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Nursery Rhymes and Their Functions in Literature

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V Chrudimi dne

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Introduction

“Mother Goose rhymes, Tommy Thumb’s songs, ditties, riddles, lullabies, nonsense, game-rhymes, infant amusements, counting-out rhymes, chants, jingles, catches or tongue-trippers.” I encountered all these terms, when I started to deal with nursery rhymes. That illustrates how important phenomenon they are in the English culture. As Delamar says: “The literature of Mother Goose has touched the life of virtually every person in the English-speaking world.”¹

Nursery rhymes enter various areas of human life. Foremost they are used by parents to soothe and entertain their babies, or they are recited by slightly older children during their games. But they are also employed in advertisements, parodied in newspapers, or said by film characters. Nursery rhymes represent a rich source of allusion, especially for literature.

In my work I analyze possible applications of nursery rhymes in literature, especially their functions as a genre of children’s literature and also their intertextual use. I try to illustrate the primary functions with examples of nursery rhymes from several publications. To demonstrate the intertextual occurrence of nursery rhymes I concentrate mainly on the references to nursery rhymes in prose, but for illustration I also mention some examples from poetry and other areas. In the end I discuss the consequences that various applications of nursery rhymes have for their translation into the Czech language.

I divide my work into four chapters. In the first one I briefly outline the history of the early publications containing nursery rhymes and discuss possible sources of this genre. In the next chapter I concentrate on the nursery rhyme form, pointing out its essential features and the basic literary devices applied in nursery rhymes. The third chapter deals with occurrences of nursery rhymes, which can appear independently as a genre of children’s literature or can be used intertextually in other works of both children’s literature and literature for adults. In the last chapter I analyze several Czech translations in order to show examples of possible approaches to the translation of nursery rhymes.

¹ Gloria T. Delamar, *Mother Goose. From Nursery to Literature* (Lincoln: iUniverse.com, 2001) 1.

1 Brief introduction to nursery rhymes

1.1 Definition

Nursery rhymes are usually the first form of poetry, and literature in general, children encounter. It is the initial stage for their further discovering of literary works. In her comparative study on nursery rhymes, Lina Eckenstein defines this form: “A nursery rhyme I take to be a rhyme that was passed on by word of mouth and taught to children before it was set down in writing and put into print.”² So according to Eckenstein nursery rhymes have the origin in the oral tradition, which is true about most of the pieces, but does not apply to all. For example two famous rhymes “Mary had a little lamb” and “Twinkle, twinkle little star”, both written by women, appeared at first on paper before entering the verbal lore.

It would be more precise to say that the oral tradition is essential for preserving and spreading nursery rhymes, as the *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* states that nursery rhymes are “verses or chants spoken or sung by adults to small children”³. We can find a more general definition in *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics*, where the oral tradition is not emphasized: “A n. r. may be defined as a rhyme or verse preserved in the world of children.”⁴ To sum it up, nursery rhymes, in America more commonly called Mother Goose rhymes, are rhymes which are part of literature for small children transmitted mainly orally.

1.2 The earliest publications and origins

The term ‘nursery rhymes’ probably became commonly used at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which was caused by the publication of *Rhymes for Nursery* in 1806. This book by Ann and Jane Taylor was popularly renamed ‘Nursery Rhymes’ and in general usage, the phrase replaced previously widespread ‘ditties’ or ‘songs’, and in the eighteenth century prevailing ‘Tommy

² Lina Eckenstein, *Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes* (London: Duckworth, 1906) 1.

³ Humphrey Carpenter, and Mary Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 382.

⁴ M.P.W., *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics* (Princeton University Press, 1993) 846 – 847: 846. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 13 Mar 2008 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=18912092&site=irc-live>>.

Thumb's songs', or 'Mother Goose's rhymes'. The last term has been preserved in the United States, where it is preferred to the title 'nursery rhymes'.

In *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* Iona and Peter Opie, leading experts on children's folklore and literature, mention an important work in the field of nursery rhymes, namely *The Nursery Rhymes of England* by James Orchard Halliwell published in 1842: "For a century its authority as the standard work has been unchallenged."⁵ Beside nursery rhymes the collection included notes about their origin. According to the Opies, together with Halliwell's another work *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales*, published in 1849, it has become an essential source for the subsequent nursery anthologies and studies on nursery rhymes, and initiated their further research.

