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Children's Fólklóre and Adults' Fólklóre

Fólklóre has become such an ambiguous term with so many different meanings that anyone who is dealing with that domain of culture feels obliged to state clearly his own point of view on the matter. This is all the more necessary since in Poland in order to become a specialist in fólklóre you have to take up research on your own after studying an arts subject. This fact influences the choice of the aspects of fólklóre which are studied (a musicologist will study musical fólklóre, an ethnographer—the fólklóre of ethnic communities, a literary critic—fólklóre in literature, etc.), and there is a particular interest in those aspects which are related to the researcher's line of studies or profession.

A growing number of people interested in fólklóre are undertaking the task of establishing a uniform terminology, since otherwise the results of fólklóre studies will not be communicative, which could lead to the appearance of many different "studies of fólklóre." This matter is already being discussed in some research centres.¹ However, it is not easy to arrive at a consistent interpretation of terminology on account of diverging aims and the fact that there are many different concepts of fólklóre.

The effectiveness of research and the further development of fólklóre studies demand also that the content and scope of the terms used be clearly defined. It often happens, however, that when using the word "fólklóre" we refer to different domains of culture or

¹ See F. L. Utley, *Folk Literature—An Operational Definition*. In Polish transl. by E. Aumer and M. Waliński, "Literatura Ludowa," 1974, no. 1. p. 45.

their various aspects. Since the materials which are studied in the present work may also provoke a discussion on whether or not they are a part of folklore, it is necessary to state precisely our point of view and account for it. Especially since owing to the ever-increasing number of definitions of folklore and tradition the matter has become even more confused instead of being cleared up. The lack of unanimity can be seen in the fact that a comprehensive, American dictionary of folklore² contains as many as 21 definitions of the term, each by a different scholar. The late F. L. Utley, an American folklore researcher, former secretary general of the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research, when looking for a working definition, analyzed all the existing ones and drew attention to the various orientations, schools and centres which have diverging conceptions of folklore.³ This example should make us realize that the lack of precision in defining folklore is quite general.

The term "folklore" almost from the very beginning, i.e. from the year 1846, has been a source of many misunderstandings. At first its meaning was too restricted, covering only artistic folk culture; then its scope was too wide, as it denoted both the subject of research and the study of folklore as such; next it was treated as a synonym of "ethnography" or of "ethnology," and finally in various countries its meaning was limited only to the "oral productions of the working people." There have been many attempts at abandoning the word "folklore," but always after a while it was used as before.⁴ It would appear that V. Y. Gusev, a Russian folklore researcher, is right when he writes:

"It is doubtful whether nowadays the use of the word 'folklore' in its etymological meaning would be justifiable, since the history of every term is irreversible and its real meaning inevitably changes with the development of the subject of study and what is known about it."⁵

² *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, vol. I, ed. M. Leach, New York 1949, p. 398–403.

³ Utley, *op. cit.*

⁴ See V. Y. Gusev, *Folklor. Historia i aktualne znaczenie terminu (Folklore. Its History and Today's Meaning of the Term)*, transl. by T. Zielichowski, "Literatura Ludowa," 1974, no. 4/5, p. 63.

⁵ V. Y. Gusev, *Estetyka folkloru (The Aesthetics of Folklore)*, transl. by T. Zielichowski, Wrocław 1974, p. 90.

The notion of "folklore" must have become deeply embedded in the cultural consciousness of modern man, since we seldom realize that "the common people" as a social class in the nineteenth-century sense of the word no longer exist, though we keep talking about their knowledge, their culture and skills. In the meantime the second part of the word "folklore" has gained importance, and this has led to a widening of the field of research. We may add that English folklore researchers, when presenting the folklore of a given social group, take away the first half of the word "folklore" and replace it with the name of the social group which is being studied. Thus for example a monograph on the folklore of children has been given the title *The Lore of Children*.⁶ In this case "lore" does not refer to the entire subculture created by children, but only to what we in Poland call folklore. Since we do not have any other term at our disposal, we give the name of "folklore" to any unofficial texts produced by a given group and passed on by word of mouth. We may therefore speak of the folklore of miners, steelworkers and potters; of working-class, country and town folklore; of the folklore of certain vocations or social spheres; of the folklore of different age groups: school-children, students, etc.

