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Article abstract

Folk poetry is verse on topics which, in fact and in principle, are vital to the everyday concerns of the people who share it as makers, reciters, listeners, or readers. The genre displays many obvious formal and functional characteristics individuating it as a phenomenon, such as its preference for the language, imagery, and subjects of daily life, but in this essay I argue for the recognition of a trait that may not be so obvious: folk poetry's attempts to simultaneously elicit thought, feeling, and action from its audience. By appealing equally to these three major dimensions of the personality, folk poetry depicts human beings as fully integrated, complete, "collected selves". I illustrate the point with poems made by a Nottinghamshire coalminer and hospital porter, Ephraim Mugglestone (1909-1977).

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FOLK POETRY AND THE COLLECTED SELF

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Introduction

The verse compositions of Ephraim Mugglestone (1909-1977) of England's county Nottinghamshire exemplify modern-day folk poetry, a phenomenon I have elsewhere characterized and analyzed at some length (Renwick 1976, 1980; for a Canadian equivalent see Greenhill 1989). Such poetry differs in some secondary qualities from the texts of pre-Victorian origin that fill our established anthologies of folk poetry and folksong (for representative examples see Reeves 1958, 1960): it has a life relatively short in time and restricted in space, is made by working-class men and women whose authorship is generally known, is most often communicated in writing or in print rather than in oral recitation, is seldom performed by anyone other than the poet himself or herself, and will not exhibit as generically redundant a repertoire of language formulae, motifs, and plot types (Andersen 1985; Dugaw 1989). Yet I have had little hesitation applying to it a folklorist's perceptions, for like traditional folk poetry (if somewhat less metaphorically) the contemporary verse of which I write communicates to significant others a message that is invariably about the quality and value of social life — which is to say, about the idea of *community*. In so doing, modern-day folk poetry usually takes as its topics real people, institutions, places, and events from the shared environment that's within daily experience and reach of both maker and audience. Folk poetry effectively passes its judgment on social matters of the indigenous, everyday, practical, *lived* sort.

An easily recognizable index of this primary characteristic of the genre, its social nature, is the native conception of the persona "poet", which versemakers are quick to disavow; they might "write poetry" or "make poetry" but will virtually never refer to themselves as "poets". Even when they have occasion to adopt explicit personas in the act of composing or sharing verses, they identify themselves by their everyday roles of kinship, residence, or occupational affiliation. They may even make this convention explicit in the text itself. For instance, one of Mr. Mugglestone's poems, "The Porter's Plea", begins "I am only a humble porter", while in another poem, "Our Nurses", Mr. Mugglestone goes so far as to actually disavow a persona that's out of the everyday:

> If I were a 'Poet', like Shelley, Keats or Burns,
> I'd be able to express myself in real poetic terms,
> But I am just a simple chap, and find it hard to choose
> The proper type of adjectives that I would like to use;
> But at least I feel I'm honest in these verses I compose...

These excerpts, in context, perform other social work as well, of course: for instance, they display an appropriate lack of conceitedness, or of "getting above yourself" (compare Bauman 1977: 21-22 on "disclaimer of performance"), as well as signal the poet's first hand acquaintance with, and thus authority to speak upon, the topic, but the establishing of an appropriate social persona without doubt predominates. Illustrating that the notion is not idiosyncratic to the poet himself is the title of a pamphlet containing three of Mr. Mugglestone's poems printed under the auspices of his employer, the Royal Victoria Hospital in Worksop, Nottinghamshire: "The Hospital Porter's Poems". And the one-sentence news item in *The Yorkshire Post* (April 26, 1973) that first drew my attention to Mr. Mugglestone read: "Two thousand copies of verses about the Lofthouse Colliery Disaster which was *[sic]* written by an ex-miner, Ernest *[sic]* Mugglestone, of Worksop, Notts., have been sold for £100 to raise money for the bereaved families."

In this essay I wish to draw attention to a special quality of modern-day folk poetry as made by working men and women like Mr. Mugglestone who have lengthy, continuous ties with their small communities. As is apparently the case with some of the more traditional, complex genres of folklore like ritual (Fernandez 1972) and drama (Glassie 1975), folk poetry does not especially privilege any one of the three major modes of its audience's consciousness — thought, feeling, or action — but in fact strives to integrate them into a "collected self". Before I illustrate this idea, let me briefly describe Mr. Mugglestone's life history and corpus of poems.