There are several other works known today, which preceded Halliwell's breakthrough collection. The book which is considered to be the first publication with traditional rhymes intended for children is a primer called *A Little Book for Little Children*. It appeared at the beginning of the eighteenth century and its author is known only under his initials 'T.W.'. In 1744 a more significant nursery rhyme book was published by Mary Cooper. Its name was *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* and it had two volumes. The only existing copy of the second volume is kept in the British Museum. It contains many nursery rhymes that have remained, with little alternations, familiar to children till the present days, for example "Bah, Bah, a black sheep"⁶ or "There was a little Man, And he had a little Gun"⁷.

Among the early collections we can also find *Mother Goose's Melody* appearing before 1780. It included such famous pieces as "Jack and Jill"⁸ or "Ding, dong, bell"⁹. This toy-book is connected with the name of John Newbery, a pioneering publisher of children's literature, for whom it is likely to have been compiled. However, this fact has never been confirmed, as the earliest print has not been preserved. In relation to *Mother Goose's Melody*, the first clearly recorded year was 1780, when Newbery's stepson and successor Thomas Carnan registered the book for copyright and advertised it in the *London Chronicle*. The

⁵ Iona Opie, and Peter Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) vii. NR further on.

⁶ See NR 101.

⁷ See NR 340.

⁸ See NR 265.

⁹ See NR 174 – 175.

oldest surviving copy is a fragment of a pirate edition from 1786 published by Isaiah Thomas in America where *Mother Goose's Melody* has gained a great popularity.

Since the end of the seventeenth century many reprints of this famous anthology have appeared on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It inspired the editors of following nursery rhyme books. One of them was Joseph Ritson, a collector of old songs, who put out *Gammer Gurton's Garland* in 1784. Its much enlarged version was issued seven years after Ritson's death in 1810.

The names of the last two collections I write about were both derived from traditional figures. We can trace Gammer Gurton back to the half of the sixteenth century, when an old comedy *Gammer Gurton's Needle* came to the stage¹⁰. In connection with Mother Goose, *The Oxford Companion to Children's literature*¹¹ mentions two possible origins. It is probable that Mother Goose was brought to England in the seventeenth century from France, where la Mère Oye (Mother Goose) played an important role in folklore as a teller of tales. Similarly, a figure associated with tales and superstitions, named Fru Grosen, existed in German traditions. The Opies illustrate the tendencies to embellish the history of Mother Goose by a legendary story, which claims that the famous teller was an American lady¹². One way or another, Mother Goose entered English folklore and became a popular nursery figure.

As such, she also appeared in plays and pantomimes, which were usually named after her, for example in 1806 the pantomime *Harlequin and Mother Goose* was performed at the Royal Theatre, Covent Garden. A sheet with scenes from this pantomime illustrating the typical representation of Mother Goose has been preserved. She has usually been portrayed "as an old crone with a witch's

¹⁰ Eckenstein 6.

¹¹ Carpenter 362.

¹² The Opies mentions a tale which was published in *The Boston Transcript* in 1860 by John Fleet Eliot. According to him, Mother Goose was a mother-in-law of his great-grandfather Thomas Fleet. Her name was Elizabeth Goose and she lived in the seventeenth century in Boston, Massachusetts. As a widow she married again at the age of twenty-seven becoming a stepmother of ten children, then having six more of her own. One of her own daughters, Elizabeth, married printer Thomas Fleet. It is believed that he collected the verses told and sung by his mother-in-law to her grandchildren, subsequently issuing them as *Mother Goose's Melodies* in 1719. This story, although very popular, does not seem probable to the Opies, the only evidence being the text by John Fleet Eliot. They tend more towards the French origin of Mother Goose. In their opinion, the figure of the teller was brought to England in Perrault's tales, which does not sound so romantic but is most likely. NR 36 – 38.

tall hat and a hooked nose and chin”¹³. The description is very close to that one of Old Mother Hubbard, who has an important place in nursery rhymes too. She was made famous by the following verses:

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard,
To fetch her poor dog a bone;
But when she came there
The cupboard was bare
And so the poor dog had none.¹⁴

This is the first of fourteen stanzas of a popular nursery rhyme published in a toy-book, *The Comic Adventures Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog*, in 1805. The nursery rhyme was written by Sara Catherine Martin, a daughter of Sir Henry Martin, but the first three stanzas were apparently taken from tradition¹⁵. The mentioned book was an immediate success spreading the fame of ‘Mother Hubbard’ among English people.

