

*Górska A. (Opole, Poland)**NURSERY RHYMES IN ENGLISH AND POLISH*

А. ГУРСКА (ОПОЛЕ, ПОЛЬША) ДЕТСКИЕ СТИШКИ И ПРИБАУТКИ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И ПОЛЬСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ. В статье анализируется роль детских стихов и прибауток в английской и польской детской литературе, описывается статус этого жанра в исследованиях детской литературы. В начале статьи перечисляются основные положения, касающиеся детской поэзии. Обычно ни английские, ни польские исследователи не дают определения детской поэзии, к тому же некоторые не считают её особым литературным явлением. С другой стороны, исследователи говорят об особенностях детской поэзии, которые отличают ее от стихов для взрослых. Кроме того, и в Англии, и в Польше можно встретить точку зрения, согласно которой детская поэзия обладает меньшей ценностью, и поэтому не заслуживает исследовательского внимания.

В английской и польской исследовательских традициях детские стихи и прибаутки имеют разный статус. В английских исследованиях детские стихи считаются поэзией, предназначенной для детей, в то время как в работах польских учёных они никогда не становились отдельным объектом изучения. В польской литературе не существует и сборников детских стихов и прибауток. В статье также сопоставляются классификации детской поэзии, представленные в работах английских и польских исследователей. Существуют достаточно общие классификации, которые можно назвать интуитивными. На сегодня не существует непротиворечивой типологии детской поэзии. В статье перечисляются основные сборники детских стихов и прибауток в английской и польской литературе. Исследование показывает, что для изучения детской поэзии необходимо разработать её непротиворечивую классификацию и более глубоко проанализировать польские источники, посвященные проблемам жанра детских стихов и прибауток.

Ключевые слова: детские стихи и прибаутки, детская поэзия, польская поэзия, английская поэзия

A. GÓRSKA (OPOLE, POLAND) NURSERY RHYMES IN ENGLISH AND POLISH.
This article intends to show the status of nursery rhymes in English and Polish children's literature research and position of them in

poetry for children field. At the beginning the most important claims about poetry for children are listed. Generally, both English and Polish researchers do not give any definitions of the poetry for children and some of them believe that it does not exist as a separate entity. On the other hand, it is believed that poetry for children has specific features, which made it different from poetry for adults. Additionally, both in England and Poland there are claims that poetry for children is of lesser value; therefore it is often seen as unworthy of scientific attention.

Status of nursery rhymes in English and Polish research literature differs. In English literature nursery rhymes are considered to be a type of poetry for children but in Polish research literature the nursery rhymes have never been awarded separated status. There are no collections of nursery rhymes in Polish literature. Then classifications used in children's poetry field in English and Polish research literature are compared. There are some generic classifications in the literature of the subject but most of the classifications are intuitive. A consistent typology of children's poetry has never been devised. Finally major collections of nursery rhymes are listed and a history of nursery rhymes in English and Polish literature is presented. Findings suggest a need for consistent classification of poetry for children and more research in Polish literature on nursery rhymes.

Keywords: nursery rhymes, poetry for children, Polish poetry, English poetry

The article is comprised of four parts: the first part is about the problem of children's poetry existence and its distinctiveness, the second part describes classifications used in children's poetry field. Then there is an overview of nursery rhyme collections in Polish and English literature, and finally, the origin of nursery rhymes in Polish and English literature is described briefly. The article contains descriptions of major collections of nursery rhymes: Polish – Jerzy Cieślowski's 'WIELKA ZABAWA' and English – Iona & Peter Opie's 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES' and 'THE OXFORD NURSERY RHYME BOOK.'

What is children's poetry?

What is children's poetry? There is poetry which is easy to read and poetry which has didactic content, but does poetry for children really

exist? Both Polish and English researchers have been trying to avoid giving the definition of children's poetry.

Morag Styles in the introduction to 'POETRY AND CHILDHOOD' (Styles et al. 2010: XI) writes that what constitutes children's poetry has never been adequately formulated in English literature. She admits later that almost any poem borrowed or stolen from the adult canon can become part of the canon of poetry for children (Styles et al. 2010: XII). As the other authors, Styles has not given the definition of poetry for children, claiming that trying to do this leads to pointless debates (Styles 1998: XXV).