The Poet and His Works

Ephraim Mugglestone was born in the coalmining village of Langley, in England's county Nottinghamshire, in 1909. In 1922, thirteen years old, he was like most children of working-class parents expected to enter the workforce to help support his not untypically large family, consisting in his case of father, mother, and thirteen children. The local barber for whom he had worked part-time as a lather boy for a year offered the young Mugglestone a full-time apprenticeship position, at three shillings a week, to learn the craft, but the boy felt his family needed a larger contribution from him than an apprentice barber's wage. So, probably to no one's surprise, since he was the brother of several coalminers, as well as the son, grandson, and great-grandson of coalminers, thirteen-year old

Ephraim began work underground as a ponydriver at the local colliery. Except for a five-year break during World War II, he spent the next 44 years of his working life in the mines.

The constituents of Mr. Mugglestone's lengthy career as a coalminer were probably nothing out of the ordinary. He never left the coal region of a three-county (Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire) confluence, although he did work at several different mines and, until the industry's nationalization on New Year's Day of 1947, for different owners; he was off work for six months during the 1926 General Strike and was blackballed at his local colliery when the strike ended; he saw his father, not yet fifty, crippled by two serious accidents underground, unable to work after the second one and dying at fifty-five of the cumulative effects; and had himself been injured by underground accidents that at various times fractured ribs, a leg, a collarbone, and even his skull. On the other hand, probably unlike those who, as Mr. Mugglestone put it, are "born into mining" like he was, he actually left the pits for good in 1968 and took a job as porter at the Royal Victoria Hospital in the mid-sized city of Worksop, ten miles from his Langley birthplace and five from his longtime home in Langold.

The wisdom of this late-in-life career move Mr. Mugglestone enthusiastically proclaims. For instance, in his short typewritten autobiography, completed in 1973, he describes his mood after just one day on the job: "Arriving home that day, I felt on top of the world and wondered why I had spent all those years down the mine when I could have been doing a really worthwhile job — a job that I really liked." And later we read: "I had, by now, been at the hospital for about three years and really liked my work, and had established myself as a very popular member of the staff. I knew everyone by name, and always gave a helping hand wherever I could, and wondered many times why I had spent so much time in the mines, when I could have been doing this kind of work, which I really enjoyed."

This autobiography, a 46 page typescript titled "A Fair Crack of the Whip: My Life in the Coal Mines — and Hospital", Mr. Mugglestone began writing when he was in his sixties. Embracing a hitherto untried form of expressive behaviour, as Mr. Mugglestone did, quite often accompanies a significant change in one's life experiences, circumstances, and/or status, so his turn to writing is not a great surprise. What is perhaps unusual in his case is that the autobiography was Mr. Mugglestone's second genre of letters; he had already, at the age of 62 begun to write poetry. When I met Mr. Mugglestone in 1973 he had made at least 13 poems and could provide me copies of eight of them.

These eight poems take as their settings the two socio-occupational milieux in which Mr. Mugglestone spent his working life: four poems are on topics relevant to his hospital experience, four to his experience in coalmining. While two full poems are reproduced in the text of this essay, three more in an appendix, and while the reader may find a sixth in my *English Folk Poetry* (1980: 202), I shall give brief descriptions of the eight here. Mr. Mugglestone's very first

attempt to write a poem resulted in "The Hospital A.B.C.", which employs an oft-used format (e.g., Hugill 1961: 456-458; Leach 1965: 178-181) in cataloguing salient features of its topic, in this case the Royal Victoria Hospital, though the portrayal would be fairly representative of any mid-sized city hospital. Each letter of the alphabet is matched with one particular feature, as in "A" stands for ALERTNESS — that must our motto be; always at the 'ready', for an emergency". His second poem was also on hospital matters; a more rhetorical and hortatory set of verses than "The Hospital A.B.C.", "The Porter's Plea" was stimulated by a particularly nasty automobile accident, whose victims were brought into the casualty room one Sunday morning while the poet was on duty and an appalled witness to their severe injuries. In the first person and evincing a strong narrative, "The Porter's Plea" tells of the Hospital's being alerted to the accident, the ambulance's arrival, and the Hospital staff's frantic attempts to treat the victims. The closing four couplets address all automobile drivers, urging more care on the road.