The Opies deal with the power of tradition which is proved by the preservation of many nursery rhymes or their alternations over centuries and by their familiarity to a wide range of readers and listeners. Today there are about 500 rhymes and their variations in common usage. After the study of the age of nursery rhymes, the Opies reached the conclusion that about 50% are nearly certain to be more than 200 years old¹⁶. It is probable that most of British nursery rhymes date back to the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Not many records of nursery rhymes from the earlier period have survived. Among them, we can find the riddle “White bird featherless”¹⁷, preserved in Latin text from the tenth century, or another riddle “Two legs sat upon three legs”¹⁸ included in Bede. There also exists a French version of mnemonic rhyme “Thirty days hath September”¹⁹ from the thirteenth century, and German equivalent of “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John”²⁰ from the fifteenth century. Other rhymes, whose origin is presumably quite old, are some of “those accompanying babies’

¹³ Carpenter 362-363.

¹⁴ NR 374, see Appendix for illustration.

¹⁵ See the Opies for their discussion of its origin, NR 377.

¹⁶ NR 6 – 7.

¹⁷ NR 93 – 94.

¹⁸ NR 315.

¹⁹ NR 452.

²⁰ NR 357.

games”²¹, such as “Handy dandy, riddledy ro, / Which hand will you have, high or low?”²² or “Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home”²³. It is probable that a number of the verses date further back to the ancient times. “References in Gr., Lat., and oriental lits. show that children’s games and verses analogous to ours were known in these cultures.”²⁴ These could be the predecessors of some nursery rhymes, which are spread in various forms not only in England, but throughout Europe.

The scholars agree that it is difficult to determine the exact origin of a number of the pieces. However, it is clear that most of the nursery rhymes were not composed for children, but mainly for adult entertainment. As the exceptions to this, the authors of *The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature* give lullabies, ABC rhymes and some of the games-rhymes and infant amusements²⁵, which were meant for the young addressee from the beginning. Otherwise, many pieces, included commonly in children’s folklore, are based on fragments of ballads and songs originally enjoyed by adults, as Eckenstein says: “... a large proportion of so-called nursery rhymes are songs or snatches of songs, which are preserved also as broadsides, or appeared in printed form in early song-books.”²⁶ Besides the song-books, the Opies deal with five more sources for nursery rhymes: ‘printed ballads’, ‘stage productions’, ‘folk-songs’, ‘the mummers’ plays’ and ‘political squibs’²⁷. The authors of *Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics* list these possible origins: ‘songs’, ‘street cries’, ‘riddles’, ‘proverbs’, ‘custom and ritual’, ‘religious and antireligious poetry’, ‘rhymes about historical figures’, ‘poems by recent authors’, ‘songs or chants for children’s games’ and ‘counting-out rhymes’.²⁸

Many popular songs found their way into early nursery collections, such as the one beginning: ‘There was an old woman toss’d in a blanket’²⁹ and sung to the

²¹ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. Vol. 3 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1993) 834.

²² NR 232.

²³ NR 308.

²⁴ M.P.W. 846.

²⁵ See Carpenter 383.

²⁶ Eckenstein 23.

²⁷ NR 18 – 28.

²⁸ M.P.W. 846 – 847.

²⁹ Eckenstein gives the following wording of this nursery rhyme: “There was an old woman toss’d in a blanket / Seventeen times as high as the moon; / But where she was going no mortal could tell, / For under her arm she carried a broom. / “Old woman, old woman, old woman,” said I, / “Whither, ah whither, ah whither, so high?” / To sweep the cobwebs from the sky, / And I’ll be with you by and by.” 25-26.

famous tune of Lilliburlero³⁰, which appeared in *Mother Goose's Melody* (c. 1765). This is believed to be a favourite song of Oliver Goldsmith, the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, who sang it to his friends at the Literary club in 1786 pretending a good mood, after the production of his play *The Good Nature'd Man*, which was a complete failure.³¹ Since Goldsmith was a friend and employee of John Newbery (1762 - 1767), it is probable that he had an important influence on the Mother Goose's collection, or maybe he could even be its author.