In 'FROM THE GARDEN TO THE STREET' (Styles 1998: XV) Styles claims that it is possible to show only which poetry is not for the children, because the language used is too complex or there are other reasons why the piece presented is inappropriate for them. Despite that Styles believes that generally children are capable of reading difficult, sophisticated texts if previously prepared. Although children can read serious texts they generally like texts written in doggerel, of little value for adults, simple or rude and we should acknowledge that fact as well (Ibid: XXV). In Styles' opinion poetry written expressly for children is not inferior to poetry written expressly for adults and later added to children's poetry canon. She believes that it is not possible to measure the quality of the poetry therefore children's poetry should be valued in its own right (Ibid.: XVI). After all, most of what has come to be known as children's poetry have been created by generations of anthologists and not by children themselves (Ibid.: XVI).

Coventry Patmore in the preface to his anthology 'THE CHILDREN'S GARLAND FROM THE BEST POETS; SELECTED AND ARRANGED' (Patmore 1884: V) claims that his book contains only genuine poetry, that gives pleasure to children. He admits using a practical test on children, although he does not give any details of the testing procedure, to separate poetry children like the most from the rest. He claims that the application of the test has excluded from the set all verse written specially for children and all verse written about children for adults (Patmore 1884: VI). He does not give a definition of poetry for children, but we understand that in his opinion, poetry for children is that which gives them pleasure.

Similar view is presented by another anthologist, Neil Philip in the introduction to his book entitled 'THE NEW OXFORD BOOK OF CHILDREN'S VERSE' (Philip 1996: XXV). He claims that poetry for

children is the only poetry to which they respond and he believes that poetry written specially for children has low quality. In his opinion the best anthologies rarely contain poems written intentionally for children. And again he doesn't give any explicit definition of poetry for children stating that there is only good or bad poetry.

Additionally, Philip describes two different views (Philip 1996: XXVII) about poetry for children held by the English. The first view is that poetry for children was perfected in a lost golden age. This type of poetry reflects a traditional perception of childhood. The second view is that poetry for children should be relevant to the modern world, should be shorter, catchier and not drenched in nostalgia. Philip believes that those two styles of writing could be represented in one anthology (and they are represented in his anthology) and poetry for children can be attractive, silly, nonsense and serious at the same time.

Among others, there is an opinion that poetry for children as a separate type of poetry does not exist. Peter Hunt in his article (Hunt 2010: 17) writes: "*There is a common, basic assumption that poetry – at least, post-romantic poetry – although essentially indefinable, is static, thoughtful, sophisticated, skilled, philosophical – and concerned with sex and death and interiority. The general concept of children is that they are not any of those things. Therefore, children's poetry cannot exist*". Hunt claims that in English culture poetry for children is regarded as a step to real poetry and an instrument of acculturation, and not as art itself (Hunt 2010: 18).

Regrettably, children are never asked for their opinion; adults decide what type of poetry is better for them and nobody knows what poetry for children really is. Many believe that its quality is lower than quality of poetry for adults. (Hunt 2010: 18).

Then Hunt says (Hunt 2010: 20) that all the opinions above are connected to our culture and do not really relate with the formal features of the poetry: "*the judgment that something is poetry or good poetry is nothing to do with what is on the page – it is nothing to do with form: it is a cultural value-judgment, exactly equivalent to the decision as to what literature is*". The idea of absolute values in literature and art is another obstacle. Those values are hard or impossible to define. Therefore readers have been forced to believe (Hunt 2010: 20) that only a small proportion of people is able to appraise literature and others have to follow their choices. Thus, at present we are only able to say what is available for children to read

(Hunt 2010: 21) because we have the canon of children's poetry, but we are not able to say what poetry for children is or how it should be read. Peter Hunt (Hunt 2010: 22) presents two basic ideas, which should change our understanding of children's poetry. Firstly, he states that children's poetry does not appeal to adults and secondly it should not be seen as a ladder or stepping-stone to anything. Hunt (Hunt 2010: 22) believes that children should be left to interact with words freely and this would lead us to *genuine, liberated children's poetry*.

Polish researchers have held similar opinions about children's poetry. Jerzy Cieřlikowski, in the article (Cieřlikowski, 1982: 367) entitled 'WIERSZ DZIECIĘCY' ['Children's poem'] states that it is not possible to describe what poem for children is. In Polish culture of the 18th century, similarly to English culture, the role of the poetry for children was to educate kids and poetry for children was never considered art (Ibid.: 362). Similarly to Styles and Patmore, Cieřlikowski (Ibid.: 368) believes that poetry for children can be found among the texts written for adults.

In the book entitled 'WIELKA ZABAWA' ['Great fun'] (Cieřlikowski 1985) Cieřlikowski claims that literature for children is not a separate genre of literature but just a modification of literature made due to meet children's demands. Because children have different point of view than adults, some poetic elements will be more frequent in poetry for children (Ibid.: 253).