The folklore of a social group is generally based on traditional peasants' folklore, though we should keep in mind that international motifs form the substratum of traditional folklore—they are not created by the people, but only adopted and transformed by them.

This traditional folklore has given birth to all the varieties of folklore which are linked with vocational circles or social spheres. Joint work, common interests, the same level of knowledge and a similar attitude towards life help to form groups whose members have a sense of belonging and similar needs. This kind of group cherishes its rituals, customs, its literature reflecting its vocational interests, and the type of work handed down by tradition. On their basis the members of the group create new customs and literature in accordance with their needs. The fact of reaching out for traditional ideas in order to revive them, enrich them with contemporary, more communicative realities, breathe new life into them—this fact demonstrates the vivid, ever-active force of folklore and constitutes an incessant act of creating, of reinterpreting tradition. Today it has

⁶ I. and P. Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, Oxford 1959, p. 417.

become obvious that folklore cannot be identified with those who pass it on or with the social conditions which in the past have given birth to folklore. The fact that old people die or that social conditions change does not mean that folklore has to disappear.

Recent research conducted not only in Europe but all over the world has clearly shown that the most industrialized urban societies create and hand down their own folklore, which, though it is well rooted in tradition, contains wholly new ideas. Much of what has been handed down has changed its function and has adapted itself to contemporary mentality and needs, so that it is difficult to distinguish it from what is being produced today.⁷ This modification, adaptation and constant change which can be observed proves that the whole process is very much alive. It is this organic force of folklore which has become the object of numerous discussions and much controversy. The question concerning the changeability of folklore is of particular importance nowadays, in this age of mass culture. Though as yet there are no studies which might show the relations between folklore and mass culture, there are, however, clearly visible tendencies towards widening the scope of the notion of "folklore" so as to cover novelties whose origin is closely linked with the mass media, as for example in the case of television doggerels, which will be discussed later. There exist certain common features, which link up these two varieties of culture. And so for example folklore is kept alive by elements which have become to a great extent objective and which suit the community in question. In the same way in mass culture all that is subjective and too individual has to be made objective, as only then will it stand a chance of success and may become widely known. It is then for these reasons that both folklore and mass culture reach out for universal, well-known motifs, which suit the majority. Both folklore and mass culture owe their popularity to simple, schematic, almost

⁷ L. Dégh, *Neue Sagenscheinungen in der industriellen Umwelt der USA*, [in:] *Probleme der Sagenforschung*, ed. L. von Röhrich, Freiburg 1973, p. 34–52; L. Virtanen, *Sagentradition bei Kindern*, *ibidem*, p. 190–195; D. Simonides, *Współczesność a tradycja w nowszych opowiadaniach ludowych* (*Contemporary Life and Tradition in Today's Folklore*), [in:] *Z zagadnień twórczości ludowej* (*Problems of Folklore*), ed. by R. Górski, J. Krzyżanowski, Wrocław 1972, p. 137–153, *Studia Folklorystyczne*.

black and white poetic means, wholly adapted to the mentality and perceptive capabilities of the public.

Little wonder then that quite a large group of folklore researchers are postulating research into new, untraditional narratives circulating in society.⁸ This concerns both the repertoire of adults and children. In both cases the texts which are being transmitted have originated in mass culture. It is enough that the given group or sphere should consider them interesting and that they should suit the majority, for this assures them a spontaneous oral circulation.

Moreover, in any period of history, apart from the classical types of folklore which belong to a great extent to the international repertoire, there is a whole group of motifs, of themes, which are the product of a particular generation, a particular period, and which as it seems must have answered the mental needs of the community in question since they proved to be so lasting.