Mr. Mugglestone's third poem was probably "Safety First", in many respects similar to "The Porter's Plea", though lacking as pronounced a narrative component and not so much about Hospital matters as about coalmining's inherent dangers, complete with suggestions for mitigating their tragic effects. Next came two more contemplative pieces, one displaying lyric structure, the other catalogue. The lyrical piece was actually composed for sale; printed copies were available locally for sixpence, either from Mr. Mugglestone himself or from the Hospital, the proceeds to be used by the Hospital's branch of the Royal College of Nursing. (There had been two other poems of Mr. Mugglestone's in the three-poem booklet, but the poet had no copies of these to give me.) The poem, "Our Nurses", is a straightforward panegyric, for the most part. Another reflective piece, also relevant to the Hospital, is "My Garden of Flowers", the only one of Mr. Mugglestone's eight poems that show stanza divisions, though its rhyme scheme is that of all his poems, AABB. In "My Garden of Flowers" the poet contemplates the pastoral retirement homestead he might build and the garden he'd plant in which different fauna would remind him of different representatives of the hospital staff he had known and been so fond of during his relatively short time working there — the sisters would be tulips, the nurses lilies, and so on.

The final three poems of the eight I have are all on coalmining and all on fatal accidents underground. Two, on which I reported extensively in *English Folk Poetry* (chapter 5), are on the same accident, the flooding of Lofthouse Colliery in West Yorkshire on March 21, 1973, that killed seven miners. "The Tragedy of the Lofthouse Colliery Disaster" deals chiefly with the attempts to rescue the trapped but, it was hoped, still alive miners, while "In Memoriam: The Aftermath of the Lofthouse Disaster" is a threnody for the men killed. Finally, "The Markham Colliery Disaster", like the first Lofthouse poem, is a narrative account of a similarly tragic coalmining accident, in Derbyshire, another neigh-

bouring county of Mr. Mugglestone's Nottinghamshire. The "cage" or elevator carrying men from the surface down to their workplace below malfunctioned and plummeted to the shaft's bottom. Eighteen miners eventually died from that July 31, 1973 tragedy. According to Mr. Mugglestone, that kind of accident "I always dreaded when I worked in the pit." The first and third poems of this trio are strongly narrative, while the second, "In Memoriam", is lyric.

These eight poems are typical of the genre I have felt free to call folk poetry. They take their content from the shared small-scale habitat of verse-maker and verse-user, and their common theme is the interrelationships among the many social selves and others that populate the poem in their everyday roles as nurses, physicians, porters, automobile drivers, children, coalminers, wives. Moreover, to repeat, I think modern-day folk poetry is an unusually rich genre in that it makes equally forceful rhetorical appeals to the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of its audience's capacities to respond to expressive stimuli.

Folk Poetry as a Unifying Expressive Form

The idea is a simple one but has ramifications out of proportion to its simplicity, especially in the context of a modern culture that encourages divisions into parts — individual expression, subordination of feeling to thought (or vice versa), quick obsolescence of materials, ideas, and customs, and the surrendering of social duties and cultural pleasures to professional surrogates. Contemporary folk poetry speaks with what strikes us as an old-fashioned, idealistic voice for the values of wholeness.

The poetry appeals to its audience's minds by depicting clearly an ethical, moral, or behavioral ideal worth reinforcing, or recovering, or perhaps even striving for. Most people, of course, are aware of their culture's sanctioned worldview, values, and norms, but know them too impressionistically, or superficially, or subjectively, and so need reinforcement and clarification. The folk poet's task is to remind us of them in lucid and euphonious images, as Mr. Mugglestone does in "Tragedy of the Lofthouse Colliery Disaster", where he depicts with relentless clarity what working underground in a coalmine is like for a community that knows only hazily what goes on each day just a few hundred feet below its homes, shops, and workplaces, even though all residents are aware of how crucial coal is to their society, and especially to their physical and economic well-being:

> They were working on the night shift, on the 'coal face' underground,
> Some three miles from the pit shaft, where no daylight's ever found,
> The machine was tearing at the coal and all seemed right, until,
> There was a sudden cracking of the coal and a gap they could not fill.
> And all at once the water from old mine workings they had struck
> Poured through that gap in torrents, like a raging sea — Bad luck!