Point of view is the main subject of Edward Balcerzan's article 'ODBIORCA W POEZJI DLA DZIECI' ['Addressee in poetry for children'] (Balcerzan 1982: 392-393). The author points out that the reader orientation has become a part of the structure of the poetry for children; in comparison the reader orientation in the structure of literary texts for adults is insignificant. Balcerzan has observed (Ibid.: 393-394) that the reader orientation influences names of genres used in the field of poetry for children. Some of the terms used in the field of poetry for children do not exist in the adult's speech but only in the children's language.

The reader orientation in the poetry for children generates limitations in the research of the children's poetry. Balcerzan (Ibid.: 394-395) claims that text of children's poetry can be judged from only two separate points of view: firstly, from the perspective of didactics, where literature is regarded as a supplement to school education, and

secondly, from the perspective of artistic values, where literature is regarded as art.

Balcerzan believes (Ibid.: 396) that both attitudes described above, extreme didactics and radical art are in opposition to each other. He believes also that both perspectives have one element in common: in each case the text of poetry for children is judged from the adult's point of view only. Child's point of view differs from adult's point of view; adults are able to analyze poetry from many perspectives in many ways unavailable to children. Balcerzan (Ibid.: 400-401) has enlisted three codes that can be found in all poems for children: didactic code, poetic code and auto-didactic code (associated with autodidactic behaviour of the children). All of the three codes coexist in each poem for children. Balcerzan claims (Ibid.: 406-408) that from the perspective of a child the whole content becomes artistic and educational at the same time, because the child sees the text as one, inseparable entirety. In his opinion, the main value of the text predestined for a child lies in skilful connection with the child's internal world.

Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz in the article entitled 'DYDAKTYZM JAKO ODPOWIEDŹ' ['Didactics as an answer'] (Czaplejewicz 1986: 15) states that contemporary literature for children is a new version of didactic literature. In his opinion children's literature and didactic literature have similar vision of the world – it sees world as a school, human as a student, and knowledge as wisdom. The difference between old didactic literature and contemporary literature for children is in the fact that didactic literature has developed in the environment which had the same system of values; contemporary children's literature is created in the environment which has a different vision of life and the world. The author of the contemporary literature for children creates values which are not his own (Ibid.: 16-17). Didactic literature and contemporary literature for children give answers but at present literature that asks questions predominates. Czaplejewicz believes that children's literature should stay unchanged, should keep its vision of the world and should keep answering the questions, because it is source of its strength (Ibid.: 21-24).

Myth of distinctiveness of poetry for children

The myth of distinctiveness of poetry for children has been the main obstacle stopping researchers from carrying out a systematic

analysis of the subject. This myth was influenced, on the one hand, by didactic traditions in the poetry for children, on the other hand, by the needs of the authors and writers. Especially lesser skilled authors have used the myth of distinctiveness for their benefit because poetry which is different, unique, or special cannot be subjected to serious stylistic analysis the same way as other literary texts.

Jan Brzechwa in his article entitled: 'O POEZJI DLA DZIECI' ['About poetry for children'] noted that myth of distinctiveness of poetry for children protects incompetent authors (Brzechwa 1982: 349) – they do not have to match the expectations readers have towards writers who write for adults. Then Brzechwa observes (Ibid.: 349) that badly written texts for children usually are believed to excel in understanding children's soul and possessing special educational values. Brzechwa has pointed out (Ibid.: 356) that the myth of distinctiveness is a barrier between children and poets. It stops the development of poetry because influenced by it professional poets do not want to write for the children. Additionally, Brzechwa (Ibid.: 355) has called our attention to the fact that in Polish culture poetry for children was generally treated as an attribute of motherhood – another reason for professional writers to avoid children's poetry and leave it to their wives.

Children's poetry research – Nursery rhymes research – Inferiority

As it was stated many times before, poetry for children was considered inferior to poetry for adults. This situation can be observed in Polish and English research literature. There are not many differences between what was said by Polish and English researchers.

Jan Brzechwa, the most popular author of Polish poems for children of all time, claims (Brzechwa 1982: 355) that in the 1920s, literature for children was regarded as of inferior quality. It was merely part of the educational process and neither editors nor critics were interested in its development.

Jan Brzechwa (Ibid.: 355) criticized that state of affairs. In his opinion poor Polish tradition of poetry for children and lack of serious attention should raise increased anxiety.