This is what has turned the interest of today's folklore researchers towards untraditional texts, produced directly in our times and often spread by the mass media. In the United States, where mass culture is most developed, they have split up into two groups, depending on their attitude towards the new motifs which function in folklore and which are passed on by word of mouth. The first group is made up of those who include the products of mass culture in folklore, for they see in them the expression of our times; the second is constituted by those who have separated themselves from the first group in the conviction that if the products of mass culture are allowed to enter folklore, it will cease to exist. The first group believe folklore to be dynamic, ever-changing and capable of constant rebirth, the second limit folklore to tradition, to folklore produced by an illiterate, primitive community. For them tradition does not mean constant selection and is not a changing process which requires incessant verification of the transmitted motifs, but is a synonym of "the archaic," of "superstition."⁹

To these two completely opposed views we may add another, re-

⁸ This could be seen at the Congress of Folklore Studies in Prague-Liblice in 1966. See H. Bausinger, *Gattungsdämmerung. Tagung der Erzählforscher in Prag*, "Stuttgarter Zeitung," 1966, no. 210.

⁹ Utley, *op. cit.*

presented by the well-known Canadian scholar McLuhan. He has introduced the concept of "the folklore of industrial man," where folklore is not a product of tradition, and is not composed of old elements, changed and brought to life again, but is a product of the mass media. We cannot help noticing the totally different situation in which the text is produced in this case. What the mass media offer on television, in films, in comics and so on is often accepted through lack of anything else, however it all lacks the necessary spontaneity and concordance with the needs of the social groups who are the potential carriers of folklore.¹⁰ In this case folklore does not spring up from the culture of a given group, it does not express the attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and views of the group, but only "the managers'" ideas of the group's needs.

Out of all the different views and opinions, that of F. L. Utley seems most sound when he writes: "folk literature is literature passed on by word of mouth, independently of where we meet it: in primitive isolated areas or in civilized cultural outskirts of urban or country communities, in the ruling or subordinate classes."¹¹

Far away from all these controversies a new, spontaneous kind of creativity is being developed. Though it does not fit within the bounds of the traditional concept of folklore, it has to be noted, catalogued and studied within the field of folklore. This is all the more necessary since in the history of folklore there have been cases of certain genres, certain motifs being left unnoted because they lay outside the accepted definition of folklore. In order not to make the same mistake, we have to extend the scope covered by the notion of folklore. No one can guarantee that the new spoken texts produced today will not enter our children's oral repertoire for good. They appear and function according to the rules which for centuries have been binding in folklore, in accordance with the laws and theory of folklore. They are subject to the ever-present objective laws of the process of transformation in folklore, which are independent of the will of the researcher. Even though we are aware that not everything which circulates among children today is in fact produced by them, we

¹⁰ See M. McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride. Folklore of Industrial Man*, London 1967.

¹¹ Utley, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

consider to be folklore all those oral texts which have a spontaneous character, which children spread around and feel to be their own. For these reasons we should perhaps devote a little time to discussing the ways in which these texts and these motifs reach the repertoire of today's children. Once we have discovered the source of this repertoire, we shall be able to study the mechanism which leads to the appearance of new folklore, in our case—children's folklore, and this will pave the way for studies on the folklore of adults in the future.

Already at the stage when we were gathering materials and then when a report discussing some of the results was presented in different research centres (Switzerland, Poznań, Karpacz), doubts were expressed as to whether these materials could in fact be classed as folklore. In support of our arguments we therefore quote the views of several well-known folklore researchers, which should prove once again that such doubts are not typical of our times only, but that they have often been voiced in the past, in every age and land.

The usual question is: can the texts which are part of children's repertoire be called children's folklore?

Using the language of folklore researchers and transposing certain notions for our purpose—folklore is all that has been accepted by the people as their own. These do not have to be original folk motifs, or in our particular case: children's motifs. "Folklore—says the distinguished Italian folklore researcher M. Barbi—is all that the people make their own in their favourite forms, which are accepted gradually."¹² The popularity and distribution of a given form is a witness to the needs of the community in which it thrives. The attitude of Russian researchers is very convincing: "The fact that certain motifs do not take origin in the countryside is not at all important, the significant matter is their function, their selection and transformation."¹³ Finally it is important to note the fact that tradi-

¹² M. Barbi, quoted from: G. Cocchiara, *Storia del folklore in Europa*. In Polish: *Dzieje folklorystyki w Europie*, transl. W. Jekiel, Warszawa 1971, p. 554.