Further on he praises the rescue workers for the selflessness that led them to face extraordinary personal danger in attempting to rescue their trapped and, it was hoped, still alive mates ("And thank God for the comradeship, as they answered to the call"), following this with a trope that appeals directly to the reader's intellect, causing him or her to reflect on the relative exchange values of coal and of human life:

> ...seven more lives to the cost
> Of winning coal to keep us warm — Oh! what a price to pay
> With human lives that ne'er again will see the light of day.

Another method folk poets adopt in engaging their audience's mental faculties is to put the real events they take as their topics into apposite frames of reference that reveal design and order to life; in other words, the poems try to explain or account for bits of experience which might seem unique, or random, or irrelevant, or even purposeless without some larger vision of the sort poets possess and, skilled as they are with words, can effectively portray. We may use two of Mr. Mugglestone's hospital poems, "The Hospital A.B.C." and "My Garden of Flowers", to illustrate this quality of folk poetry, because their frames of reference are unusually clear, embedded as they are in extended metaphors. Thus by the very act of using the alphabet as a semantic matrix in which to fit a vision of the Royal Victoria Hospital, "The Hospital A.B.C." makes certain assertions: for instance, that, like the alphabet, the Hospital is a complete world in which reside all the components necessary to construct a whole, unified, exhaustive system, in this case not a system of words, of course, but a social system. (The alphabet is often used thus in proverbial speech — for instance, when it is said that someone "knows such-and-such from A to Z".) Another implication is that the society under discussion, the Hospital, is a kind of model, even Edenic, community founded on "first principles" (as, once more in proverbial speech, one "knows one's ABC's").

As for "The Garden of Flowers", its extended metaphor clearly conveys the image that the community at hand is a natural and not an artificial one, that it is orderly ("Right in the centre of it all, I'll plant a lilac tree, /To remind me of the Matron"), serene ("Away from all the dust and grime, and busy traffic streams"), harmonious ("And won't allow one single weed, to grow amongst my flowers"), and eternal ("I'm sure that I will shed a tear, each time a flower fades, /But then I'll go on planting more, to bloom in later days"). The poet's imaginative portrait assures his audience that there is a rational plan to our existence that thought can make explicit as well as justify.

Folk poetry also encourages an appropriate feeling toward its topic. Once again, in keeping with the genre's fundamental characteristic as the communica-

tor of socially relevant messages, the feelings the poet conveys are not such solipsistic, internally-directed ones as individual pride, self-satisfaction, confidence, or narcissism, but other-directed: compassion, affection, gratitude, sorrow — and occasionally their opposites, especially when the topic includes a strong exoteric component to make the usual esoteric message even sharper by contrast (Jansen 1965). Mr. Mugglestone's "Our Nurses" is a good example of his formulating, transmitting, and thus evoking social feeling in his audience:

> A nurse is really "someone" — "someone" who's very kind,
> A person to appreciate — for service to mankind

and

> I've seen the silent tears they shed when they've fought so hard in vain,
> When battling for some poor soul's life, who's suffered untold pain.

The poem continues in the same vein, cataloguing the selfless dedication of the nurses, their supremely heightened attention to others that once again makes the Hospital a model of what an ideal community should be.

One device folk poets use frequently to strengthen the effect of their emotional appeal is to draw explicit analogies between the audience and the poem's *dramatis personae*, by pointing to common residence in the same town, or to a shared occupation, or more generally, to shared experiences of the simple sort common in daily life. In "The Markham Colliery Disaster", Mr. Mugglestone employs this often-encountered device but carries its effect farther than is usual; he immediately follows the affecting analogy with a sharp *empirical* contrast between "us" and "them", by introducing the tragic fact of the miners' imminent demise. These juxtaposed images ultimately increase the pathos — and thus the emotional response — even more than a simple one or the other would do:

> They were real live human beings, just the same as you and I
> Going to work that morning, as the sun rose in the sky;
> But little did they realise that this would be the day
> On which they never would return to see the light so gay.