Jan Zygmunt Jakubowski expressed a similar opinion. In his article (Jakubowski 1982: 357) entitled: 'WIERSZE DLA DZIECI... ALE POEZJA' ['Poems for children... but poetry'] Jakubowski pointed out that critics

and commentators did not analyze poetry for children because of its poor quality. According to Jakubowski, poetry for children which was published in newspapers and volumes in the 1920s was of very bad quality.

Concerns about quality have not been the only reason for critics to avoid dealing with poetry for children. Edward Balcerzan (Balcerzan 1982: 396) believes that lack of commentators' own point of view in the judging of poetry for children was to blame for the fact that literature for children was marginalized by the critics.

In Poland, poetry for children has been ignored not only by the critics of poetry but by the researchers of folklore as well. Dorota Simonides, folklore researcher, in her article 'WSPÓŁCZESNA USTNA TWÓRCZOŚĆ DZIECI' ['Contemporary oral children's work'] (Simonides 1982: 408) points out that for a long time there were no research made on folklore for children. Despite many attempts, in Polish literature, there is only one study devoted to children's folklore, which is Jerzy Cieślukowski's 'WIELKA ZABAWA'.

Jerzy Cieślukowski himself agreed (Cieślukowski 1985: 6) that in Polish literature there were not many scientific articles or publications dealing with children's folklore. Despite of the fact that Oskar Kolberg, the most famous Polish ethnologist, has collected texts known and sung by children, there are no publications which list all of them separately.

In fact, Polish researchers have never created (Cieślukowski 1985: 91) any selection of nursery rhymes. Kolberg himself described children's games but neglected the rhymes. Additionally, nursery rhymes were never published in a separate anthology in Poland, and there is no custom to print them in publications for children.

Poetry for children has never been the most popular research subject in Britain. It has not changed much recently despite the fact that we observe growing interest in children's poetry. Morag Styles in 'POETRY AND CHILDHOOD' (Styles 2010: XV) says: *'Regrettably, poetry is also the Cinderella of children's literature, receiving very little scholarly attention. It is usually poorly represented at academic conferences and is the subject of minority interest.'* In 'From the Garden to the Street' Styles (Styles 1998: 16) admits that the position of children's literature is marginal within literature as a whole and there are not many scholars in this field (Ibid.: IX). In the same way there are not many publishers willing to deal with children's poetry, they are preoccupied

with commercial success (Styles 2010: XV) and prefer to promote other types of literature. In Britain, where the editorial market is much more developed than in Poland, there is certain unwillingness among publishers (Ibid.: XV) to popularize poetry for children, especially volumes written by a single poet.

Generally, research on the children's poetry can be challenging. Poetry for children had not existed for a long time and it emerged from the poetry for adults. Poets had been writing texts with adults in mind for ages, and only some of the texts later became part of the children's poetry canon. Therefore, neither style nor subject determines who should be the reader of the poem. Additionally a coherent typology of children's poetry was never presented. The names of the genres of the children's poetry are taken from children's speech and do not exist in the dictionaries or handbooks of stylistics.

Generic classifications of children's poetry

As it was mentioned previously, a consistent typology of children's poetry was never presented. There are some generic classifications in the literature on the subject but most of the classifications are intuitive and inconsistent. Those classifications often present terminology where literary terms are mixed with the colloquial expressions. For example, only among nursery rhymes from "THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES" (Opie & Opie 1997: IX) we can find: *nonsense jingles, humorous songs, infant amusements, nursery counting-out formulas, baby puzzles, riddles, rhyming alphabets, tongue twisters, nursery prayers, folk rhymes, magic spells, and fairy tales in verse.*

There were some attempts to systematize children's poetry field in the Polish literature. Stanisław Frycie in a book entitled: 'LITERATURA DLA DZIECI I MŁODZIEŻY W LATACH 1945-1970' ['Literature for children and youth in 1945-1970'] (Frycie 1982: 87-104) divided contemporary lyrics for children into four subdivisions: poetry of imagination, poetry of grotesque and satire, lyrical poetry and poetry of the avant-garde. Frycie (Ibid.: 115) was one of the researchers who believed that children's poetry of the twenties was well matched to the psychological, aesthetic and educational needs of children.

Another method of categorising poetry for children was devised by Bogusław Żurkowski. Żurkowski (Żurkowski 1982: 376) identified two branches in poetry for children: older – didactic and modern –

lyrical. Żurakowski (Ibid.: 376-377) also described two genres of poetry for children. The first genre was called by him *children's tale*, which he compared to a *fable*. The difference between them is that a *fable* is polysemous whereas a *children's tale* is unambiguous. The second genre (Ibid.: 378) was called by him *the little parable*. Aim of *the little parable* was to educate, show good behaviour and positive values.