¹³ P. Bogatyrev, R. Jakobson, *Folklor jako specyficzna forma twórczości* (*Folklore as a Specific Form of Expression*), transl. by A. Bereza, "Literatura Ludowa," 1974, no. 3, p. 35.

tional, collective means of expression are used.¹⁴ In this sense all the oral texts circulating among children are folklore.

In the period between the wars there arose a violent controversy among scholars concerning the creative potential of the lower classes. The opinions expressed were those which had already been voiced in the year 1854, when R. Berwiński's book *O literaturze ludowej* (*On Folk Literature*)¹⁵ was published. The well-known German ethnologist H. Naumann pronounced then his famous sentence: "Volksgut wird in der Oberschicht gemacht."¹⁶ The most hotly debated issue was the creative independence of the people. The motifs functioning in folklore were examined, and this showed that most of them had their source in the culture of the literary élite and in written works. More and more people took part in the discussion; however they started to stray from the subject of folklore and focused their attention on borrowed ideas in culture in general. We mention this because the fact that questions concerning the origin of particular motifs in folklore were shifted out of the scope of folklore research, the stress being put on the social process of the transmission and reproduction of oral texts, was an excellent way out of the impasse and saved folklore research from being transformed into a branch of knowledge studying only "relics" and "archetypes."

Nowadays in most countries "folklore" implies something "transformed by the people" and not "created by the people."¹⁷ This same view is represented by the outstanding Polish authority on folklore, the late Julian Krzyżanowski. Discussing folk tales, he wrote: "It is not the source which determines whether or not a tale belongs to folklore, but the fact that it circulates in oral tradition and has been recorded."¹⁸

Following this line of reasoning, let us stress once again that we

¹⁴ See V. Gusev, *O kollektivnosti v folklorie*, [in:] *Specifika folklornykh zhanrov*, Moskva 1966, p. 19, *Russkij Folklor*, vol. 10.

¹⁵ See R. Berwiński, *Studia o literaturze ludowej ze stanowiska historycznej i naukowej krytyki* (*Folklore Considered from the Point of View of Historical and Scholarly Criticism*), Poznań 1854.

¹⁶ H. Naumann, *Primitive Gemeinschaftskultur. Beiträge zur Volkskunde und Mythologie*, Jena 1921.

¹⁷ See the views of M. Pidal in: Cocchiara, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

¹⁸ J. Krzyżanowski, *Bajka ludowa*, [in:] *Słownik folkloru polskiego* (*A Dictionary of Polish Folklore*), Warszawa 1965, p. 28.

consider to be children's folklore all the texts which circulate among children and have been transformed by them in imitation of what they themselves produce. In this situation every cultural fact, every text which is popular among children may become children's folklore if: a) it is known to a wide community of children, b) circulates in a spontaneous way, orally, c) has a collective and anonymous character. These features are generally taken to be the criteria for a text to be part of folklore.

As to the first condition, our investigations have shown that in a given community some texts are so generally known that it would in fact be enough to distribute a questionnaire to one class of schoolchildren in order to obtain a review of the repertoire of a certain age group. All the children listed the same texts with only slight variations. Of course some of the pupils "copied from their neighbour," and as a result several children almost literally duplicated what their friends had written (including mistakes). This, however, does not change the fact that the repertoire was generally known, as this was proved over and over again. For if children do not like something, then—as always happens in folklore—it does not stand a chance of entering their current repertoire. "The only way in which individual inspiration—writes B. Malinowski—can become a cultural reality is when it is capable of shaping the opinion of a group."¹⁹ It must therefore be very strong or suit the interests and needs of the group. The lack of social acceptance is an obstacle which cannot be overcome, and there is no use in keeping any texts artificially alive by propagating them at school and in books.²⁰

The second feature—spontaneous oral circulation—is most clearly visible. The motifs found in the texts are sufficient proof of this. Besides, we kept coming across the fact that children had a manifest awareness of the distinctness of their repertoire. We were surprised to find over and over again that they wanted to conceal from adults most of the texts from their repertoire. They were glad that adults did not know what amused them. They were particularly delighted

¹⁹ B. Malinowski, *Szkice z teorii kultury* (*Essays on the Theory of Culture*), Warszawa 1958, p. 38.