An especially effective means of building identification between social self and other is to dwell on the archetypal locus of emotional bonding, the nuclear family. Mr. Mugglestone, we have already seen, frequently implies "familyness" in his depictions of close-knit communities, especially the hospital community; where the real thing rather than its analogue is quite apposite, however, he employs the reference with full force. "The Markham Colliery Disaster" again:

> They got their lamps and walked across the pit yard, full of life,
> Talking to each other — who knows? — perhaps about the wife,
> Or the children they had left behind to await their safe return
> Which, alas, ne'er came — ah! cruel fate, and for them their families yearn.

Indeed, death of a family member is the most affecting of tragedies, and whenever death is a topic in his poems, Mr. Mugglestone invariably evokes maximum emotional response by depicting it in part through the eyes of kin. In one Lofthouse poem, for instance, we find

> Whilst all the time the relatives tried hard to keep back tears
> And prayed for miracles to happen, and so allay their fears, in the other,
> Their loved ones will remember, for many a long year,
> And suffer in silence and hide many a tear.

The imagery is perhaps sharpest in "The Porter's Plea":

> The waiting room across the way was now full to overflowing
> With relatives awaiting news — their agony was showing
> Their eyes were red, the tears streamed down, and faces deathly white
> I could not stand it anymore — this plea I had to write.

These examples suggest that, just as folk poetry's cognitive appeal depends for its effectiveness on a vision of a coherent society of members acting in concert to uphold cultural ideals, so does the poetry's affective appeal depend on evoking feeling that moves outward to link self and other in a shared sentiment. Mr. Mugglestone's poems subvert the urge toward self-absorption that so much in the dominant culture, corporate controlled and mass-media disseminated, incites.

And similarly does modern folk poetry's third type of appeal, the conative, just as important as the other two, urge its readers and hearers to *do* something that contributes to the social good. A poem's appeal to purposive action may be made even more explicit in the circumstances of its composition and dissemination than in its text. For instance, Mr. Mugglestone's booklet of three poems ("The Hospital Porter's Poems") was published expressly to stimulate the contributing of money to aid a public institution, as the booklet's front page announces: "by the sale of these poems, he hopes to be able to make a substantial donation to the 'Royal College of Nursing'". A similar headnote graces Mr. Mugglestone's broadside, "The Tragedy of the Lofthouse Colliery Disaster": "Mr. Mugglestone guarantees that every penny raised by the sale of this poem, will be donated to the 'Relief Fund' or the dependents of the victims, and thanks everyone for their contributions." Just as often, the intended effect is explicit in a poem's rhetoric, often taking form very much like the following, from Mr. Mugglestone's verses on the mining accident that followed the tragic affair at Lofthouse by just over four months, "The Markham Colliery Disaster":

> And spare a thought for the families, in their hour of such sad sorrow
> As we give whatever we can spare — it may be us tomorrow.

Helping needy community members financially is not the only or even the main action folk poetry seeks to instigate in its audience, of course. Also common are efforts toward the kind of "behaviour modification" that we more traditionally call "social control" (Bascom 1954: 346). For example, as a longtime miner himself who began working in pits when both workplace conditions and pay were extremely primitive, Mr. Mugglestone is attuned to the necessity of both a fitting wage for miners and a policy of consistent improvement of safety measures underground. We find an example of the former in "The Markham Colliery Disaster":

> Let's not forget this tragedy, when we talk of the price of coal,
> And pay the men for what they do, for all the dangers towards their goal.

The latter concern we find not only in his mining poems ("Safety First") but also in his hospital poems, as in "The Porter's Plea":

> So all you drivers on the roads — please don't think I'm preaching,
> You know the rules, and Highway Code — you got them with your teaching,
> But I am pretty well convinced that a little extra care,
> Is all that's needed on our roads, to make these crashes rare,
> So will you, next time on a run, before you overtake
> Make sure your path in front is clear — just for the other's sake.

Now that we've scanned the range of devices Mr. Mugglestone employs in his rhetorical appeals to the mind, feeling, and will of his audience, it would be appropriate to look at a complete poem or two for a clearer picture of how the poet integrates the three in constructing not just a unified poem but an assumption of a unified human personality. I'll begin with "Safety First", which is to my mind the most representative of Mr. Mugglestone's eight poems, containing as it does most of his favoured topics and themes.

