . . [The Tailor of Gloucester] as her masterpiece.”
Today, the tailor’s shop is the home of *The Tailor of Gloucester* Beatrix Potter Museum and Shop (figure 42) located at No. 9 College Court, just off Westgate Street. It is a popular tourist attraction and is open to the public every day. The website may be visited at [http://tailor-of-gloucester.org.uk](http://tailor-of-gloucester.org.uk). According to Lane, the tailor, John Prichard, died in 1934, and is buried in Charlton Kings churchyard. Inscribed on his kerbstone are the words: ‘The Tailor of Gloucester.’"
NOTES

2 THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER

3 Ibid., 194.
10 Ibid., 123-5.
11 Ibid., 124-7.
12 Taylor, 64.
15 Vicinus, 163.
16 Ibid., 6.
17 Lear, 33, 144.
19 Crow, 184-7.
23 Linder, *BP Journal* (June, 1894), 317.
24 Ibid., (6 November, 1895), 399.
25 Lear, 41.
27 Kutzer, 21.
Lane, 104.
Taylor, 109.
Lear, 33.
Ibid., 50, 33.
Lear, 130.
Taylor, 424.
Lear, 149.
Taylor, 71.
Kutzer, 23.
Tate Collection, “Helen Beatrix Potter,”
Taylor, 109.
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/beatrix-potter-tailor-of-gloucester/ (accessed May 17, 2011).
Lear, 63.
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Lane, 103.
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Ibid., 57.
Ibid., 316.
Linder, *BP Journal* (10 June 1884) 90.
Taylor, 74.
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/beatrix-potter-tailor-of-gloucester/ (accessed May 17, 2011).
Taylor, 184.
65 Lear, 162.
66 Taylor, 139.
71 Moore, 156.
72 Kutzer, 21.
73 Lear, 12-13.
74 Taylor, 73.
77 Linder, BP Journal (19 March 1884) 73.
79 Taylor, 109.
80 Ibid., 283.
81 Lane, 105.
82 Ibid., 108.
THE TALE OF TWO BAD MICE

BEATRIX POTTER
THE ORIGINAL AND AUTHORIZED EDITION
The Tale of Peter Rabbit (1902), The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin (1903) and The Tailor of Gloucester (1903), Beatrix Potter’s first three commercially published books, were immediately successful, quickly filling nursery bookshelves. By the end of 1903 for instance, The Tale of Peter Rabbit was in its sixth printing.\(^1\) Beatrix was firmly establishing herself as a highly popular writer/illustrator of children’s books. As Linda Lear points out, she had become “one of the most important authors on the Warne list.”\(^2\) Beatrix relished the success and the sense of independence that it brought. She confided to Norman Warne in correspondence dated 19 April 1904, “it is good to be able to earn my own living.”\(^3\)

For the 1904 publishing season Beatrix submitted several ideas to Warne’s for consideration. They eventually chose two books for publication: The Tale of Benjamin Bunny, a sequel to The Tale of Peter Rabbit, and The Tale of Two Bad Mice, a second ‘mouse’ book. For Two Bad Mice, Beatrix created a new tale that featured a pair of mice who wreak havoc in a doll’s house they find set on a nursery floor, where the entire story takes place. Throughout the highly animated adventure the mice experience a wide range of emotions and are depicted in a broad variety of poses and configurations. They are correctly drawn, portrayed with sensitivity and expression and touched with great spirit. The fascinating doll’s house, based entirely on photographs, is beautifully rendered to scale in soft pastel colors.\(^4\)
*The Tale of Two Bad Mice* is of particular interest as Norman Warne, seen in figure 43 with a favorite nephew, was actively involved in the creative process of the book, necessitating much contact and interaction with Beatrix - to the dismay of her parents. He built, at Beatrix’s request, a little house with a glass front for her pair of mice so that she could observe and sketch them.\(^5\) In addition to providing expert editorial guidance, Norman built the dolls’ house (intended for Winifred, his niece) that provided the inspiration for the book, and supplied Beatrix with photographic aids, dolls, miniature food and furniture.\(^6\) Their professional collaboration, which is documented in their correspondence, was a happy and mutually gratifying experience in which they developed a close, personal bond. Linda Lear has observed that the making of *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* provided the “subtext of a love story.”\(^7\)

The Potters strongly objected to their daughter’s deepening relationship with her publisher. Although Beatrix was in her late thirties, she lived at home where she was subject to her parents’ approval and strict authority. In their judgment the Warne family did not meet their high standards and were socially inferior because they were in “trade.”\(^8\) The Potters therefore attempted to sabotage the alliance by putting impediments in her way, making it difficult for Beatrix to work freely with Norman. In a letter to Harold Warne dated 13 July 1903, Beatrix clearly expressed her distress: “I have had such painful unpleasantness at home this winter about the work . . .”\(^9\) Nevertheless, she persevered, overcoming the obstacles put in her way, and no doubt enjoyed cathartic relief in the rebellious antics of her *Two Bad Mice*. In her critical analysis of the book, M. Kutzer, submits that one can see “Potter’s complex and conflicted feelings about domesticity and rebellion.”\(^10\)
The Tale of Two Bad Mice was published in small format, like the previous three books, and contained twenty-seven watercolor illustrations and a frontispiece. The cover illustration (figure 44), shows a neatly dressed lady mouse, wearing a floral dress and long white apron. She is slightly bent forward, holding a whisk broom and dust pan, facing and directly engaging the viewer. The image is nearly identical to the last illustration in the book (figure 75), in which she is shown holding a full-sized broom, entering the doll’s house to clean. The good deed she is about to perform with her broom identifies her with Robin Goodfellow, a spirit from medieval English folklore, who was also referred to in the previous chapter, The Tailor of Gloucester. An early woodcut (figure 45), shows Robin Goodfellow with a broom - his attribute - which he invariably used for chores he performed (in return for cream and bread) when he inhabited various English domiciles.

The frontispiece (figure 46), shows the two bad mice in action. Beatrix creates a sense of depth in the composition by standing the male mouse, named Tom Thumb, in mid-ground. He is poised with tongs ready to strike a dish of ‘pudding,’ which is placed in the lower right foreground. Hunca Munca, in the background, examines broken plaster. The title page (figure 47) sports a single image of a standing mouse drawn in pen and ink, while the dedication page which follows, reads: For W.M.L.W. [Winifred Mary Langrish Warne] The Little Girl Who had the Doll’s House. Linder p 152

The Tale of Two Bad Mice begins:

“ONCE upon a time there was a very beautiful doll’s-house; it was red brick with white windows, and it had real muslin curtains and a front door and a chimney.” (9).

The first illustration (figure 48), opposite the text, is one of the loveliest Beatrix ever
produced: an exquisitely rendered Edwardian-style doll’s-house. It is situated on a
nursery floor with two dolls sitting outside the house, one on the roof and one facing the
front door. The house is trimmed in white, with a pale blue roof and light green door,
complete with brass knocker. Lying nearby are a jump-rope and badminton rackets. The
inclusion of the rackets underscores the comfortable circumstances of this household.
Badminton, a racket game played with shuttlecock that British Army Officers adopted in
India and took back to England in the 1860’s, was a popular sport of the leisure classes in
Victorian England.¹⁴

Lear has noted that the finely crafted doll’s-house that Norman built (seen in
figure 49 with Winifred) was “a three-storied affair with a brick paper exterior, a grey
slate roof with gables, a turret and a flagstaff.”¹⁵ The exterior key features were typical of
the architecture of the Edwardian period which is generally considered to be between
1901 when Edward VII, son of Queen Victoria, ascended the throne, through the year of
his death, 1910 (although often extending beyond, through 1920). The flamboyant
exteriors of Edwardian homes reflected the desire of the growing middle classes to
project their prosperity. These houses were shorter in height than Victorian homes as
generally there was no longer a need for servants’ quarters. They were wider to allow for
a larger entry hall, and longer for both a front and rear garden.¹⁶

Doll’s houses provided joy and entertainment for children (and many adults) but
they also filled a very useful function: teaching young children about the organization of
homes and the practical art of housekeeping.¹⁷ It was in the later part of the nineteenth
century that doll’s houses became increasingly popular. This is traced to the rise in
prosperity of the middle classes and the doll’s house as portrayed appealingly in literature
and art. Margaret Towner cites two works by Charles Dickens of 1845, *The Cricket on the Hearth* and *A Christmas Tree* in which a variety of doll’s houses and furniture are vividly described. She has also noted that Victorian painters of genre scenes, like Frederick Daniel Hardy (1827–1911) often depicted doll’s houses in works portraying domestic interiors.18

The little Princess Victoria owned a “modest two-room doll house” and a large collection of dolls which she and her governess dressed in the royal nursery at Kensington Palace.19 Doll’s houses were displayed at the Alexandra Palace in London for a Christmas exhibition in 1875;20 featured at toy shows, which in 1892 the *Spectator* favorably reviewed; and often featured in magazines like *Girls’ Realm*.21 By the end of the nineteenth century, according to Constance Eileen King, “almost every nursery contained a doll’s house . . .”22

Beatrix had admired the craftsmanship of the doll’s house Norman had built for his young niece. She had seen it in his basement workshop before it was completed and delivered to Winifred’s nursery in Surbiton for Christmas, 1903.23 Soon afterward it was decided that the doll’s house would be the perfect setting for *Two Bad Mice*. However, Mrs. Potter objected to Beatrix visiting Surbiton to sketch it. Norman provided a solution by photographing the doll’s house in Surbiton and forwarding the pictures to Beatrix. She then drew it entirely from the photographs.24

“IT belonged to two Dolls called Lucinda and Jane, at least it belonged to Lucinda, but she never ordered meals. Jane was the Cook; but she never did any cooking, because the dinner had been bought ready-made, in a box full of shavings.” (10). Norman borrowed ‘Lucinda’ from Winifred, and purchased ‘Jane,’ an inexpensive
wooden doll with minimally shaped limbs, from London retailer 'Seven Dials.' The second illustration (figure 50), provides a close-up of the two dolls. Jane, the taller doll, is in full view in the background, but interestingly the viewer does not yet see Lucinda's face. Beatrix admitted in a letter to Norman dated May 31, 1904, "I think some of the new mouse drawings are rather good, the dolls are still difficult." The potted flowers placed in midground reveal Beatrix's interest in botanicals and are a common motif that she repeats throughout the work, seen in figures 55, 60, and 71.