Jerzy Cieślukowski in the article 'Wiersz dziecięcy' (Cieślukowski 1982: 365-366), unlike Żurakowski, who identified lyrical and didactics subdivisions of children's poetry, has divided Polish children's poetry into two subdivisions: rustic (describing: cottages, village, and animals) and urban (describing: toys, town and child's room). Additionally Cieślukowski (Ibid.: 374) has pointed out that all types of texts for children can be either for the hearing, because of the rhyme, accent, etc. or for the viewing, because of the pictures or other visual elements corresponding with the content.

Cieślukowski (Ibid.: 360) postulated *the children's poem* as a genre independent from the reader. He believed that it is a structure conditioned by the nature of children's imagination and argued that a *children's poem* does not have to be written with children in mind and does not have to follow the guidelines developed for the use of educational standards.

In the same article Cieślukowski (Ibid.: 360 - 361) divided children's poems into three types: *lullabies* – songs with rhythm, melody and chorus sung at the cot, *little fables* – combination of magical folk fairy tale and fable and *rhymes* (in his system the *riddle* is a type of the *rhyme*). He has also described five types of *little fables*:

1. *lyrical* – with stanzas, choruses and descriptions of emotions,
2. *magical* – with the elements of magic,
3. *narrative* – with the plot,
4. *dramatic* – dialogues can be used as a script of a game,
5. *manual* – manual elements as essential component.

Cieślukowski (Ibid.: 361) claims that the *little fable* derives directly from the children's nursery rhyme and is in fact grown-up, mature form of the nursery rhyme.

In 'BAJECZKA DZIECIĘCA' he (Cieślukowski 1968: 88) also argues that the *little fable* is a new genre of rhyme for the children which has developed in Polish literature. This genre combines many elements

taken from: fairy-tales and fables, and contains other elements like: fantasy, magic, animal symbolism and didactics. It is usually written in verse, with dialogues and can be seen as a miniature of fairy-tale and fable.

Some attempts have been made by researchers of folklore to classify genres of poetry for children in Poland. Dorota Simonides (Simonides 1982: 409), the ethnologist, during her research on children's folklore found out that children have two repertoires of songs and rhymes. The first repertoire of a child comes from its parents, and the second one is the child's own repertoire.

Texts included as children's folklore by Simonides (Ibid.: 409) are: stories in prose (fables, legends, anecdotes) nursery rhymes (counting rhymes, compilations, poems) and proverbs (and proverbial expressions).

The following types of rhymes were found to be known by the children during the Simonides' (Ibid.: 410-420) research:

1. rhymes related to TV programmes;
2. parodies and travesties of: songs, slogans, prayers, carols;
3. rhymes about good behaviour;
4. rhymes with rude expressions;
5. rhymes based on proverbs.

Both repertoires will be found to contain a variety of characteristic linguistic constructions besides the use of rhyme. The recognition of the text as belonging to the children's folklore is based on its popularity among the children and not on its origin, so every text popular among children can be included into the set of the children's folklore.

Another way of thinking is presented by Jolanta Ługowska. Ługowska (Ługowska 1958: 143-155) divides children's poetry into *models of communicative situations*. In her scheme the designation or usage of the text determines its position in a system. Ługowska's approach shows notable clarity and coherence. Many authors have tried to systematize children's poetry but not many of those trials were successful – most of the categorizations attempted lack a semblance of scientific practice and are different types of lists.

In Britain, Morag Styles (Styles et al. 2010: XIII) did not create a classification of children's poetry, but itemized its basic types. These

were: country rimes of Bunyan, Stevenson's garden, Potter's and Milne's light verse, Hughes' animal poems, humour, rude rhymes, nonsense, fairy-tale poetry, nursery rhymes.

Classification of nursery rhymes

Since in Polish literature there is only one publication about the nursery rhymes, there is only one classification of nursery rhymes available. In his book 'WIELKA ZABAWA' Jerzy Cieślowski (Cieślowski 1985: 92) used and adjusted a classification of the nursery rhymes created originally by the Czech ethnographer J. Fejtalik.

The classification of nursery rhymes of J. Fejtalik had these categories:

1. Clapping rhymes;
2. Rhymes about animals or plants;
3. Animal's voices;
4. Song sung during making willow pipes;
5. Rhymes sung when the rain was raining or sun shining or without specific reasons;
6. Rhymes related to entertaining the children;
7. Alliterations;
8. Riddles;
9. Rhymes used during public holidays;
10. Games and plays.