"Safety First" opens by establishing the poet's community persona and his qualifications to speak on the subject at hand:

> For many years I worked below, in the bowels of the earth,
> My father and grandfather did, long before my birth,
> In the coal fields of South Yorkshire, Notts. and Derbyshire as well,
> And many stories of tragedy I could tell.

The poem then lays its first stress on the cognitive ramifications of its topic:

> But there's only one thing at this time in which I'm interested,
> And that's the rules of Safety First, which have been tried and tested.
> Each time I sit and think about the lives that have been lost,
> In getting coal to keep folk warm, and adding up the cost,

I realise the answer can't be found in pounds or in new pence,
But I do believe it could be cut with a little common sense.

The language here is weighted with references to cognition — "interested", "think", "realise", "believe", and "common sense". Into this mood of reflection that Mr. Mugglestone has established in these opening lines, he now introduces a set toward feeling:

For when I pick a paper up and read in bold headlines,
That another man has lost his life in one of Britain's mines,
I think about the relatives, that he has left behind,
Perhaps a wife and family, their own livelihood to find,
And wonder, is it possible, this life could have been saved
If the simple rules of Safety First had not been disobeyed?

Note that Mr. Mugglestone does not simply switch his emphasis from thought to emotion, but integrates the two by incorporating, in an almost understated way, the tragic images of the bereaved families (the family and the home are extremely common signifiers in modern-day folk poetry, carry a heavy semantic load, and are often highly symbolic) while maintaining a stress on thought, in his references to "reading", "thinking", and "wondering".

The question posed in the last couplet quoted above, which contains both cognitive ("wondering") and affective (the image of a life lost) elements, is followed by an answer that neatly incorporates the third kind of appeal by calling for some sort of corrective action:

These rules are made for everyone to study and digest,
Please read them o'er and o'er again, you know it is the best.

The possible presumptiveness of this exhortation, though tempered by "please" and "you know", is further ameliorated by another motif of familial relationships:

Though I no longer earn my bread in coal far down below,
I still have many relatives and friends who do, and so

— which is itself followed by a return to a hortatory stance; the audience is urged to initiate some action to change the state of affairs that both mind and feeling deem unacceptable:

With these few lines I do not hope for any big rewards
But hope that all you mining chaps will do your bit towards,
Reducing these fatalities, less serious mishaps, too,
By making Safety First well-known, and my thanks to all of you.

Another good example of folk poetry's unifying of thought, feeling, and action is the second of two poems Mr. Mugglestone made on a mining accident at Lofthouse Colliery in neighbouring Yorkshire that killed seven workers. The poem, "In Memoriam", begins with a distinctly emotional appeal:

> Never again will they see the light of day;
> And their loved-ones can only kneel down and pray,
> For the six poor souls in the Lofthouse mine,
> On whom the sun no more will shine.

Into this highly emotional orientation Mr. Mugglestone incorporates cognitive elements by sketching an image that resonates with values crucial in two related contexts: first, in the general religious worldview, is the idea that the dead should receive proper ritual burial and in consecrated ground, none of which was the case here, since the miners perished suddenly and violently and their bodies were never found; and second, in the more specific worldview of mining culture, the idea that all of a colliery's productive resources, people and material, should be unstintingly put to use not just in rescuing men in peril but also in recovering dead bodies (and indeed, no mining of coal resumed until such recovery has been effected).

> As their flesh lies rotting and their bones turn to dust
> In the heat of the mine their bodies must rust
> Behind seals built by men, who had given their "all"
> In the rescue attempt, when they answered the call.
> No coffin or shroud to cover their skin
> No flowers from friends, only tears from their kin.

These lines lead up to a couplet that continues the predominantly cognitive set, as it questions the justness of a tacit cost equation balancing one person's material comfort with another person's life, the latter having been lost in procuring the means for the former:

> What a terrible end to those lives in their prime,
> What a price for the coal, we get from the mine!

Mr. Mugglestone then employs the theme of memory to integrate cognitive and affective appeals. He contrasts the modern world's tendency to be seduced into caring for the present only, into constant frenetic go-getting, into lack of caring for other's misfortunes, and into an emphasis on things (coal, machines) with the longer memories, greater feelings ("suffer"), reluctance to be self-assertive ("silence" and "hide"), and an enhanced concern with people other than oneself that familial ties foster:

And too soon all forgotten in this hustling world,
With the flag at half-mast, for a time, then unfurled.
Their loved ones will remember, for many a long year,
And suffer in silence and hide many a tear.