Norman continued to purchase items for the doll's house, sending Beatrix a mix of miniature food. In a letter dated February 24, 1904, Beatrix thanked Norman, stating: "I received the parcel from Hamley's this morning; the things will all do beautifully; the ham's appearance is enough to cause indigestion. I am getting almost more treasures than I can squeeze into one small book . . ." 

"THERE were two red lobsters and a ham, a fish, a pudding, and some pears and oranges. They would not come off the plates, but they were extremely beautiful." (13). For the accompanying illustration, (figure 51), Beatrix arranged a still-life composition of the food that Norman had sent to her. The simple forms and color planes of the fruit, as well as their modeling in color rather than chiaroscuro, in particular, recall certain Post-Impressionist still life paintings.

"ONE morning Lucinda and Jane had gone out for a drive in the doll's perambulator. There was no one in the nursery and it was very quiet. Presently there was a little scuffling, scratching noise in a corner . . . Tom Thumb put out his head . . . Hunca Munca, his wife, put her head out, too; " (14-17). The next illustration (figure 52), shows the two mice peering out of a small mouse hole in the nursery, directly facing the viewer.
In figure 53, the viewer sees them from behind, standing inside the mouse hole. Their fur is brown, matching the interior. Their ears are noticeably large, accurately denoting their keen sense of hearing (which compensates for poor vision). They appear to be quite plump and cute. Beatrix used her own two mice as models: caught in mid-1903 at Harescombe Grange while Beatrix was visiting the Huttons. She had rescued them from the kitchen and tamed them. Their names, Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca, were taken from a 1730 play by Henry Fielding called *Tom Thumb the Great*. In English folklore, Tom Thumb is a diminutive hero – who is the size of a thumb.

In figure 54, the mice are seen from yet another perspective – above - as they hesitantly approach the doll’s house. The seven scenes following (figures 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 and 61), take place inside the doll’s house, in the dining room and kitchen. In these rooms the furnishings are plain and Beatrix revealed in correspondence many years later, they were made by the “Disabled Soldiers shop – Lord Roberts soldiers of the S. Af [i.e., Boer] war.”

“TOM THUMB and Hunca Munca went upstairs and peeped into the dining-room. Then they squeaked with joy! Such a lovely dinner was laid out upon the table!” (21). The ‘joy’ the mice experience (figure 55), changes to frustration (figures 56, 57 and 58), when they try to eat the food. They are unable to do so because it was made of plaster, and their frustration turns to ‘rage’ (30). Using tongs, they break up the food and shatter it into many pieces as shown in figure 59. Moving to the kitchen (figure 60), they are thwarted in their attempt to put the fish into the ‘red-hot crinkly paper fire’ (30). Hunca Munca endures more frustration as she discovers nothing but ‘red and blue beads’ (34) in food canisters (figure 61).
“TOM THUMB went up the kitchen chimney and looked out at the top-there was no soot.” (33). Figure 62 is a close-up view of the exterior top section of the doll’s house, showing Tom Thumb looking out of the chimney and Hunca Munca, just beneath, looking out a window. On the cornice of the roof is a decorative fly – an amusing touch of trompe l’oeil painting which adds an illusionistic effect. The inclusion of trompe l’oeil flies in paintings has a very long history and they were considered to symbolize sinfulness and evil. However, more recent interpretations put forth by art historians also see them as ‘professional calling cards.’ One scholar, Felix Thulemann, maintains the addition of trompe l’oeil flies may be a display of “superior painterly prowess.”  

On February 12, 1904 Beatrix wrote to Norman, expressing her delight with the little mouse house he had built to assist the progress of her drawings: “I have had so very much pleasure with that box, I am never tired of watching them run up and down.”  

Consequently, Beatrix was able to realistically capture the many natural movements of her pet mice and accurately transmit them into the humorous and highly animated scenes taking place in the book.

“THEN those mice set to work to do all the mischief they could-especially Tom Thumb! He took Jane’s clothes out of the chest of drawers in her bedroom, and he threw them out of the top floor window. But Hunca Munca had a frugal mind. After pulling half the feathers out of Lucinda’s bolster, she remembered that she herself was in want of a feather bed” (37), figure 63. Thereafter, the mice focus on removing the bolster and other useful items from the bedroom, down the stairs, across the nursery floor and into their mouse-hole (figures 64, 65 and 66). They are adeptly depicted performing the related activities: carrying, lifting, pulling, and pushing.
In figure 25, the dolls are placed in the upper left background, seated together in the perambulator, entering the nursery. In the foreground, Hunca Munca and Tom Thumb are shown running toward their mouse hole. Lucinda’s lovely features are now visible, although quite miniaturized, demonstrating Beatrix’s dexterity and skill.

In figure 68, Beatrix convincingly portrays the dolls’ placid expressions and complete stillness. Jane and Lucinda are depicted up-close in the kitchen of the doll’s house as they view the damage done by the two bad mice. There is much detail in their features and clothing, which results in a very charming illustration. Jane, the menial cook, has ‘leant against the kitchen dresser’ while Lucinda ‘sat upon the kitchen stove and stared.’ (46). Both dolls have light skin color with blush in the cheeks and tiny closed mouths. Jane’s hair and dress are simple, befitting her servant status. Her dark hair has a plain center part. She wears a simple, long white dress with a tiny flowered print. Lucinda, with raised arms, is charmingly attired in a flowing light blue dress trimmed with white lace and adorned with ribbons. Her long flaxen hair sports a wide matching ribbon.

"THE book-case and the bird-cage were rescued from under the coal-box – but Hunca Munca has got the cradle and some of Lucinda’s clothes." (49). In figure 69, Beatrix succeeds in depicting Hunca Munca as an ideal mother. Against a white background of undefined space, Hunca Munca is shown with her litter of baby mice (pups). With her left foot, she rocks the cradle she retrieved from the doll’s house, while looking out at the viewer. The pup she holds seems to be waving, which adds a touch of humor and charm to the picture. This illustration can be related to ‘Bedtime’ (figure 70), a drawing Beatrix created about 1893. She never ceased to consult her early works, which
were quite imaginative and beautiful, and employed many of them in her books. Using Bedtime as a model, Beatrix enlarged and embellished the chair and cradle, included a lap blanket, designed a new, fancy dress and placed a third pup in the cradle.

In figure 71, Hunca Munca is depicted as a perfect housekeeper. She is shown standing in the well-lit mouse hole, neatly dressed in a floral frock with white apron. While her young litter gaze up at her from the cradle in the lower right foreground, she is shown carefully inspecting one of the ‘pans’ (50), she and Tom Thumb pilfered from the doll’s house. As mistress of her household, she is properly concerned about hygiene – a Victorian preoccupation - and particular about the items she will use in her kitchen.³³

“THE little girl that the doll’s-house belonged to, said, - ‘I will get a doll dressed like a policeman!’ ” (53). Beatrix’s visual representation of this scene (figure 72) demonstrates her sure aesthetic judgment. She presents a very tall policeman doll – borrowed from Winifred by Norman – in left mid-ground. He is standing in front of the doll’s house he is now guarding, looking down at Hunca Munca and her baby situated in the right foreground. His height is out of proportion with the other elements in the setting, nevertheless, it works well as the complete lack of scale seems to add to his air of authority and appeal of the picture. In the background, Tom Thumb can be seen looking into the ground floor window at Jane, while Lucinda appears in the window above. Around the side of the doll’s house, two young mice look on cautiously.

“BUT the nurse said, - ‘I will set a mouse-trap!’ ” (54). In figure 73, Hunca Munca and Tom Thumb are portrayed as good parents. They are placed in semi-circular fashion with their offspring, who gaze at them, in front of a large wood mouse-trap. Tom
Thumb points to the mouse-trap in Albertian fashion - leading the viewer into the work - while seemingly pointing out its dangers to the young ones.

