few minutes to make, no real effort, and they are most often thrown away, lost or destroyed by their maker. In this sense, paper folk toys mirror the values of our modern society, the values that adults teach children to mimic: we demand instant gratification in all areas of life and if the object breaks or wears out, we do not mend or recycle it, we throw away or replace it.

This temporary quality of children's folk material culture is but one aspect of what makes studying the toys so difficult; much of what children create is meant to "stand out of adult and ethnographic view." [9] Billy Riesinger reported that he received detention for using a Paper Popper during religion class. Folded paper notes are passed furtively between students during lectures. Boys sneak a game of paper football when sent to the library to do research. And the Chatterboxes often contain messages that children do not want adults to read.

The secret nature of much of children's folklife serves a necessary function of control and power in children's lives. It is significant that the paper toys observed are created almost exclusively in the context of school. Jay Mechling notes,

> *Schools are settings, in which, like the family, the adults hold the real power and set the institution's agenda for children. In these formal institutions, the children become increasingly adept at creating folk cultures separate from and resistant to the adults' definition of the organization's culture.*[11]

Folded paper toys also play an important role in the socialization of children. When I asked the kids why they made these objects, the most common response was, "EVERYBODY makes them." During the pre-adolescent years, a child's search for identity begins, and it is within the context of a group that most kids chose to align themselves. The quest for individuality is necessarily postponed for later adolescence; junior high schoolage children want to fit in. It is during this time in a child's life that powerful cliques become popular; this is the time that children become acutely aware of what is "cool" to wear, to say, to do, as peer pressure rears its sometime ugly head. This is the age of embarassment over body size and shape and a time when children discover just how truly awful their parents are.

When children share folk toys with each other, they are sharing more than a simple step-by-step demonstration of how to make an object. They are sharing ideas and rules about what is acceptable to the group; they are sharing traditions that offer the security of belonging.

This yearning to belong is illustrated, too, by the prestige a folk-toy maker enjoys. Some children were reported by others as being particularly adept at making specific toys. George Ernst, a short, pudgy eighth grader, was not athletic, not a good student, but nonetheless was held in great esteem by the other boys because of his ability to make Paper Poppers and airplanes.

In the climate of our sexually liberated times, it is significant that children still create gender-appropriate toys. Boys and girls are aware of folk toys made by the opposite sex and have 'tried their hands' at making them, but general use and practice of the toys is still most sharply divided. Boys' folk toys demonstrate an agressive competitiveness; paper airplanes are used as a test of skill, both in their construction and in their demonstration,. Paper Poppers are agressive toys; their purpose is to startle. Paper football games are most obviously competitive; the objective of the game is to score, to win. Girls' toys, on the other hand, exhibit a passive, cooperative scope. Small groups of girls cluster around a Chatterbox to share a giggle. Folded paper notes are a statement of friendship and are inherently social.

Michael Owen Jones asserts,

> *It is significant that contemporary urban children, in an era of widespread commercialization, continue to utilize their imagination in the construction of play objects.*[12]

No longer made out of necessity, the creation of folk toys by modern children satisfies and serves functions in their lives that the plethora of commercial toys available cannot. Moreover, the fact that the folklore of children continues to persist and grow in today's media-inundated society, suggests that the popular culture offered to kids is insufficient as a means of defining and interpreting their own lives. In these fast-paced, high-tech times, children may need folklore and folktoys more than ever, as an outlet of self-expressison and a way to deal with stress.

As folklorists seek to discover an accurate representation of modern children, it is essential to keep in mind that a fundamental aspect that children and folktoys share is their innate sense of fun. There is joy and laughter in children and the things they make echo this. If we can look beyond the acid-washed denim, the moussed hair, and the sometimes outrageous fads of pre-adolescents, we will see the children as children: kids who struggle with issues of identity and meaning in their lives, who need to interpret their lives through play and recreation.

"The need to express, the urge to create" [13] is basic to all human beings. When we examine handmade artifacts found in folklife scholarship, from the wooden crafts of Appalachian highlanders, to the pottery of Indians in New Mexico, to the folded paper toys of urban school children in Columbia, Pennsylvania, we begin to appreciate and understand, not only the culture of the makers, but creative human behavior in general. The study of the folded paper toys of modern pre-adolescents provides a wonderful opportunity for folklorists to study a genuine, living folk craft of a vital, changing culture rather than the disappearing traditions of a remnant group of society. Through the observation and interpretation of contemporary children's folklife we can understand modern children and the society they live in.

NOTES

1. David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast, Too Soon* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1981), p. 3.
2. Mac Barrick, "Folk Toys," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 29, (Autumn 1979), p. 33.
3. Ibid, p. 27.
4. For a discussion of the role of books in transmuting folklore see Mary and Herbert Knapp, *One Potato, Two Potato: The Folklore of American Children* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976), P. 10.
5. Roger Dean Beatty and Yasuko Yamaguchi, "Origami: From Japanese Folk Art to American Popular Art," *Journal of Popular Culture* 9 (1976), p. 809.
6. Simon Bronner, "Folk Objects," in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, ed. Elliot Oring (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986), p. 216.
7. Alan Dundes, *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).
8. For a discussion of American society's visual emphasis, see Simon J. Bronner, *Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society in America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), p. 1.
9. Ibid., p. 89.
10. Issues of power in children's folklore are discussed in Knapp and Knapp, *One Potato, Two Potato*, pp. 58-157.
11. Jay Mechling, "Children's Folklore," in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, ed. Elliott Oring (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986), p. 95.
12. Michael Owen Jones, *Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work, and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987), p. 41.

New Publications

Martha's KidLit Newsletter

P.O. Box 1488, Ames, IA, 50010.

Martha's KidLit Newsletter will appear bimonthly and will focus on out of print and antiquarian children's books. The newsletter will also contain articles, advertisements, and inquiries. Editor/publisher Martha Rasmussen intends this newsletter to become a means of communication among collectors, booksellers, librarians, and scholars. A year's subscription is $25.00 and single copies are available at $4.50 per copy.