In Britain, Iona and Peter Opie gathered 800 rhymes and ditties in 'THE OXFORD NURSERY RHYME BOOK' (Opie & Opie 1955: V). Among them were: infant jingles, riddles, catches, tongue-trippers, baby games, toe names, maxims, alphabets, counting rhymes, prayers and lullabies. The authors (Ibid.: VI-VIII) divided rhymes into nine sections according to occasions, particular actions or different stages of child's development.

Opies' classification includes:

1. Baby games and lullabies (baby-play, knee rides, sayings for undressing, washing and going to bed all used when child cannot yet read);
2. First favorites (known to every parent and most memorable);
3. Little songs (when it is possible to recognize a tune to sing);
4. People (songs about people);
5. A little learning (alphabet and number rhymes);
6. Awakening (for awakening senses of a child to help appreciate the feel of words);
7. Wonders (fancies and frolics);
8. Riddles, tricks and trippers (common objects in the apparel of other objects);
9. Ballads and songs (mature songs for a child 7 – 8 years old).

Collections of nursery rhymes – Jerzy Cieřlikowski’s ‘Wielka zabawa’

‘WIELKA ZABAWA’ by Jerzy Cieřlikowski is the only publication in Poland about games, songs and rhymes for the children. There are no other publications about nursery rhymes and games for children in the Polish language so far.

In his book, Cieřlikowski (1985: 5-6) observes that artistically the best literary texts for children have come from children’s folklore. Cieřlikowski puts the emphasis on the analysis of rhymes and songs and shows how they derive from folklore and very often he gives only abbreviated version of the song or rhyme.

Cieřlikowski entitled his book ‘WIELKA ZABAWA’ [‘Great fun’] assuming that everything children do they do for fun. In his book (Ibid.: 88-159) he characterises as follows:

1. Games:
 - a) Games where the words are important;
 - b) Texts which come from the games;
 - c) Games based on certain motifs such as: birds, rose, paints;
 - d) Games connected with the dances and processions;
2. Lullabies and wake up songs:
 - a) Lullabies;

- b) Beliefs and superstitions about a cot;
- c) Rhyming lullabies;
- d) Myths of childhood: first tooth, where I came from;

3. Nursery rhymes - Cieślowski has adjusted classification of J. Fejtalik and his classification of the rhymes is as follows:

- a) Manual rhymes: clapping, pinching, touching, fingers games.
- b) Poems on various occasions: work songs, repetitive poems;
- c) Fear: dwarves, witches, darkness, 'Gniotek', 'Baba Jaga', 'Kurze plucko';
- d) Phonetic rhymes: alphabets, tongue-twisters;
- e) Children's adaptations: pagan songs, wedding songs, carols;
- f) Birds and animals voices: nightingale, chickens, rooster, frogs etc.;
- g) Nonsense;
- h) Puzzles;
- i) Rhymes about ladybird and snail.

4. Children among themselves:

- a) During pasturing;
- b) Shepherds' sayings;
- c) Counting rhymes.

Collections of nursery rhymes – Opie's 'THE OXFORD NURSERY RHYME BOOK' and 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES'

For many people the birth of a child is a beginning of a new stage in their life. Energy and changes coming with the child very often inspire other activities. 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES' by Peter and Iona Opie (Opie & Opie 1997) was the direct result of a birth of their first child.

Peter Opie (Carpenter & Prichard 1984: 387) was the son of a surgeon but he did not follow in the footsteps of his father, he never graduated college and he has become a journalist. Iona Opie was the daughter of an expert on tropical diseases. She also never graduated college and she worked for an international shipping company. They were married in 1943 and their first child (they had three children) was born in 1944 and this event started their studies on British nursery

rhymes. The Opies probably did not expect how far they will become preoccupied with their new job of collecting the nursery rhymes and that as a result they will save them from the oblivion and preserve them for the posterity.

The first publication of the Opies was a collection of nursery rhymes entitled 'I SAW ESAU', published in 1947. In this collection rhymes which are known to British school children, were presented. After this publication they continued their research and were collecting nursery rhymes for a book which was planned as a study on all British nursery rhymes. This collection was released in 1951 as the 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES' (Opie & Opie 1997) and received wide acclaim. It is worth to mention that it was not the first publication dedicated to British nursery rhymes. Almost one hundred years earlier, James Halliwell (Carpenter & Prichard 1984: 235) in 1842 had published an anthology of nursery rhymes entitled 'THE NURSERY RHYMES OF ENGLAND'. His anthology was incomplete; it did not have information about the sources used during the research. Some scholars (Ibid.: 235) now doubt the reliability of material in the book.