Beatrix’s realization of the next illustration (figure 74), shows Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca in the dolls’ bedroom, where light from a burning candle placed in the lower right foreground casts a soft amber glow over the entire image. The action takes place on ‘Christmas Eve,’ a reference to Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. Beatrix previously drew on this theme for *The Tailor*. Tom Thumb, like Ebenezer Scrooge, has undergone an moral transformation and he is attempting to atone for bad behavior by placing a ‘crooked sixpence . . . into one of the stockings of Lucinda and Jane.’ (56).

“AND very early every morning – before anybody is awake – Hunca Munca comes with her dust-pan and her broom to sweep the Dollies’ house!” THE END (59). In her gesture preparing to sweep (figure 75), Hunca Munca echoes Robin Goodfellow. She also reflects the Victorian obsession with cleanliness and hygiene. Significant advances in the improvement of public health through the work and published writings of notable individuals such as Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), and Louis Pasteur (1822-95), brought recognition of the causes and prevention of disease and better sanitation. Books such as *The Art of Housekeeping* (1889), provided guidance on the most efficient ways to keep homes clean and free of dirt. *Our Homes, and How to Make Them Healthy* (1883), reinforced the necessity of initiating “a war against dirt . . .”

20,000 copies of *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* were printed in September, 1904 (along with *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*). A favorable review appeared shortly thereafter in *Bookman*: ‘these mischievous mice are not entirely bad and in the twenty-seven water-colour drawings they look both innocent and loveable’. While these books were
successfully selling Beatrix was working on her next two books for the 1905 publishing season, *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle* and *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan*. Sadly, in 1905 Beatrix suffered not only the loss of her pet mouse Hunca Munca, who died accidentally, but the unexpected and tragic loss of Norman Warne. She and Norman had recently become engaged just prior to his passing on the 25th of August at the age of 37 from pernicious leukemia.\(^{36}\)

Beatrix found consolation from her grief through her close association with the Warne family. On September 5, 1905, in correspondence with Harold Warne (Norman’s brother) Beatrix wrote: “I feel as if my work and your kindness will be my greatest comfort.” To Norman’s mother she wrote on September 26, 1905, “I cannot tell you how grateful I have felt for the kindness of all of you, it has been a real comfort . . .”\(^{37}\) To Norman’s sister Mille she expressed deeper feelings on 1 February 1906 in a letter from Bath where she was staying: “I find the names of the streets rather melancholy here, do you remember Miss Austin’s [sic] “Persuasion” with all the scenes & streets in Bath? It was always my favourite and I read the end part of it again last July, on the 26th the day after I got Norman’s letter [containing a proposal of marriage]. I thought my story had come right with patience & waiting like Anne Eliott’s [sic] did . . . With love to your Mother believe me dear Mille, yrs aff Beatrix Potter.”\(^{38}\)

Despite the tragic and untimely death of Norman in August, 1905, and the ensuing grief and disappointment, Beatrix looked forward with hope to the future. In her bereavement she found solace in her work and Hill Top Farm, a property she purchased sometime in the summer of 1905. From time to time she traveled there to oversee improvements, from her residence at No. 2 Bolton Gardens in London. Hill Top Farm
was located in the village of Sawrey, in the Lake District in the North West region of
England. The Potters had rented vacation homes in the area for many years and Beatrix
had grown to love the simple way of life there and the natural allure of the many lovely
lakes and mountains (fells). In the early nineteenth century, the Romantic poets (the
Lake Poets), especially William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert
Southey, all lived there and were inspired and influenced by the great beauty of the
area.40

The purchase of Hill Top Farm had a significant impact on Beatrix’s work. She
found much inspiration in some of the quaint village places, people, animals, gardens and
insects. Her expanded repertoire is reflected in subsequent works. Nevertheless, mice
were always among her favorite subjects and were featured in supporting roles during
this period in *The Story of Miss Moppet* (1906), *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* (1909),
and *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles* (1909). The dolls Lucinda, Jane, and the policeman
were also featured in this latter book. A mouse character introduced in the *Flopsy
Bunnies*, Mrs. Tittlemouse – who was also the heroine of the story - became the subject
NOTES

3 THE TALE OF TWO BAD MICE

5 Taylor, 84-85.
6 Ibid., 84.
7 Lear, 178.
8 Lear, 176.
9 Taylor, 78.
12 Linder, *Writings of BP*, 152.
15 Lear, 176.
20 Ibid., 56.
21 King, 253.
22 Ibid., 326.
24 Ibid., 79.
25 Taylor, 86.
26 Ibid., 94.
27 Ibid., 128.
28 Lane, *Magic Years*, 123.


30 Taylor, 402.


32 Taylor, 85.


34 Ibid., 165.

35 Lear, 185.

36 Taylor, 125.

37 Ibid., 131.

38 Ibid., 139.

39 Lear, 7.

THE TALE OF
MRS. TITTLEMOUSE

BEATRIX POTTER
The original and authorized edition
By 1910 it was clear that Beatrix had settled into a busy routine of regularly traveling from her London residence or various vacation homes to Hill Top, her farm located in the Lake Country. At Hill Top, she oversaw repairs and renovations, performed chores, tended to the garden, became acquainted with the locals, photographed, sketched indoor and outdoor scenes, and concentrated on the illustrations and text for her books. She had even negotiated the purchase of an adjoining property, known as Castle Farm in Near Sawrey, which would eventually be the home she was to share with her future husband, William Heelis. He was a partner in a local firm, W. H. Heelis and Son that Beatrix had hired to act as her agent.¹

In Sawrey, Beatrix found inspiration almost everywhere she looked. Hill Top and the local village engaged her vivid imagination and provided ideas for new tales. As was often the case, her personal experiences were the basis for many of her works. For instance, *The Roly-Poly Pudding* (1908) - renamed *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* at a later date - was inspired by an infestation of rats which she had to contend with when she first purchased Hill Top Farm; *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles* (1909), featured John Taylor’s Shop in Smithy Lane, which Beatrix had patronized; and *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* contains many autobiographical elements, directly inspired by Beatrix’s personal encounters with various spiders and insects at Hill Top.²

A solitary woodmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), was the subject of her book *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse*. Beatrix, a naturalist artist and illustrator, was long familiar with
the anatomy and various characteristics of the woodmouse: sandy brown coloring with white underside, large eyes and ears and long tail. In 1886, with scientific accuracy, she precisely captured the features of a woodmouse in a superbly executed watercolor (figure 76) created as a Christmas present. Because she had studied their habits she knew they were very clean animals who store food - essentially seeds (granivores) – and was able to accurately and convincingly communicate the lifestyle of Mrs. Tittlemouse.3

Mrs. Tittlemouse is the epitome of domesticity. She takes pride in her humble home, carefully sweeping, dusting, and polishing. Like all good housewives of the era, she is preoccupied with maintaining a clean, well-kept home, subscribing to the prevailing belief, “cleanliness is next to godliness.”4

Mrs. Tittlemouse lives alone and encounters a succession of uninvited visitors who leave messy cobwebs, unkempt moss and dirty footprints. She is a “resourceful person” however, as noted in *The Tale of The Flopsy Bunnies* (1909), and confronts her invaders, thoroughly determined to expel them. Although she is exasperated by the untidiness and constant intrusions, she never loses her sense of propriety. Her impeccable manners, displayed throughout the tale, denote refinement and gentility, characteristics Beatrix naturally possessed herself. When the visitors leave, Mrs. Tittlemouse initiates a thorough cleaning of her house, and celebrates by having a party.

The uninvited visitors, which include a spider, various insects and a toad, were quite familiar to Beatrix as she had completed many microscopic studies and/or illustrations of these natural history subjects in her youth. Several excellent examples are extant as seen in figures 77, 78 and 79, which include a beetle, spider and butterfly.5 In order to specifically enhance her knowledge of entomology, Beatrix frequented the
Natural History Museum in London which holds major research and teaching collections. Although she was frustrated by some mislabeling, and the condescending attitude of museum staff, it was rich in information and she reported in her Journal (23 November 1895), for instance that “spiders . . . are not insects [they have eight legs].” Anne Stevenson Hobbs has noted that Beatrix’s “insects were drawn to scale with the care of a professional: their scientific accuracy is as great as their aesthetic attraction.” In her youth, Beatrix’s menagerie at No. 2 Bolton Gardens included a toad, and a group of them were depicted in her illustration ‘The Toads’ Tea Party,’ 1902? (figure 80), designed to accompany a rhyme.8

Before it was published by Warne in July, 1910, The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse was written out in an abbreviated version for Nellie, Harold Warne’s daughter, and presented as a New Year’s gift, dated Jan. 1st, 1910.9 The published version, printed in small format, contained a frontispiece, illustrated title page, dedication page (“Nellie’s Little Book”), and twenty-six watercolor illustrations in round vignette style. Beatrix drew Mrs. Tittlemouse from nearly every possible angle and completed highly detailed, naturalistic depictions of her ‘visitors.’

Mrs. Tittlemouse is shown on the cover of the book in profile (figure 81). She is sporting a gentle expression, is neatly dressed and carrying a basket on her right side. There is an early drawing by Beatrix, Mrs. Mouse Goes Shopping (see figure 82), that may be the basis for this charming design.