A less conservative voice might at this point envisage a new social and moral order, but that would require an ethos of discontinuity one finds only rarely in authentic English folk poetry; not only would Mr. Mugglestone not want to change the infrastructure of a system that generates a familiar way of life, but even if he did, a radical ideology would be inappropriate subject matter for the genre of community verse, would be socially indecorous considering the tragic circumstances, and indeed would constitute an assertive posture at variance with Mr. Mugglestone's personal modesty (Renwick 1980: 211-212). What the public can do, to the poet's way of thinking, is to combine thought and feeling in proper proportion with some practical and fitting action. Thus does "In Memoriam" end with a conative appeal recommending one of the poet's most favoured strategies, "safety first":

But the world will go on with its daily routines;
And more coal produced with those ugly machines;
So let's play "Safety First" and have no repeats
Of the Lofthouse Disaster — shout it aloud in the streets.

Finally, I should point out that a further appeal to action, an extra-textual one, was integral to "In Memoriam" in that the verses were made expressly to raise money for the official Lofthouse Colliery Disaster Fund, which provided financial help to the dead miners' dependents. Thus whenever Mr. Mugglestone shared his poem with other members of his community, a specific social act was elicited in response — the donating of money for the miners' bereaved kin.

* * *

Ephraim Mugglestone's poems illustrate my conception of modern-day folk poetry. The genre shares with older, oral, anonymous folk poetry the quality of being primarily a social rather than individualistic product, motivated by a social concern, espousing social values, and functioning most often to integrate individuals into the collective of the specific community that is the poetry's context-of-use. In articulating these features, a folk poet directs attention to the continuities that knit individuals into groups, and occasionally to discontinuities that exist with competing practices which work against community — frequently ones that are considered non-traditional, exogenous, and "hegemonic". This integrating function of folk poetry may be reflected in one of the genre's striking characteristics; poems not only exhibit a range of rhetorical appeals, directed to

the cognitive, affective, and conative domains of its audience's consciousness, but also unify these three types of appeal so that a sense of the individual as a truly whole person matches the wholeness of what his or her community "body" ideally should be. In his poems Mr. Mugglestone strives to counter elements of modern life that conspire to make each of his neighbours more forgetful of traditional knowledge and values, more materialistic, more uninvolved, and more ego-centred.

Appendix

"The Porter's Plea" to all Drivers

I am only a humble porter — like a cog in a big machine,
But I sometimes wish all drivers could see what I have seen;
It started on a Sunday — soon after early dawn,
I had just begun my duties, on that bright and sunny morn,
And was passing by the switchboard when suddenly a flash,
Came over on the telephone — "There's been an awful crash,
Three ambulances are coming — with full families inside".
So to the Casualty I went and opened both doors wide.
I hadn't very long to wait 'ere I heard an ambulance bell,
And when it stopped outside the door — 'twas worse than any Hell.
A little child lay screaming, her head a mass of cuts,
And next a mother's body — there were no 'ifs' and 'buts',
A Doctor climbed inside to look and soon he shook his head,
"Take this one to the Mortuary — I'm sorry — but she's dead".
They then took out the father, who looked a sorry sight,
And the Doctors and the Nursing Staff put up a glorious fight
To try and save this poor man's life — he was losing so much blood;
They'd have to give transfusions to do him any good,
And by this time, the second of the ambulances came in,
But when they got the stretchers out — I thought 'Oh what a sin!'
Four more poor souls — unconscious — their heads turned on one side,
And to see the faces of these four I hardly could abide.
Then as the third load came along, the Resuscitating Room
Was one hive of activity — stayed like that till noon.
About another one, poor chap — the surgeons did debate,
And decided that to save his life, a leg must amputate.
The waiting room across the way was now full to overflowing
With relatives awaiting news — their agony was showing.
Their eyes were red, the tears streamed down, and faces deathly white,
I could not stand it any more — this plea I had to write.
So all you drivers on the roads — please don't think I'm preaching,
You know the rules, and Highway Code — you get them with your teaching,
But I am pretty well convinced that a little extra care,
Is all that's needed on our roads, to make these crashes rare,
So will you, next time on a run, before you overtake
Make sure your path in front is clear — just for the other's sake,
Perhaps you may save someone's life, and now, I say 'Adieu'
Take heed of a humble "Porter's Plea" and "Thanks" from me to you.