Another originally a popular song, which has remained in circulation as a nursery rhyme till these days, is the one about three blind mice:

Three blind mice, see how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did you ever see such a thing in your life,
As three blind mice?³²

Its variation was included by Thomas Ravenscroft (b. c. 1590) in *Deuteromelia or the Seconde part of Musicks melodie* in 1609. Ravenscroft produced two more collections of songs, containing roundelays, catches and madrigals, some of these becoming possibly a source of other nursery rhymes. These works were followed by further song-books, such as *The Musical Banquet* (1651) or *Wit and Mirth* (1684, 1700, 1706), which also contributed to the nursery rhyme cannon.

The development of songs was interconnected with the history of ballads, another base for children's verses. Some songs were transformed into ballads, and on the other hand some ballads shortened into songs. So the past of a nursery rhyme can have more stages. For instance the rhyme about the unfortunate courting of a frog ("A frog he would a-woeing go")³³, was probably at first a ballad called "A moste Strange weddinge of the ffrogge and the mowse" registered in 1580, and later as a song involved in a song-book by Ravenscroft. Ballads often provided material for the nursery, a number of rhymes having been stanzas from ballads published in the seventeenth century. A broadside ballad *The*

³⁰ According to Wikipedia, *Lillibullero* is a march that sets the words of a satirical ballad generally said to be by Lord Thomas Wharton to music attributed to Henry Purcell. Although Purcell published *Lillibullero* in his compilation *Music's Handmaid* of 1689 as "a new Irish tune", it is probable that Purcell hijacked the tune as his own, a common practice in the musical world of the time. 5 Sept 2009 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lillibullero>>.

³¹ See NR 34.

³² NR 360 – 361.

³³ For the full wording see NR 208 – 209.

Wiltshire Wedding, which was printed around 1680, became known as its shortened nursery version beginning “One misty, moisty, morning”³⁴. Sometimes the printed ballads originated in tradition, but quite often they were humorous or even bawdy pieces of that time.

Eckenstein describes the transformation of a ballad story into a nursery rhyme: “... the nursery version of the tale is usually simpler in form, and often consists of dialogue only.”³⁵ As an example of a ballad accepted into children’s folklore she mentions an old ballad of *The Elfin Knight*, first recorded around 1670, in which the knight tries to win the heart of a lady in a contest, when they impose impossible tasks on each other, such as making a sack without a seam or ploughing a land with a ram’s horn. This romantic ballad has been preserved in a nursery form as a dialogue between a suitor and his maiden with similar tasks. At first the man asks: “Can you make me a cambrick shirt, / parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme, / Without any seam or needlework?”³⁶, then two more questions follow. In response the maiden requests three things from him.

The popular songs, which later entered the nursery, were not only included in the song-books, but were also presented on the stage in comedies to entertain the audience. An old version of the rhyme ridiculing three hunters (“There were three jovial Welshmen”³⁷) appeared in the play *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, part of which was written by Shakespeare and the whole work completed by Fletcher around 1613. One character, namely the jailor’s daughter, sings the predecessor of the discussed rhyme, starting as follows: “There were three fooles, fell out about an howlet”³⁸.

There exist numerous attempts to find possible sources of present nursery rhymes. According to a writer in *Notes and Queries*³⁹, a parallel to the rhyme about the life of Solomon Grundy⁴⁰ can be found in Beaumont and Fletcher’s play, *Wit at Several Weapons*, IV, i. To illustrate his opinion, he quotes a part of

³⁴ See NR 370.

³⁵ Eckenstein 46.

³⁶ Eckenstein 48.

³⁷ See NR 505 – 506.

³⁸ See NR 506.

³⁹ Archer Taylor, “The Nursery Rhyme of Solomon Grundy”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 69, No. 274, Oct. – Dec. 1956: 356. *JSTOR*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/536342>>.

⁴⁰ The Opies give the following version of the rhyme: “Solomon Grundy, / Born on a Monday, / Christened on Tuesday, / Married on Wednesday, / Took ill on Thursday, / Worse on Friday, / Died on Saturday, / Buried on Sunday. / This is the end / Of Solomon Grundy.” NR 467 – 468.

the comedy, where an unfortunate man is brought to justice in Newgate prison, the session is on a Thursday, the jury assembled on a Friday, judgment given on a Saturday, the man put into a dungeon on a Sunday and executed at Tyburn on a Monday. The author of the note emphasizes the similarity in the connection of bleak life events and the days depicted by the rhyme and the passage of the play.