The colorful frontispiece (figure 83), which appears opposite the title page, relates to a passage in the book in which bumblebees have entered Mrs.Tittlemouse’s house and built a nest. It captures the mood of the story, which is confrontation. The four bees
shown in the lower left foreground of the composition are apparently guarding their nest and would sting if cornered. This point is stressed in the illustration as Mrs. Tittlemouse, seen in the upper right background, appears to be in retreat after she has spotted them in the passageway.

The black and white title page is truly noteworthy (figure 84). Mrs. Tittlemouse is seen addressing a large butterfly (*Lepidoptera*) which, later in the story makes a striking appearance in full color (see figure 106). The butterfly may be associated with Norman Warne, Beatrix’s fiancé, who, as previously noted, died in 1905. One of Norman’s hobbies, in addition to building doll’s houses, was collecting butterflies.¹⁰

During the preparation of *Mrs. Tittlemouse* in the spring of 1910, while visiting Woodcote, Beatrix saw some butterflies in flight and was reminded of Norman. Shortly thereafter she wrote to Millie Warne: “There are some yellow butterflies flitting about, I think Norman and Frue used to come up on the common between here and Shere to get butterflies . . .”¹¹ In this context, Beatrix’s depiction of a butterfly in the title page may be seen as a symbolic representation of Norman. Iconographically, a butterfly can represent the resurrected human soul.¹² Greg M. Furth, Ph.D argues: “Every artist uses his medium to reflect and comment upon the world in which he lives . . . These nonverbal commentaries record both conscious and unconscious impressions that come from the artist.”¹³

Artists often used symbolic imagery to suggest hidden meanings and themes in their works. A pertinent example is the 1856 work: *The Doubt: Can these dry bones live?* by Henry Alexander Bowler (figure 85). Painted in Pre-Raphaelite style, the title is taken from the Old Testament, Book of Ezekiel, which describes Ezekiel being shown the
valley of dry bones by God. A woman is shown standing at rest on a tombstone which is inscribed ‘Resurgam’ ("I shall rise again") and looks down at a butterfly, which sits on the skull of the departed John Faithful.\textsuperscript{14}

*The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* begins:

\[\text{“ONCE upon a time there was a wood-mouse, and her name was Mrs. Tittlemouse . . .”}^{15}\]

Beatrix was evidently influenced by a popular nursery rhyme - *Little Tommy Tittlemouse* – when she named her wood-mouse Mrs. Thomasina Tittlemouse. The rhyme was beautifully illustrated by Kate Greenaway in her 1881 book titled, *Mother Goose or the Old Nursery Rhymes*, with which Beatrix was surely familiar.

The first illustration (figure 86) depicting Mrs. Tittlemouse standing in her doorway relates in composition to a photograph of Beatrix standing in the doorway of Hill Top Farm, dated 1907 (figure 87). Mrs. Tittlemouse is very prim and proper, with hands folded, staring directly at the viewer. She is posed as if ready to extend a warm welcome and draws the beholder into the composition. She is dressed in a cheerful pink and white stripe workaday dress with apron. The page is filled with profuse detail. There is lush foliage surrounding her little home, which is situated “in a bank, under a hedge.” (9). This phrase is very similar to one used in Jane Austen’s classic novel *Persuasion*, chapter ten (which Beatrix had read, as previously mentioned in Chapter Four): “Anne [Elliot] found a nice seat for her, on a dry sunny bank, under the hedge-row.”\textsuperscript{16}

In the second illustration (figure 88), Beatrix created a convincing interior scene by the use of organic shapes for the passageway. The placement of Mrs. Tittlemouse in
the right foreground, with the darks and lights, indicated by varying shades of yellow and brown, and the strong perspective, help to achieve the effect of depth in the composition.

SUCH a funny house!
There were yards and yards of sandy passages, leading to storerooms and nut-cellar and seed-cellars, all amongst the roots of the hedge. (10).

This descriptive narrative echoes to some extent a description of Hill Top Farm Beatrix gave in correspondence with Louie, Harold Warne’s son. She wrote on July 8th, 1907: “It is a very funny house. It would be a beautiful house for playing hide and seek, I think there are 13 wall cupboards [sic]; some of them are quite big rooms, quite dark.”

For the image of Mrs. Tittlemouse asleep in her bedroom (figure 89), Beatrix may have been influenced by the nursery rhyme illustration, *Elsie Marley has grown so fine* (figure 90) which was included in Kate Greenaway’s *Old Mother Goose* book. The compositions are similar: the bed is depicted up-close in profile, complete with hangings, and situated at the center of the page.

Mrs. Tittlemouse’s first visitor is a Ground Beetle (*Carabus nemoralis*). In this illustration (figure 91) Mrs. Tittlemouse is seen holding a whisk broom and dust-pan, which is reminiscent of Hunca Munca in *Two Bad Mice*. “Shuh! shuh! little dirty feet!” said Mrs. Tittlemouse, clattering her dust-pan.” (14). Many books were written on domestic issues for the Victorian housewife, with *The Art of Housekeeping* (1889), among the most influential. The author, Mrs. Haweis, noted that “if an old house has been lived in by respectable and careful people, it is not uncommon to find it . . . actually
free from a single blackbeetle!” Mrs. Tittlemouse exemplifies the respectability and carefulness Mrs. Haweis referred to in her book.

In the next illustration (figure 92) Mrs. Tittlemouse is seen in the background sweeping, when she spots a ladybug (*Coccinellidae*). The warm yellow color of the passageway provides a sharp contrast to the vibrant red ladybug. Mrs. Tittlemouse attempts to chase her away: “Your house is on fire, Mother Ladybird! Fly away home to your children!” (17). Mrs. Tittlemouse refers to the beetle as ‘ladybird,’ which is the name by which it is known in the UK. The etymology of the word reveals that the term came about in the Middle Ages and refers to ‘Our Lady.’ The seven spots on the insect were symbolic of seven joys and seven sorrows.

“ANOTHER day, a big fat spider came in to shelter from the rain.” (18). The image Beatrix designed for the next illustration (figure 93) is perhaps the least successful in the book. The shape of the spider (*Araneae*) as depicted is hard to distinguish, but there is humor in the spider’s question to Mrs. Tittlemouse: “Beg pardon, is this not Miss Muffet’s?” (18). The reference is to the popular nursery rhyme, *Little Miss Muffet*. Beatrix was very fond of nursery rhymes, (she would eventually create two nursery rhyme books), and could not resist including them whenever possible in her *Tales*. “SHE bundled the spider out at a window. He let himself down the hedge with a long thin bit of string.” (21) (figure 94).

The next illustration (figure 95) is similar in style and organization to the cover design (figure 81). Mrs. Tittlemouse walks along a passage looking at the floor, certain she can see “the marks of little dirty feet.” (22). This description is reflected in the design, which shows Mrs. Tittlemouse curved forward, pointing toward the ground.
In the following three illustrations (figures 96, 97 and 98), Mrs. Tittlemouse is seen confronting bumblebees (*Bombus*). This encounter may be based on an actual experience Beatrix had in 1906 near Hill Top. On July 18, she wrote to Millie Warne that she had “found a swarm of bees on Sunday & caught them, (it isn’t quite so valiant as it sounds!) they were lying on the grass near the quarry, we think they had been out all night & blown out of a tree; . . . I have bought a boxhive . . . and borrowed a straw “skep” to catch them in, & put it down over them.” Mrs. Tittlemouse uses her basket as a shield when she confronts a bee named ‘Babbitty Bumble’ (figure 96) who was on her way to a nest in a “storeroom which had been used for acorns.” (figure 97). The theme of Christmas reappears, but is not elaborated on as it was in either *The Tailor* or *Two Bad Mice*: “Mrs. Tittlemouse had eaten the acorns before Christmas . . .” (26). The bees had made a nest in “the untidy dry moss” which Mrs. Tittlemouse began to pull out. The bees “buzzed fiercely,” (figure 98) and Mrs. Tittlemouse decided to leave the bees till after dinner.” (29-30).

When she got back to the parlour, she heard some one coughing in a fat voice; and there sat Mr. Jackson himself!

He was sitting all over a small rocking chair, twiddling his thumbs and smiling, with his feet on the fender.

He lived in a drain below the hedge, in a very dirty wet ditch.” (30).

Mr. Jackson (figures 99/100) was an amphibian, a large, smiling toad (*Anura*). He was well-dressed in coat tails and gaiters and had come in search of ‘honey’ (37).

Beatrix’s first-hand knowledge of toads – their nature, habits and food preferences, e.g.
honey – enabled her to truthfully convey Mr. Jackson’s characteristics. Margaret Lane has suggested that Judge Crompton Hutton (cousin Caroline Hutton’s father), may have been the inspiration for Mr. Jackson’s character.