Opies were the first researchers who not only collected the majority of the English nursery rhymes but also to a large extent systematized available knowledge about them. All texts in the dictionary were arranged alphabetically according to the most important word in the title. Additionally, all the texts were presented with all known versions and with the appropriate commentary on sources used and the origin.

The author of 'THE NEW OXFORD BOOK OF CHILDREN'S VERSE', Neil Philip (Philip 1996: XXX) writes about work of Opies: "*My admiration for the both books (he mentioned also Donald Hall's 'OXFORD BOOK FOR CHILDREN'S VERSE IN AMERICA') <...> has grown in the process, and I have also been grateful that the assiduous scholarship of their editors has freed me from the need to include work simply for its historical importance. If you look in this book for some half-remembered poem from your childhood and do not find it, it is probably in Opie or Hall.*"

Opies' dictionary was published twice, in 1951 and 1997. The book is known to all English-speaking researchers of poetry for children and it is considered essential reading in the field of children's poetry. The book contains works published from many sources; books, newspapers, leaflets. The authors aimed at finding the earliest versions of each text. If the piece had many versions they presented the most

full and most widely known version as basic. The dictionary alongside with British nursery rhymes includes pieces published in the United States. Many of the texts in the 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY NURSERY RHYMES' had previously been known in oral tradition (Opie & Opie 1997: 3). The basic criterion for the allocation of the gathered material was the age of children, therefore 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES' does not include pieces that were read by school children.

The dictionary of Iona and Peter Opie is consistent and accurate. All the entries in the dictionary were written by the Opies, and not, as is often the case, by different authors commissioned to write about specific issues (Carpenter & Prichard 1984: 8). Their approach was extremely methodical and their labour was organized from the very beginning. Iona Opie was responsible for the field work: school and library visits, surveys. Peter Opie was responsible for the editing and writing. In addition to the 'OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES' the Opies published the 'OXFORD BOOK OF NURSERY RHYMES' in 1955. Thanks to their incredible diligence they created a collection that is currently used as a reference for other researches and editors.

Currently, the publishing market recognises the child as a customer and anthologies of poetry for children are published frequently. But at the time when Peter and Iona Opie were gathering rhymes for their collection, research on children's literature was not as popular as it is nowadays (Carpenter & Prichard 1984: 7). The situation we observe today with congresses, symposia and seminars devoted to children's poetry was hard to imagine in 1951.

The origin of nursery rhymes in Polish literature

Polish nursery rhymes were first collected in the 19th century. Some of the pieces can be found in many regions of Poland in a similar or the same form. They are all very old, definitely of folk origin and come from the practice of amusing children or rituals and ceremonies of pagan or Christian origin. (Cieślowski 1985: 90) In Polish literature nursery rhymes do not have separate generic name and they are just called *rhymes* or *rhymes for children*.

The first collection of nursery rhymes was published by Ł. Gołębiowski in 1831 (Ibid.: 91). Gołębiowski admitted that some of the pieces included in his booklet were obtained from Klementyna Hoffmanowa. Hoffmanowa was one of the first Polish writers of

children's literature, who lived between 1798 and 1845. Those pieces were games and jingles known to her when she was a child. It is believed that the descriptions of the pieces passed by Klementyna Hoffmanowa are the earliest data about Polish games for children. It is proven (Ibid.: 91) that those games and activities remained unchanged for the next hundred years.

Polish folklore research is generally uninterested in children's folklore. Polish researchers have never awarded separated status to nursery rhymes. Oskar Kolberg, the most famous Polish folklore researcher, author of the monumental work of 33 volumes about folk (Kolberg 1957-1980) with about 18 thousand texts described did not create a section for them either (Ibid.: 91). Jerzy Cieřlikowski (Cieřlikowski 1985) just published his 'WIELKA ZABAWA' in 1985, and his work was the first publication about Polish nursery rhymes.

The origin of nursery rhymes in English literature

The majority of nursery rhymes were not originally intended for children.

Pieces known now as nursery rhymes were often written for adults (Opie & Opie 1997: 3-4). They include: ballads, folk songs, remnants of ancient customs, war songs, proverbs, prayers, and indecent songs. Only rhymed alphabets and lullabies were created for children.

