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## CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE — A ZAGREB STUDY

### Summary

The paper begins with a brief survey of projects and results in the study of children's folklore by Croatian and Yugoslav folklorists and ethnologists. The conclusion is that little has been written about children's folklore and that its treatment has been unsystematic. Thus, some fundamental questions have barely been touched (such as the question: what is children's folklore), while some narrowly specific topics (for instance, counting-out rhymes) have received considerable attention.

The section of the paper entitled »A child and its group« presents the results of a study of folklore elements adopted by an urban child (the author's daughter) in the city of Zagreb before the age of eight. The first part of that section examines the child's individual folklore repertoire acquired in the family circle before her fourth birthday. The second part deals with the elements of folklore acquired by the child in the company of other children, as a member of different groups: peer groups in the neighbourhood, the kindergarten group, and the school group in the first grade of primary school.

Folklore elements are here taken to be those elements which children do not learn in an organized fashion but rather take them over from one another, exchange them individually and in children's groups through direct contact in kindergartens and schools, on collective excursions, in summer camps and on winter holidays. These elements thus form a kind of children's traditional lore. Children not only learn these elements from one another but also create them to a certain extent through combination, addition, variation, and topicalization.

The recorded types are classified by content as follows: counting-out rhymes, mocking (satirical) rhymes, riddles, fun rhymes, written rhymes, funny narratives, rhythmic movement songs, short poems, modern children's games (»Olimpijada« and »Gumi-gumi«-a skipping game played with a stretched elastic band).

A small-scale comparative research has shown that the same repertoire is found over a larger area and stretching over a longer period. It has been recorded also among other groups and individual children in Zagreb and other places and in several successive generations of children.

It is interesting to observe that some details of this folklore are identical with certain features of traditional children's folklore as described in the ethnological literature from the beginning of this century. Some other features are analogous with those found in contemporary children's folklore over a wide area of Europe.

The paper concludes by noting that phenomena of contemporary urban children's folklore discussed here range

between banality, imitative patterns and naive phrases on the one hand and small creative contributions, complex systems of movements, rhythms and rules on the other. They come from the children's great capacity for observation and from their creative reaction expressed through rhymes, jokes, rhythms, games.

An appendix to this paper contains musical scores for children's songs, descriptions of hand movements accompanying certain rhymes, and descriptions of rhythms for counting-out rhymes.

(Translated by Vladimir Ivir)