Mr. Jackson declined Mrs. Tittlemouse’s offer of “cherry-stones” (34), (figure 101), and “thistle-down” (figure 102), he only wanted “a little dish of honey!” (37). He began to search for it in the cupboards (figure 103) - while Mrs. Tittlemouse cleaned the floor after him – and went down a passage (figure 104). As he went, he said: “Tiddly, widdly, widdly,” to Mrs. Tittlemouse who followed behind him. He entered the pantry (figure 105), and encountered three “creepy-crawly people” (42) which were actually wood-lice (Oniscidea). “Two of them got away; but the littlest one he caught.” (42). This passage reflects an actual encounter Beatrix had with a toad ‘nearly as large as a teapot’ in the summer of 1905, while vacationing in Wales. She fed it some wood-lice.

In the larder, where Mr. Jackson next searched, “Miss Butterfly was tasting the sugar; but she flew away out of the window.” (45). Beatrix had originally intended to place a design of a centipede in this section but revised it in favor of a butterfly. ‘Miss Butterfly’ (figure 106) has been identified as a Red Admiral (Vanessa atalanta) It is red, black and white and as a result derives its English name, red admiral, from these three colors. Many Victorians were passionate about collecting butterflies. Lynn Barber writes that by mid-century, “there was hardly a middle-class drawing-room in the country that did not contain a . . . butterfly cabinet . . .”

“THEY went along the sandy passage- ‘Tiddly widdly – ‘Buzz! Wizz! Wizz!’ He met Babbitty round a corner, and snapped her up, and put her down again.” (46) (figure 107). Mr. Jackson found the bees-nest nearby and while he searched for honey,
Mrs. Tittlemouse retreated into her nut cellar until everyone had left (figure 108). When she emerged, she was determined to clean house. The next illustration (figure 109) shows her at the front door, attempting to make the opening smaller in order to keep Mr. Jackson out. It is another lovely scene of the exterior, similar to figure 86, which shows the surrounding vegetation in meticulous detail.

In figure 110, Mrs. Tittlemouse is fast asleep in her rocking chair, her cleaning supplies on the floor behind her. Fatigued from all the work in her home, she is worried if “it will ever be tidy again?” (53).

In the following illustration (figure 111), Mrs. Tittlemouse is depicted as the embodiment of the perfect Victorian housewife whose “greatest task was the home . . .”

“Next morning she got up very early and began a spring cleaning which lasted a fortnight. She swept, and scrubbed, and dusted; and she rubbed up the furniture with beeswax, and polished her little tin spoons.” (54). Mrs. Tittlemouse directly engages the viewer and appears to be in domestic bliss as she polishes her tiny spoons. It is certainly plausible that somewhere in her humble home, there is a miniature copy of Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management (1859), the quintessential guide on all aspects of housekeeping care. Beatrix was an admirer of the highly influential Isabella Beeton. After marrying in October, 1913, Beatrix requested a copy of her book as a wedding gift from Millie Warne. 30

For the two final vignettes, Beatrix once again drew upon her earlier works for inspiration. The first (figure 112), can be related to a drawing of mice created in 1890 for publishers Hildesheimer & Faulkner (figure 113), and reflects the influence of the highly admired Randolph Caldicott. Beatrix captured the liveliness and joyous mood of the party.
given by Mrs. Tittlemouse for “five other little mice.” (56). Each figure is painted in
different costume; long flowing dresses with large, colorful bows of yellow, blue and
pink for the female mice and green and brown attire for the two visible male mice. The
soft color palette serves as a contrast to the dark, plain background. A perception of depth
in the composition is achieved by the layering and juxtaposition of figures, some of
which are set in profile.

The last illustration (figure 114) recalls Beatrix’s *The Toads’ Tea Party* (figure
80), which she created for the unpublished 1905 *Book of Rhymes*. The mice are holding
acorn-cupfuls of honeydew – as the toads did at their tea party - and pass one along to Mr.
Jackson who has returned and appears at the window. “He sat outside in the sun, and
said- “Tiddly, widdly, widdly! Your very good health, Mrs. Tittlemouse!” THE END (59).

It would be several years before another mouse book was published. In 1917
Warne’s published *Appley Dapply’s Nursery Rhymes*, a compilation of various rhymes
originally illustrated in the 1890’s by Beatrix, and named after her pet mouse. At the start
of her publishing career, Beatrix was enthusiastic about creating a book of nursery
rhymes and submitted her suggestions to Norman Warne. Although he approved of the
idea for the proposed book, it was not published at that time. Chapter Six, which follows,
is devoted to an in-depth discussion of the book, including a comparative analysis of
early and late designs.
NOTES

4 THE TALE OF MRS. TITTLEMOUSE

2 Ibid., 218.
3 The-piedpiper.co.uk, “Rodents & Others,” http://www.the-piedpiper.co.uk/th1g.htm (accessed May 17, 2011).
8 Lear, 237.
11 Lear, 226.
14 Newsome, 118-119.
18 Flanders, 115.
20 Taylor, 142.
21 Lane, 176.
22 Ibid., 81.
24 Lear, 201-202.
29 Flanders, 211.
30 Lane, 112.
31 Lear, 237.
32 Linder, Writings of BP, 227.
APPLEY DAPPLY'S NURSERY RHYMES
CHAPTER 5
APPLEY DAPPLY’S NURSERY RHYMES, 1917

In the spring of 1917, while Europe was still embroiled in World War I, publisher, F. W. Warne & Co., experienced a serious internal crisis, which ultimately had an impact on Beatrix’s life and artistic output. The company suffered financial and legal difficulties due to mismanagement of the firm’s finances. Harold, the eldest brother and head of the firm, had committed fraud diverting company funds to another family business he had inherited. He was arrested, charged with committing forgeries, and sentenced to Wormwood Scrubs prison in London. In May, 1919, the company was reorganized with remaining brother Fruing in charge as managing director, and was thereafter known as F. W. Warne & Company Limited.

In order to generate revenue for the ailing publishing house, Warne’s released Tom Kitten’s Painting Book in June, 1917. This was basically a reissuing of the 1911 Peter Rabbit’s Painting Book with one minor addition. Fruing then made an appeal to Beatrix for a new book. But after a four-year hiatus – the last book was published in 1913 – and settling down to married life (Beatrix married William Heelis in 1913) and the demanding routines of farming, Beatrix had neither spare time nor energy for new creative endeavors. A compromise solution was reached after Beatrix wrote to Fruing on June 21, 1917 and asked “would it be too shabby to put Appley Dapply into a booklet...? I find I could scrape together sufficient old drawings ... and the old drawings are some of them better than any I could do now.” Beatrix was referring to a set of watercolor illustrations of a pet mouse named Appley Dapply and related works that she had created in the early 1890’s, during the period that she was experimenting with greeting cards and
booklets intended for publication.\(^5\)

Between the years 1902 and 1905, Beatrix and Norman had exchanged several letters that reveal their intention to publish a book of various illustrated nursery rhymes that she had created. In a letter to Norman dated July 15, 1902, Beatrix related that she had been lately studying Caldecott’s illustrations and that she “sometimes thought of trying some of the other nursery rhymes about animals, which he did not do.”\(^6\)

At one point during this period Beatrix submitted a collection of thirty nursery rhymes about animals to Norman for his consideration. From this selection Norman chose twenty-one rhymes, initialing those he approved.\(^7\) However, when Norman died suddenly and unexpectedly in August of 1905, the proposed book was left unfinished. Nevertheless, when Warne’s released *Appley Dapply’s Nursery Rhymes*, in time for Christmas, 1917, six of the seven illustrated rhymes appearing in the book had been endorsed by Norman—in effect resulting in another collaboration between them. In this first nursery rhyme book—a second was released in 1922—there are two rhymes featuring mice, both in domestic settings: *Appley Dapply*, originally composed by Beatrix, and *You Know the Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe*, a variation on an old traditional rhyme. According to Anne Stevenson Hobbs, a completely new illustration was necessary for the second of three scenes in the *Appley Dapply* rhyme as the original was lost, and the original first and third scenes were “reworked”.\(^8\) In comparing the stippled originals (figures 115, 116 and 117) which are signed ‘HBP’ and dated 1891, to the book illustrations (figures 118, 119 and 120) it appears that any reworked details, such as the enhancement of color or the direction in which Appley Dapply walks in the
third scene, were minor. Nevertheless, this allows for some stylistic comparison of early and late work.

The *Appley Dapply* rhyme begins with an illustration of the title character, (figure 118) standing by an open cupboard. On the opposite page a short simple verse reads:

APPLEY DAPPLY, a little
brown mouse,
Goes to the cupboard in somebody’s house.9

The verse is partly descriptive as Appley Dapply is depicted wearing clothing – just like a person. She is perfectly well-groomed, and in possession of a clean and shiny coat. She is fastidiously dressed in a starched, embroidered white apron, topped off with a pretty blue bow, and slippers. Aprons were typically worn by Victorians to protect underclothing and according to author Dallas Bogan, took on an “aristocratic look with lace and embroidery. This was done . . . as a distinction from the servants and maids.”10 Appley Dapply confidently carries a basket in which to place goods, and seems to pause to acknowledge the viewer before proceeding to raid the cupboard.