²⁰ Bogatyrev, Jakobson, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

to be able to show off with their "own" language. This usually consisted in deforming the structure of a word by adding a few letters to each syllable, so that the uninitiated might not be able to understand. J. S. Bystroń writes that such transformations, which have been known for centuries, were at one time used in conspiracy, and he calls this language: "secret cant." He adds however: "nowadays it is only used in schoolchildren's games."²¹

The third invariable feature of folklore—its anonymity, and at the same time collective character, is also fully reflected in children's folklore. According to V. Gusev, contemporary folklore can include also those texts which have a definite author, no matter if he is nameless or known by name, but which have been actively, creatively adopted by a community and subjected to transformations.²² Let us quote another folklore researcher's opinion on the matter:

"One man's song becomes everyone's song if when it is composed it finds itself in the best possible conditions for a long-lasting existence, and it is kept alive because it corresponds with the natural feelings, customs and traditions of the people."²³

This is true in the case of the two well-known Polish songs *Góralu, czy ci nie żal* and *Czerwony pas*. Few people remember that the first was written by M. Bałucki, the second by J. Korzeniowski. This confirms the theory that oral texts are produced by individuals, but passed on and transformed collectively. Thus the mere fact of bringing a motif into being by an individual is not a sufficient creative act for folklore. We mentioned that social acceptance was necessary. We should keep in mind that within the cadre of this acceptance there is someone who is the first to make the text circulate, to include it in the community's repertoire. Among children these individuals are generally those who enjoy authority in the group. This is why so often when asked about the source of a story, text, riddle or jingle they had heard, the children pointed to their "leaders."

Children's folklore is subject to the same rules, the same laws as the folklore of adults. It has, however, a different store of themes and

²¹ J. S. Bystroń, *Komizm (The Comic)*, Wrocław 1960, p. 24.

²² Gusev, *Estetyka folkloru*, p. 25.

²³ Cocchiara, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

motifs, a different scale of frequency in the appearance of certain genres. In order to see the question more clearly, it must be considered from yet another angle.

Basically there is only one kind of folklore, even though we talk about the folklore of different vocational groups, social spheres, age or generation groups. This approach allows us to see more clearly the position of children's folklore. P. Bogatyrev and R. Jakobson, the Russian folklore researchers referred to earlier on, who studied folklore from this point of view, have stated what follows:

"Because of their repertoire of folklore, there are differences not only within ethnic and regional groups, but also within groups whose division depends on: sex — men's and women's folklore, age — children, adolescents and old people, vocation — shepherds, fishermen, soldiers, criminals, etc."²⁴

From the social point of view, folklore is the same everywhere, its rules and transmission are always the same. The repertoire, however, is different in every case, and it determines the name we might give to the folklore of a particular social or vocational group. It has to be stressed once again that the notion of children's folklore does not cover only those features which are typical of children, but above all those ideas which are passed on by them. So apart from nursery rhymes and jingles there are also texts which belong to other repertoires and other social spheres, or even literature. Since, however, young people have accepted them, since they have given them their own "polish" and integrated them into their repertoire, we have had to take these texts into consideration as well.

The folklore of a given social group, in our case basically two age groups, is expressed in a repertoire known to the group's members, to a great extent shaped and modified by them. Since it must agree with those members, it must contain ideas which are acceptable to them. As for the members representing the folklore of a group — or of a vocation — they contribute their own folklore, either the traditional kind, handed down in their respective families, or that of their nearest circle of friends. The folklore of a group is then generally a secondary, heterogeneous kind of folklore. It is based not on one tradition or on one cultural formation, but on several traditions

²⁴ Bogatyrev, Jakobson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

and several formations. We shall refer to the description of cultural formations introduced by A. Kłoskowska,²⁵ as they are indispensable for our study. In discussing these formations, we present them in the context of children's folklore.