Nursery rhymes seem to have appeared in the literature rather late. There were no publications of nursery rhymes in 16th and 17th centuries. In 1744 a volume of nursery rhymes entitled: 'TOMMY THUMB'S PRETTY SONG BOOK' was published. Only one copy of this volume has survived (Ibid.: 28-29).

The next collection of nursery rhymes was published in 1760 under the title: 'THE TOP BOOK OF ALL, FOR LITTLE MASTERS AND MISSES'. The same year, a well-known publication: 'MOTHER GOOSE'S MELODY OR SONNETS FOR THE CRADLE' was published. This collection was very popular in Britain and United States, it has been published many times over the years. Rhymes from this collection have been reissued or reprinted in different forms after the publication (Ibid.: 32-33). Thanks to the popularity of the collection in the United States nursery rhymes are called *Mother Goose songs*. *Nursery rhyme* is the British term. This term appeared in the second decade of the 19th century, introduced probably by well known authors of 'RHYMES FOR THE NURSERY', Ann and Jane Taylor. Their book had a gilded inscription 'nursery rhymes' on

the back cover (Ibid.: 1). Before this publication rhymed songs for young children were known under the name of *songs* or *ditties* (Styles 1998: 83).

Nursery rhymes and other songs for children in the 16th and 17th centuries were issued in the form of disposable, low-cost prints. These publications were often decorated but printed on poor quality paper. For this reason, not many of these publications have survived till today.

In the 18th century so called ABC books were very popular among children. They were created to facilitate learning to read. Between the 16th and 18th centuries horn-books and later battledores were popular. These books were made of wood to which a parchment with alphabet, prayer, or proverb was attached. Apart from these exceptions before 17th century, children were generally reading literature which was pre-designed for adults (Styles 1998: 86).

It should be mentioned that in the 18th century, nursery rhymes were seen as a manifestation of idiocy among the peasantry (Ibid.: 85). Works of this type were considered dangerous (especially by Puritans) because they contained nonsense and fantastic elements (Ibid.: 85). At that time, many Puritan authors were changing the content of songs, trying to create religiously and ideologically correct versions (Opie & Opie 1997: 2). Although there have been many attempts to change the content, most of the rhymes have survived from ancient times to the present day virtually unchanged. Iona and Peter Opie found that most of the nursery rhymes were very old: about 50% of all rhymes were created before the 18th century, and some of them were created before the 16th century (Ibid.: 7). The most popular songs have their equivalents in other European cultures, mainly in Norway, Germany and France (Ibid.: 9-10).

Summary

There is no generally accepted definition of children's poetry in Polish or English literature. Children's literature is considered part of didactic literature, a modification of literature or new version of didactic literature by Polish researchers. English researchers do not give an explicit definition of children's literature. The position of children's literature is marginal within literature as a whole. Both in Poland and in England; children's poetry is regarded as an inferior genre especially when it is written specifically for children and it is

unwillingly analysed by critics and commentators. A consistent typology of children's poetry has not been devised yet. There are some generic classifications in the literature of the subject but most of the classifications are intuitive. There were some attempts to systematize children's poetry field in Polish literature made by Frycie, Żurkowski and Cieślowski. In Britain the classification of children's poetry was not devised. Nursery rhymes as a subject of research were ignored by Polish researchers of folklore. In Polish literature there is only one publication ('WIELKA ZABAWA') about nursery rhymes and there is only one classification created by the Czech ethnographer J. Fejtalik and later adjusted by Jerzy Cieślowski. There are no anthologies of nursery rhymes in Polish literature. Polish folklore research is generally uninterested in children's folklore. Polish researchers have never awarded separated status to nursery rhymes. In Britain, Iona and Peter Opie published two anthologies of nursery rhymes: 'THE OXFORD NURSERY RHYME BOOK' and 'THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF NURSERY RHYMES' and they classified nursery rhymes into nine sections according to different stages of child's development. Nursery rhymes first appeared in British literature in the 18th century, although they were published in the 16th and 17th centuries in the form of low-cost prints. The term '*nursery rhymes*' has been used in Britain since the 19th century. Before that rhymed songs for young children had been known under the name of *songs* or *ditties*. In the United States, nursery rhymes are called 'MOTHER GOOSE SONGS'. Polish nursery rhymes were collected for the first time in 19th century. They are of folk origin and come from practice of amusing children or rituals of pagan and Christian origin. In Polish literature, nursery rhymes do not have separate generic name and they are just called *rhymes* or *rhymes for the children*.

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