As is true of much of her early work, Beatrix paid scrupulous attention to each minute detail: all horizontal and vertical lines forming the background, including the cupboard and interior shelves, are perfectly straight. In her description of the scene, M. Daphne Kutzer refers to the “almost photographic realism of the skirting board: one feels that a carpenter’s level placed on that board would show it to be absolutely level and square”11 The entire scene is bathed in light and shadows are well-defined. The contents of the cupboard – the objects of Appley Dapply’s attention - consisting of various shapes, sizes and colors, have been carefully delineated, reflecting the light.
The rhyme continues on the following page opposite the second illustration:

(figure 119).

IN somebody's cupboard.
There's everything nice,
Cake, cheese, jam, biscuits,
-All charming for mice! (12)

While Appley Dapply busily and selectively fills her basket, she again turns to gaze at the viewer, unlike the original (figure 116) where she faces the cupboard. However, there are many other stylistic differences from the earlier illustration that are worth noting. In this scene, created in 1917, when Beatrix was under acute time constraints because of ongoing shortages of help and material due to the war, much less attention was paid to detail: Appley Dapply's size is noticeably larger and the texture of her fur has changed – it is not as finely drawn; the embroidery details on her apron have been modified; the cupboard shelves, door and contents now seem hastily sketched; the basket is a different shape, with straight instead of curved sides as in the original scenes; and finally, the background is left unfinished. Some of these differences and shortcomings have also been attributed to Beatrix's age (50) and failing eyesight. In fact, in her letter of June 21, 1917, to Fruing, Beatrix alludes to negative changes that have taken place with her eyesight.12 Hobbs notes that Beatrix felt the worsening of her eyesight was due to her early microscopic and fungus work, but working by candlelight at Hill Top was the reason given by her housekeeper.13

The third illustration (figure 120) and following lines complete the rhyme:

APPLEY DAPPLY has little
sharp eyes,
And Appley Dapply is so fond
of pies! (15)
Appley Dapply leaves the cupboard with her basket filled and walks briskly away, intent on looking only at the dish of pies she carries. Apart from the direction in which she walks – to the right - most other details are faithful to the original scene (figure 117) composed in 1891. Beatrix displayed originality in this fantasy about food, a theme she explores more fully in *The Tales*.

At the time *You Know the Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe* was created in 1893, (the year she wrote her famous picture-letter to Noel Moore about Peter Piper) Beatrix was 27 years old, unmarried, and searching for meaningful direction in her life. Apart from her serious mycological studies, Beatrix was also interested in creating booklets like, *You Know the Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe*, for submission to publishers. In this aesthetically pleasing work, consisting of two illustrations, Beatrix put a different twist on an old familiar rhyme by using mice as the subject matter. The rhyme begins in the form of two questions:

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YOU know the old woman  
who lived in a shoe?
And had so many children  
She didn’t know what to do? (25)
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In the first illustration (figure 121) – one of the finest examples of Beatrix’s early watercolor illustrations - opposite the opening verse, a family of mice is seen crowded into an elegant ladies’ evening shoe. The ‘old woman,’ gazing directly at the viewer, is an endearing little mouse dressed in a white apron and mobcap. Surrounding her are ‘many children’ – eight mice babies - who are seen playing and interacting with each other in the small space. Their cute expressions and lively action form an effective contrast to the inanimate, stationary shoe. The shape and position of the shoe deviates from an undated pencil sketch (figure 122), revealing the artistic process at work,
however, Beatrix maintained the spirit of the preliminary work.

In many illustrated adaptations of this nursery rhyme, the shoe is represented as an old, worn-out boot with holes for windows. In this story however, the shoe is new, in perfect condition, and its fancy Victorian style, feminine shape, and beautiful color provide an attractive center of attention. The pastel blue color of the shoe, the most striking element in the work, is paired with pastel pink as seen in the bow on the mobcap, and ears and tails of the mice, against a neutral background. This successful combination of delicate pastel colors characterizes Beatrix’s work and is a perfect match with the gentle, light-hearted content.

The second illustration (figure 123) follows with verse that answers the first part of the rhyme:

I think if she lived in
a little shoe-house –
That little old woman was
Surely a mouse! (27)

The focal point of this scene - one of domestic tranquility - is the “little old woman . . . mouse.” Directly facing the viewer, comfortably seated, she is wearing a full-cut pink and white gingham dress, accented with a blue and white collar. A clean white apron, frilly mobcap and pink pointed shoes complete her outfit. Although she lives in a ‘shoe-house,’ she appears to enjoy the comforts of a cozy, furnished kitchen, drawn to scale, in which to take repose from her work. She is evidently content and relaxed while engaged in the process of knitting, reflecting what was a popular craft and leisure activity in Victorian culture.

Warne’s had printed 20,000 copies of the first edition of *Appley Dapply’s Nursery Rhymes*, and by the end of 1917, they had sold out.15 Upon hearing the
favorable public response, Beatrix wrote to Fruing on October 17, 1917, stating she was “very glad to hear the new book [. . . published in October] has caught on.” Following this success, Beatrix then turned her attention to selecting a suitable topic for a new book for 1918.
NOTES

5 APPLEY DAPPLY’S NURSERY RHYMES

2 Ibid., 288.
3 Ibid., 291-2.
5 Lear, 127-8.
6 Taylor, 64.
12 Taylor, 234.
13 Hobbs, 17.
14 Lear, 127-8.
15 Taylor, 247.
16 Ibid., 238.
THE TALE OF
JOHNNY
TOWN-MOUSE
In a letter to Fruing Warne dated February 26, 1918, Beatrix wrote: ‘Do you think this mouse story would do [Johnny Town-Mouse]? It makes pretty pictures . . . A few years ago I amused myself by writing out several of Aesop’s fables, this is one that got rather longer than the others.’¹ Fruing responded affirmatively and Beatrix began work on the new mouse book – *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse*.

Beatrix encountered many challenges during the preparation of *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse* due to the ongoing war, failing eyesight, and family tragedy. The tragic war continued throughout most of the year, officially ending on November 11, 1918. Beatrix explained her predicament and the demands on her time to Fruing in a letter dated May 6, 1918: ‘I do feel ashamed of my delay over the book, I have seemed so rushed lately . . . I have just come in after a rough two hours search for some sheep and lambs with a boy.’² A few weeks later in another letter to Fruing, dated May 24th, Beatrix revealed some difficulty concerning the execution of the drawings – ‘alas so bad to see colours now.’³

The biggest setback however, came after Beatrix received news in June of brother Bertram’s unexpected death at age 46 from cerebral hemorrhage. Beatrix again wrote to Fruing, and in her letter of July 2, explained her circumstances:

> I know you wanted the book finished by the end of June; . . . I have been going through a hard time lately, first anxiety about Mr. Heelis’s [call-up] papers (fortunately grade 3), then my only brother died suddenly in Scotland at his farm after a few hours illness. What with the shock, the difficulty of getting to the funeral and back, & the number of letters I
have had to write, since neither his widow nor my mother
seemed able to write them – I am only just getting straight.
On top of this we have had 2 boys ill with measles just when
beginning hay so things have been a pretty muddle. ...I will
try to post, some drawings with the proof tomorrow. I got
fitted with spectacles at Carlisle, that was something!}

Despite the difficulties and her personal loss, Beatrix ultimately put together and
coordinated over twenty-five miniature vignetted illustrations for the new book, which
she dedicated to "Aesop In The Shadows." However, there is some degree of
inconsistency in her renderings of the mice. Some of the noticeable differences – in mice
anatomy, size and color - may be attributable to the inclusion and revision of old
drawings, failing eyesight and time constraints.

_The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse_ is a humorous and clever variation on the
original fable which contrasts the ways of life of a town mouse and a country mouse.
Because she had lived in both places, this topic was a natural for her. A passage from her
Journal, recorded when she was just eighteen years of age, provides insight into her
somewhat ambivalent feelings: "country most beautiful, flowers and bird’s nests. Why
do people live in London so much? yet there are advantages to being in a town house."}

Inspiration for the narrative course and structure of this Tale’s beginning might
have come from an early favorite of Beatrix’s, Louis Carroll’s 1865 novel, _Alice’s
Adventures in Wonderland_. Alice’s experience of falling asleep, dropping down a
(rabbit) hole, and joining a party in progress (in which a Dormouse is present), is similar
to that shared by Timmy Willie, the country mouse (figure 124).

Timmy Willie first meets the cosmopolitan Johnny Town-Mouse after he is
accidentally transported to a house in town in a vegetable hamper in which he has fallen
asleep (figure 125). Dropping down a mouse hole, (figure 126) Timmy Willie
inadvertently and literally crashes a ‘gentlemen-only’ dinner party given by Johnny for his friends (figure 127). Beatrix captured the instant after Timmy Willie lands on the table, breaking “three glasses.” From a raised vantage point she juxtaposes Timmy Willie, who has arrived au naturel, with Johnny Town-Mouse and friends, who are formally dressed in white tie, and at the same time recorded their astonishment at seeing him there. Johnny and guests have seemingly pushed back their chairs and jumped to their feet, confounded by his appearance, and gather round to study him. Directly facing Timmy Willie, Johnny exclaims - “Who in the world is this?” (21). He then quickly regains his composure.