The first cultural formation consists of elements of a strictly local, regional character. This is the first layer of the culture of a given community. In our case it is the family, which hands down to the child its local, family traditions.

The second formation is the local network of central organizations of cultural life. In relation to children this can be their school, summer camp, scouts' camp, etc.

The third formation concerns the influence of far-off centres. Kłoskowska points to the strictly passive character of the functioning of this cultural formation—this fact distinguishes it from the first two. This formation covers the reception of all the texts transmitted by the mass media. However, these formations have changing boundaries, and nowadays no social group or sphere is content with just e.g. the first formation.

In the age group in question all three formations are present along with the elements transmitted by them. The first formation, as we have seen, functions in a direct contact with the family and is based on oral transmission. This is the first and most lasting form of the child's participation in culture. Though for adults its significance has been steadily decreasing, for children—particularly small children—it is still of fundamental importance. Within this formation takes place the process of accumulating traditional lore, of absorbing folklore, of gaining experiences which produce results later on in life.

The second formation, which may be described as: children amongst themselves, provides an opportunity for direct personal contacts, helps to maintain social bonds and forms the child's personality. Children clearly need these mutual personal contacts, they need to feel that they belong to a community, that they have common experiences and share the same games and pleasures. They also feel a great need to have their own organized social gatherings. This need is satisfied to a great extent at school, at summer camps,

²⁵ A. Kłoskowska, *Spoleczne ramy kultury (The Social Framework of Culture)*, Warszawa 1972, p. 61 ff.

out-of-school meetings and playground games. They look out for opportunities enabling them to exchange what they have heard or experienced, opportunities for making traditional texts objective and lasting, or for creating their own tradition.

All this contributes greatly to maintain social bonds.²⁶ Adults have their own, organized social gatherings which satisfy their need for personal contacts and provide an opportunity for an exchange of views. Even though more and more often the disintegration of local communities is causing the weakening of these social bonds, they still exist where they are most needed. This is why they exist among children. The main stimulus for children's gatherings is a psychological need. The school and playground are not the only places for personal contacts—children also like to hold improvised meetings in cellars, during which they tell one another ghost stories. These gatherings provide new situations for the creation of folklore, and this leads us to believe that children are at present the only authentic community where folklore is produced and passed on. The English folklore researcher D. Newton rightly points out that children are the only "brotherhood" which shows no signs of dying out.²⁷

In the old days the family was so to speak left to itself. The life conditions then demanded solidarity and doing one's duty. The child was slowly introduced to life and work, and folklore, which took up a considerable amount of time, was generally for him a different world, a fairyland whose existence was confirmed by the authority of his grandparents and parents. Even if children met on pastures, they formed too small a group, with too wide an age span, to be able to produce their own repertoire and have their own audience.

Earlier on we spoke of the heterogeneous character of the folklore of a given sphere; at this point we should add that this heterogeneity has two consequences—on the one hand it limits the transmission of the folklore of a given sphere to a limited community within that particular sphere, and in this way isolates it from others; on the other hand the fact that a community absorbs all kinds of motifs and transforms them according to its own needs automatically

²⁶ See K. Zawistowicz-Adamska, *Przemiany więzi w społeczności lokalnej* (*Changing Bonds in Local Communities*), "Roczniki Socjologii Wsi," IV: 1965.

²⁷ Opie, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

makes this kind of folklore lively and dynamic, which results in constant adaptations and modifications. Apart from that, depending on the social sphere or vocational group, etc., those who create and transmit folklore take an active part in all three cultural formations, which results in that contemporary folklore contains the kind of ideas which totally agree with the man of the second half of the 20th century. These ideas are therefore not out of date, for we are not dealing with folklore in the traditional sense of the word. If in spite of everything there are certain echoes or whole sets of motifs of traditional folklore in the folklore of a given group, then this proves that they are needed, that they have not lost their original meaning or have been brought up to date. In contemporary children's folklore we can find some adapted epigrams of Sztaudynger, parodies of Polish classics, as well as themes and motifs taken from television broadcasts. All these texts are transformed collectively and anonymously, and are passed on spontaneously by word of mouth. In this way we have arrived at the third formation—the influence of far-off centres. The appearance of these new motifs in contemporary folklore accounts to a great extent for its growing popularity.