The Markham Colliery Disaster

They were real live human beings, just the same as you and I
Going to work that morning, as the sun rose in the sky;
But little did they realise that this would be the day
On which they never would return to see the light so gay.
They were going to the mine that morn to earn an honest living,
And produce more coal to keep us warm, but fate was all forbidding.
They got their lamps and walked across the pit yard, full of life,
Talking to each other — who knows? — perhaps about the wife,
Or the children they had left behind to await their safe return
Which, alas, ne'er came — ah! cruel fate, and for them their families yearn.
They were huddled together in the cage, like cattle in a sale,
And descended into the darkness, not knowing the brakes would fail;
Still as the cage went down the shaft at quite terrific speed,
They still chatted to each other, that is a miner's creed;
When suddenly they realised that all was not quite right,
As the cage began to gather speed, and they screamed and shook with fright.
They crashed down on the sump boards with such a sickening thud,
As a cloud of dust rose in the air and there was a sudden sea of blood,
And there were broken bones and arteries torn, and for many, all life gone
And now for many families — life no longer is a song.
Another 'Act of God' they'll say at the enquiry when completed,
And work will go on just the same, perhaps a bit depleted.
Let's not forget this tragedy, when we talk of the price of coal,
And pay the men for what they do, for all the danger towards their goal;
And spare a thought for the families, in their hour of such sad sorrow
As we give whatever we can spare — it may be us tomorrow.

The Hospital A. B. C.

A stands for ALERTNESS — that must our motto be; always at the 'ready', for an emergency;

B is for our BOILERMEN, you've heard of them no doubt, they work to keep the fires in and never let them out.

C is for our CASUALTY which opens day and night, where many times to save a life, they've fought a classic fight.

D is for DEPARTMENTS such as N.O.P. for instance; Physio. and Dispensary, all in easy distance.

E is for EXPERIMENTS our Path. Labs. carry out; they study why we all get ills — then try to stamp them out.

F stands for FIRES — if unguarded can be foes; they've claimed so many victims, as the Record plainly shows.

G is for GASTRECTOMY — nasty operations; bad enough at any time, far worse with complications.

H is for the HOSPITAL, this poem's all about, an institution for the sick, we'd be bad off without.

I is for INJECTIONS, some for relief of pain, but others may be just in case the flu bug strikes again.

J stands for JOYFUL — that's what most patients feel, on being told they can go home, they want to dance the Reel.

K is for KINDHEARTED — that what our skilled staff are; it helps a lot when folk are sick, and dims the pain by far.

L stands for LIFE we all contrive to save; but sometimes God takes one away — don't criticise, He gave.

M is for the MATRON, we couldn't do without; she tells the staff just what to do, and often helps them out.

N is for our NURSES, nippy, nice and neat, and to see them go about their work, gives our eyes a treat.

O is for OFFICIALS to whom we show respect; among the many jobs they do, the staff they must select.

P stands for PAIN which we all sometimes must bear; but thanks to skilful doctors, we're soon out of despair.

Q is for QUIET PLEASE — essential you'll agree; especially at night time, that's very plain to see;

R is for RECEPTIONISTS who are always most polite; they always have a cheery word, much to our delight.

S is for our STRESS sometimes as hard as nails; but alike us all, they have got hearts and whencalled on, never fail.

T is for THEATRE of which folk have a dread, where surgeons fight both day and night, or many would be dead.

U is for UNTIDYNESS — in Hospital a sin; so do not throw your waste around, please place it in a bin.

V is for VICTORIA, the name this place was given; where in the past so many times, grave problems have arisen.

W is for WARDS where in-patients are treated, and often they all get so full — 'tis the staff gets overheated.

X stands for X-RAY a marvellous invention — takes pictures of all sorts of things, and shows what needs attention.

Y stands for YAWNING — excusable no doubt, especially if we're on nights, and had to chase about.

Z stands for ZEAL of which our staff are full, and so in times of trouble, we all together pull.