Beatrix sharply defined the individuality of the two mice by strategically depicting Timmy Willie as a vole (meadow mouse) and Johnny Town-Mouse as a typical house mouse. This decision appears to have been based on one of her earlier unpublished watercolors, ‘The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse’, c. 1905, (figure 128) in which the distinction is first made. Anne Stevenson Hobbs noted the influence of Art Nouveau in this exceptional design. The country mouse is silhouetted against a canopy of foliage in an enchanting setting in which Beatrix has paid meticulous attention to detail. She has carefully delineated trailing vine, foliage and wheat sheaf, and reveals perfect harmonies of color and placing.

It is also likely that this same illustration served as the basis for the image of Johnny Town-Mouse, which appears on the cover of the book (figure 129). In this image, the pose of Johnny Town-Mouse is almost identical with the same forward-posture shown in figure 128 and although his head is slightly turned, he is dressed similarly, with the exception that Beatrix has added golf shoes and socks, and a bowler
(or derby) hat. Another exception is that Johnny is shown “carrying his tail under his arm, out of the mud.” (46). Leslie Linder reported he received a written account from Mrs. Susan Ludbrook, who “was told by a lady who visited Hill Top,” that the image of Johnny Town-Mouse was modeled on an actual person – Dr. Parsons, a golf partner of Mr. Heelis, who lived in Sawrey.  

It does appear, however, that the profiles of Johnny Town-Mouse and Timmy Willie closely resemble two significant men in Beatrix’s private life - Norman Warne, her former fiancé, and William Heelis, her husband. Beatrix’s choice of names for the two mice in the story is revealing: Johnny (Crow) was a nickname for Norman (based on the name of a book his firm published, Johnny Crow’s Garden, in 1903, and Willie was the name Beatrix used for William. Further, Norman had lived in town (London) and William, in the country (Sawrey). The cultural and social differences that existed between Johnny Town-Mouse and Timmy Willie represented in the way of dress, manners and food, as well as their physical differences, were also naturally shared by Norman and William. Despite the fact that thirteen years had passed since Norman’s death, Beatrix kept his memory alive in part by wearing the ring he gave her.

The refined manners of Johnny Town Mouse and his guests, which are a reflection of Beatrix’s own upper middle-class London upbringing, are especially evident in the next two illustrations of the dinner party. Timmy Willie is introduced (figure 130) “With the utmost politeness... to nine other... well-bred” (22) mice and the dinner party resumes. The table is formally set, complete with white tablecloth, place settings and cocktail glasses. Johnny and guests appear to interact, engaging in conversation and using utensils to eat a dinner which was “unknown to Timmy Willie...
of eight courses . . . truly elegant.” (25). In the following scene (figure 131) the mood changes as Timmy Willie becomes anxious after hearing the constant noise from upstairs. As he bolts up in his seat, his posture shifts to the side, and he “drops a plate.” (25) Johnny reacts in a nonchalant manner, stating: “Never mind, they don’t belong to us,” (25) while the dinner guests remain composed and unruffled. Several appear to gaze inquisitively toward the viewer while the guest next to Timmy Willie is seen displaying proper table manners by correctly using his dinner napkin.

In the book’s most animated scene (figure 132) two young mice are seen quickly scurrying away from the menacing upstairs cat, who is partly obscured. (Beatrix had, at one time, confessed “. . . I do not draw cats well . . .”). The facial expressions and body language convincingly transmit the tension and the action in the scene. Timmy Willie learns “with horror” (26) that after the mice were “waiting on the others,” (26) and they had gone to fetch dessert, they were being chased by the cat. Not unnaturally, his “appetite failed, he felt faint.” (26). His anxiety further intensified after Johnny offered him a spot on the sofa to sleep (figure 133) and it “smelt of cat” (29). This parlour scene, along with scenes of a tall staircase (figure 134), a dark coal-cellar (figure 135), and a large, busy kitchen (figure 136), are some examples of the inner structure of the house in town.

As Timmy Willie could not rest due to the proximity of the cat and the strange noises in the house, he became exhausted and missed his “peaceful nest in a sunny bank.” (33). Beatrix drew inspiration from the village of Sawrey, where she lived, as she had done in recent books, for the illustrations set in the country. She was able to lavish attention on background scenes, some of which include a colorful flower garden (figure
137), a constant source of joy in her own life; an idyllic image of cows in pasture (figure 138); and the pastoral beauty of a verdant hillside landscape in summer (figure 139). These country illustrations exemplify Beatrix’s personal connection with the land and her support for the preservation of the way of life of the Lake District, which became a life-long mission.13

Beatrix demonstrated her commitment to the cause by specific purchases of farms and land over the years with the sole aim of conservation, and her involvement with related issues, such as buying and preserving original farmhouse furniture.14 Beatrix was a staunch advocate and benefactor of the National Trust, co-founded by family friend, Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley. The sizable donation to the Trust of over 4,000 acres of pasture and fell made upon her death in 1943 became part of this artist’s great legacy.15

In the following scenes, where Timmy Willie converses with Johnny and describes his bucolic existence in detail, Beatrix specifically drew upon previous work, personal experience and her love of gardens for dialogue and images. For example, in figure 140, Timmy Willie’s friend “Cock Robin,” first appeared in The Tale of Peter Rabbit and is a recurring figure in Beatrix’s work. Beatrix appears to have modeled him after a robin that paid her a visit while the family vacationed in Lennel in 1894. A Journal entry dated Wednesday, October 10, reads:

I also learned four Acts of Henry VIII . . . The 4th Act is associated with the company of a robin who came in at daylight attracted by sleepy flies, and sat on the curtain pole or the wardrobe, bold and black-eyed. He only once sang.16

Beatrix created a realistic sense of depth in this illustration by placing the grain sacks and supplies in the foreground, Timmy Willie in the middle ground and the robin in the
background (in the rain – rarely seen in her repertoire).

When Johnny Town-mouse remarks that the country “sounds rather a dull place . . .” he was echoing sentiments voiced by Mrs. Helen Potter years earlier, after she had spent time in Sawrey with Beatrix.16

In figure 137, previously mentioned, Timmy Willie, seen standing in his garden holding a leaf umbrella, is surrounded by “flowers - roses and pinks and pansies . . .” (34). These particular varieties were among those that grew in Beatrix’s garden in Sawrey and as Linda Lear noted, “Gardens had always fascinated Beatrix. . . . throughout her journal she comments on gardens and the plants and flowers that pleased her. She especially enjoyed drawing trees.”17 Of course, Timmy Willie was “born in a garden.” (9). Certainly, Mr. McGregor’s garden, created in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is Beatrix’s most famous garden.18 In the course of her correspondence with Millie Warne throughout the years, Beatrix frequently referred to her garden, various flowers of interest, and was especially fond of “plants from places one knows of or with some associations.”19

The story shifts to the country as Timmy Willie leaves town with great relief in the vegetable hamper, which travels between both places weekly. He eagerly returns home in the expectation that Johnny Town-mouse will visit him. Time passed, the seasons changed, and one day “up the sandy path all spick and span with a brown leather bag came Johnny Town-mouse!” (45). Timmy Willie welcomes him and suggests they will have “herb pudding and sit in the sun.” (46). “H’m’m! it is a little damp,” said Johnny Town-mouse, who was carrying his tail under his arm, out of the mud.” (46). In figure 141, Timmy Willie and Johnny Town-mouse are seen dining *al fresco* - an
altogether novel setting in the *Tales*. In this pleasant and refreshing atmosphere they are depicted sitting on tiny benches under a green-leaf canopy. Timmy Willie gazes directly at the viewer, capturing interest, while Johnny Town-mouse, formally dressed and wearing shoes, is focused on his meal, utensils in hand, preparing to eat.

However, the noises of the country – lawnmowers and cows mooing – disturbed Johnny Town-mouse. Timmy Willie tried to persuade him to “settle in the country” (53) and although he considered it (figure 142) he “went back in the very next hamper of vegetables; he said it was too quiet! !” (56).

Beatrix’s exceptional gift for capturing the beauty of the natural world is evident in the final scene (figure 143). Timmy Willie is seen standing in a lush strawberry patch, under a green-leaf parasol he is holding. He is next to a red, vine-ripened strawberry, nearly his size, which he is eating. The strawberry brings a bright accent of color to the scene. The trailing runners in the foreground suggest movement – similar to Johnny’s tail in figure 128 – as they follow the curved edge of the vignette, unifying the composition.