All that has been said up till now is true of children's folklore. It differs greatly from traditional folklore, though it is clearly based on it, and borrows from it. The various kinds of traditional folklore fully correspond with particular phases of a child's development. However, traditional folklore has been transformed, adapted to the needs of a certain age group, and as a result it fully reflects not only children's interests, not only their way of expressing themselves—but it is also a kind of register of motifs and forms which for no good reason are being avoided in children's literature. If we analyze the repertoire of schoolchildren and compare it with literature for children we see that the motifs and forms which are often consciously spread are those which are deliberately avoided by teachers or which—for various reasons—are left unnoticed. Schoolchildren's folklore is then a kind of underground literature for children. Secrecy is its mode of existence. As it has already been pointed out, children are fully aware of this secrecy. When telling us the oral texts they knew, the children said that adults did not like these texts, that their parents punished them for saying them, that they had to keep quiet about it, etc. It is clear that not only ethical norms function in a given social

sphere, but also artistic norms. Texts that children like, that interest, amuse and entertain them, leave their parents unmoved. This difference of social norms and attitudes towards the repertoire of children is visible in the reaction of adults. When the children were enjoying themselves, when open-mouthed they listened to stories told by their friends, the adults could not wait for it all to end, they showed signs of boredom and only affected a smile from time to time.

However, since the official literature for children depends on adults, little wonder that children's folklore has so many young followers, who take in with great zeal what adults consider stupid, poor or indecent. Schoolchildren's folklore will always be very much alive, for no official literature, no official culture will satisfy the need for spontaneous creativeness suited to the children's own tastes.

The fact that the child draws from the same motifs, has the same needs, which he satisfies in accordance with the conventions accepted among his friends, assures the circulating texts popularity.

Adults' folklore does not suit children, even though it has always contained motifs destined for children and teenagers. Today's children have created a repertoire of their own, different from that which corresponds with adults' needs, and thanks to this they have created their own children's subculture.

We are certainly not saying that children's folklore and their subculture are one and the same thing. The latter has a wider scope, it includes schoolchildren's fashions, their typical mode of behaviour, and finally all those elements which determine the image of today's teenagers.

If in the old tradition it was thought normal for ways of behaviour set by adults to be passed on to children and adolescents, nowadays the order has been reversed. As a result adults, especially in their middle years, pattern themselves upon the subculture of teenagers in their way of dressing, their language and style of behaviour. The same thing happens in folklore. Many sayings, anecdotes and songs pass from children's to adults' folklore, and adults accept them, pass them round and are amused by them. This concerns in particular abstract riddles, new sayings and jokes about animals. Sometimes even the mass media make use of children's folklore for entertainment.

We have not discussed here another problem, which has little to

do with this study, namely the utilization of folklore by authors who write for children. This is being constantly undertaken and usually with good results, however this issue does not fit within the scope of our research.²⁸ We can only add that literature for children, that is the official literature, makes use of folklore only when, according to the opinion of adults, the subject, form and genre are suitable for children. However, for obvious reasons it does not contain any of those texts which are transmitted spontaneously, have the greatest number of versions and are the most popular, as for example certain anecdotes with scatological references, "dirty" anecdotes which adults consider indecent.

The function of children's folklore as the folklore of particular age groups consists then to a great extent in filling in gaps in the official culture and literature, in the programme transmitted by the mass media, with ideas which are necessary for the child's development, but which are neglected for various reasons.

Transl. by *Agnieszka Kukulska*

²⁸ They are discussed by J. Cieślowski, *Wielka zabawa. Folklor dziecięcy* (*Great Fun. Children's Folklore*), Wrocław 1967.