Rule-breaking and meaning-making in Edward Lear

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Nonsense seems to break many rules of semantico-syntactic compatibility and somehow managed to construct discourse. This paper discusses the work of Edward Lear, the 19th century English writer and painter in an attempt to identify some of the linguistic and psycholinguistic principles underlying the nonsense text. It claims that nonsense relies on a “fuzzy” image—not meaning, but the suggestion of meaning or a feeling of sense, which results basically from the manipulation of the phonemic and lexemic possibilities of the English language and the exploitation of patterns of redundancy, sustained by a rigid syntactic and metric structure. It also suggests a relation to strategies of child language acquisition which would on the one hand explain the popularity of nonsense and on the other hand support the hypothesis that the origin of the genre is to be sought in the nursery-rhyme tradition of English literature.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Edward Lear was an English artist, illustrator, author and poet, and is known now mostly for his literary nonsense in poetry and prose and especially his limericks, a form he popularised. Update this biography » Complete biography of Edward Lear ». Famous poems by Edward Lear: Limerick: There was an Old Man with a Nose. Rate it: Alphabet Poem. Jeremiah Lear underwent severe financial reverses—in later years Lear repeatedly told friends his father had gone to debtors' prison, but no evidence substantiates this claim—and the family had to rent out their home, Bowman's Lodge, for a time. Mrs. Lear entrusted Edward to the care of his eldest sister, twenty-five-year-old Ann, and when financial stability returned, she did not resume her maternal duties. Lear received little, if any, formal education. Ann tutored him at home and encouraged a talent for drawing and painting that he had early exhibited. When Jeremiah Lear retired and moved south of London in 1828, Edward and Ann remained in the city, taking up lodgings off the Gray's Inn Road. Edward Lear published limericks and other nonsense verse in his lifetime. Here are 10 limerick poems to celebrate his birthday. Edward Lear is best known for his limerick poems and he is rightly celebrated each year on the 12th May for his unique contribution to the field of nonsense! The artist, illustrator, cat lover, watercolourist, traveller, humourist and limerick meister has given us so much to think and laugh about it's high time we gave him something back!