In the final verse, opposite, Beatrix concluded with the moral of the fable and stated her own preference:

One place suits one person,
another place suits another person. For my part I prefer to live in the country, like Timmy Willie. (59). THE END

Soon after publication of the book, a glowing review appeared in *The Bookman*:

Another volume for the Peter Rabbit bookshelf. Oh, such charming pictures and exciting letterpress! We like Timmy Willie, who was born in a garden, better than Johnny. Poor Timmy Willie who had such
simple country tastes, and who fell asleep by mistake in a hamper of vegetables which went up to town! The pictures are among the very best Miss Potter has done, that of the dinner of eight courses held by Johnny Town-mouse and his friends under the floor is utterly delicious, also Johnny’s questioning of Timmy—“A garden sounds rather a dull place. What do you do when it rains?” The whole secret of Miss Potter’s success lies in the fact that there are plenty of pictures for her impatient audience, and that the pictures can be readily understood, and that the story is just modulated at the right tone to please a child’s ear. Miss Potter need not worry about rivals. She has none. “Johnny Town-mouse” does even so accomplished an artist and writer as herself much credit.”
NOTES

6 THE TAIL OF JOHNNY TOWN-MOUSE

2 Ibid., 248.
3 Ibid., 249.
4 Ibid., 250.
10 Taylor, 272.
11 Lear, 3.
12 Taylor, 227.
14 Taylor, 370.
15 Stephen Lacey, Gardens of the National Trust (London: National Trust Enterprises Limited, 1996), 144.
16 Linder, Writings of BP, 358-9
17 Lear, 154.
18 Ibid., 154.
19 Ibid., 216.
20 Linder, Writings of BP, 244.
Throughout the last phase of her career, after the publication of *The Tale of Johnny Town Mouse* in 1918, Beatrix remained fond of her mice subjects. Their images were depicted on several subsequent occasions in *Cecily Parsley's Nursery Rhymes* (1922), which was a sequel to *Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes; Peter Rabbit's Almanac for 1929* (1928); *The Fairly Caravan* (1929); and a Christmas card designed for the Invalid Children’s Aid Association (1932).

Throughout her life, it seems, Beatrix continued to identify with the mice characters she created. In 1938, twenty years after *The Tale of Johnny Town Mouse* was published, while recuperating from surgery in Cheshire, in correspondence with Nancy Nicholson (a niece through marriage), when Beatrix was homesick for Sawrey, she wrote “I am a country mouse, like Timmy Willie.”1 Again, in 1943 in a letter written to a friend Beatrix wrote: “I... agree with you, you and Timmy Willie, in preferring the country.”2

In December, 1943, a few weeks before she died, Beatrix humorously referred to both Mrs. Tittlemouse and Hunca Munca in correspondence with a friend3

In conclusion, Beatrix’s mice books are deeply personal, with roots in memories of her own youth, in nursery rhymes, fables, imagery of the places she visited and lived in, and the animals and people who figured largely in her life. Margaret Lane, Beatrix’s original biographer, identified the power of her appeal when she wrote:

Beatrix Potter’s own emotional response to certain things in childhood has been most subtly and beautifully conveyed – the family lives that go on in burrows and holes, the natural detail of hedge and ditch and kitchen garden, the revelation of beauty and dewy freshness in the northern countryside,
the homeliness of its farm kitchens, the cool smell of dairies, the fragrance of baking days – they are all now a part of our own vision. She has made her books, like lyrics, out of emotional experience and it is this real feeling under the gentle playfulness of the fantasy that strikes so directly home⁴

Beatrix’s art, Lane further asserted, occupies a “humble, but secure place in the British School.”⁵
NOTES

7 CONCLUSION

3 Ibid., 461.
5 Ibid., 121.
Chronology  
(Sources: Ruth K. MacDonald, *Beatrix Potter*, and Judy Taylor, *Beatrix Potter's Letters.*)


1876 First extant signed sketch, “Foxglove and Periwinkle,” 9 February.

1881 Awarded Art Student’s Certificate of the Second Grade from the Science and Art Department of the Committee of the Council on Education, 1 July; first dated entry in coded journal, 4 November.

1890 Illustrations for *A Happy Pair* by Frederic Weatherly.

1893 Picture letter containing the original story of Peter Rabbit sent to Noel Moore, 4 September; picture letter containing the original story of Jeremy Fisher sent to Eric Moore, 5 September.

1894 Picture letter containing the original story of Little Pig Robinson sent to Eric Moore, 28 March; visit to Gloucester and inspiration for The Tailor of Gloucester. 12 June.

1895 *A Frog He Would a-Fishing Go.*

1897 Last dated entry in coded journal, 31 January; “On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae” presented before the Linnaean Society, 1 April; picture letter containing the original story of *Squirrel Nutkin* sent to Noel Moore, 28 August.

1901 Picture letter containing the revised story of *Squirrel Nutkin* sent to Norah Moore, 25 September; *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, first private edition.


1903 *The Tailor of Gloucester*, Warne edition; *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*

1904 *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny; The Tale of Two Bad Mice.*

1905 Proposal of marriage from Norman Warne received and accepted, 25 July; purchase of Hill Top Farm, Near Sawrey, August; death of Norman Warne, 25 August. *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle; The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan.*

1906 *The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher: The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit: The Story of Miss Moppet.*

1907 *The Tale of Tom Kitten.*
Chronology (cont’d)

1908 *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck; The Roly-Poly Pudding.*

1909 Purchase of Castle Farm, Near Sawrey; *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies; Ginger and Pickles.*

1910 *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse.*

1911 *Peter Rabbit’s Painting Book: The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes.*

1912 *The Tale of Mr. Tod.*

1913 Marriage to William Heelis, London, 14 October; *The Tale of Pigling Bland.*

1917 *Tom Kitten’s Painting Book: Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes.*

1918 *The Tale of JohnnyTown-Mouse.*

1922 *Cecily Parsley's Nursery Rhymes.*

1923 Purchase of Troutbeck Park.

1925 Beginning of correspondence with Bertha Mahony (Miller) of *The Horn Book: Jemima Puddle-Duck’s Painting Book.*

1927 Beginning of fund-raising for The National Trust for Windermere Ferry property through *The Horn Book.*

1928 *Peter Rabbit’s Almanac for 1929.*

1929 *The Fairy Caravan.*

1930 *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson.*

1932 *Sister Anne.*

1943 Death of Beatrix Potter, 22 December.

1944 *Wag-by-Wall.*

1955 *The Tale of the Faithful Dove.*

**Chronology** (cont’d)


1971 *The Sly Old Cat*.

1973 *The Tale of Tuppenny*.


BOOKS BY BEATRIX POTTER
(published by Frederick Warne, unless otherwise noted)

1901  The Tale of Peter Rabbit (privately printed)
1902  The Tale of Peter Rabbit
1902  The Tailor of Gloucester (privately printed)
1903  The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin
1903  The Tailor of Gloucester
1904  The Tale of Benjamin Bunny
1904  The Tale of Two Bad Mice
1905  The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle
1905  The Tale of the Pie and The Patty-Pan
1906  The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher
1906  The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit
1906  The Story of Miss Moppet
1907  The Story of Tom Kitten
1908  The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck
1908  The Roly-Poly Pudding; later renamed The Tale of Samuel Whiskers
1909  The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies
1910  The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse
1911  Peter Rabbit's Painting Book
1911  The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes
1912  The Tale of Mr. Tod
1913  The Tale of Pigling Bland
1917  *Tom Kitten’s Painting Book*

1917  *Appley Dapply’s Nursery Rhymes*

1918  *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse*

1922  *Cecily Parsley’s Nursery Rhymes*

1925  *Jemima Puddle-Duck’s Painting Book*

1928  *Peter Rabbit’s Almanac for 1928*

1929  *The Fairy Caravan* (David McKay, Philadelphia)

1929  *The Fairy Caravan* (privately printed)

1930  *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson* (David McKay, Philadelphia and Frederick Warne)

1932  *Sister Anne*, with illustrations by Katherine Sturges (David McKay, Philadelphia)

1944  *Wag-by-Wall* (The Horn Book, Boston)

1944  *Wag-by-Wall* (limited edition, 100 copies)

1952  *The Fairy Caravan*

1970  *The Tale of the Faithful Dove*, with illustrations by Marie Angel

1971  *The Sly Old Cat*

1973  *The Tale of Tuppenny*, with illustrations by Marie Angel

1987  *Wag-by-Wall*, with illustrations by Pauline Baynes

1987  *Country Tales: ‘Little Mouse,’ Daisy and Double,’ ‘Habbitrot’, with Illustrations by Pauline Baynes*
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ILLUSTRATIONS

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Figure 1

Figure 2
Figure 3.
Chapter 2

Figure 6.

put in a book, but it will be a dull one to read. We have had one little fungus like red holly berries. It had only been found once before in Scotland. I am glad you have got a nice dog, and had the cramps very badly in the cold weather; he falls down when he is walking. We have got a Canary. I hope they will lay some eggs.

A friend of mine has got a Savage Dormouse, it bites small like the prickle of a pin. It lost its tail by accident, it seems to have spoilt its temper. I remain ever affec,

Beatrix Potter.
Chapter 2

Figure 7.
Chapter 2

Figure 40.

Figure 41.
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Figure 44.

Figure 45.
Chapter 3

THE TALE OF TWO BAD MICE

By BEATRIX POTTER

Author of "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" &c.

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Figure 47.
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Figure 48.

Figure 49.
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Figure 63.
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Figure 64.

Figure 65.
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Chapter 4

The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse

Beatrix Potter

The original and authorized edition

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**Figure 127.**

**Figure 128.**

**The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse**

**Figure 129.**
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Figure 130.

Figure 131.

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Figure 136.

Figure 137.

Figure 138.