The verses which later became a part of the nursery had come not only from comedies, but also from the Mummers' Plays, described as "traditional English folk-dramas, enacted at Christmas and sometimes at other winter festivals"⁴¹. The protagonists dressed in comic costumes and often with blackened faces competed in a duel. The texts were scarcely preserved in written form, as they were transmitted mainly orally. And since the plays were repeated annually, there was no need for printing them. However, both adults and children remembered the lines from these plays, finally adding them to the nursery tradition. This is the case of the following nonsensical rhyme:

On Christmas Eve I turned the spit,
I burnt my fingers, I feel it yet;
The cock sparrow flew over the table;
The pot began to play with the ladle.⁴²

These words originate from the mummers' plays, which contained similar verses beginning "Last Christmas night I turned the spit, ..."⁴³

As we can see, the antecedents of present nursery rhymes appeared in various contexts. It is a popular practice to associate the origins of some nursery rhymes with particular historical events or persons, but there is seldom enough evidence for it. As the author of the article on nursery rhymes in *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature* states: "Attempts by scholars to connect nursery rhymes with historical events or personages have been largely inconclusive."⁴⁴ This approach is for example applied by Katherine Elwes Thomas in her book *The Real Personages of Mother Goose* (1930), where she claims that 'Bo-Peep' was Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, or 'Simple Simon' James I.

⁴¹ Carpenter 367.

⁴² See NR 143.

⁴³ NR 144.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Tucker, "Nursery rhymes", *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature*, ed. Mary Ellen Brown, and Bruce A. Rosenberg (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1998) 458 – 460: 458.

However, some nursery rhymes are certain or probable to have been inspired by a real person or incident. Delamar writes about possible meanings of the following verses:

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady upon a white horse;
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
And she shall have music wherever she goes.⁴⁵

The first usual interpretation considers the ‘fine lady’ to be Queen Elizabeth I (1533 – 1603), “who was known to be very fond of rings and proud of her beautiful hands, and whose royal pageants were frequently accompanied by the herald of guns, drums, flutes, and trumpets.”⁴⁶ Another explanation which some commentators give, presents the idea that the rhyme is about lady Godiva, wife of the Earl of Mercia.

Discussing the historical allusions, the Opies mention a nursery rhyme, which comes from a part of a Jacobite song:

What is the rhyme for porringer?
What is the rhyme for porringer?
The king he had a daughter fair
And gave the Prince of Orange her.⁴⁷

The song was meant as a threat for William, Prince of Orange, who gained the throne from James II., after he married his daughter.

To conclude, we can see that many nursery rhymes have a long history, which is not always clarified and offers various interpretations. In this chapter I have tried to discuss the first nursery rhymes publications and some sources of children’s verses, especially songs, ballads, plays and political lampoons. The important fact, which is reflected in the content and form of the present nursery rhymes, is that most of them originate from the pieces primarily intended for adult addressee.

⁴⁵ NR 76.

⁴⁶ Delamar 130.

⁴⁷ NR 420.

2 Form and literary devices

2.1 Structure

The form of nursery rhymes is necessarily determined by their function. As they are primarily intended for loud recitation or singing to or by small children, the main emphasis is placed on the regular rhythm and such devices that make the listening pleasant or bring joy to the speaker. Nezkusil writes about the liking of little children for rhythmical organization: “Souběžně s ovládnutím jazyka, zhruba kolem třetího roku, objevuje se prakticky u každého dítěte veliká záliba v rytmické organizaci hláskového materiálu, ...”⁴⁸ The regularity is also an important factor for remembering of the rhymes. Another aspect, which should be considered and which requires the regular rhythm, is that the verses often accompany movements and games. And as such they should make chanting and singing possible. Karel Čapek captures well the importance of rhythm for children’s rhymes: “V dětském říkadle není rytmus příkrasou, nýbrž samotnou podstatou věci.”⁴⁹

Probably the most appropriate form corresponding the purpose of nursery rhymes is a quatrain, a stanza of four lines. In his study on the metrics of children’s verse, Burling claims that “The overwhelming majority of English nursery rhymes have 16 “beats”, which are divided into four “lines” of four beats each.”⁵⁰ Similarly Triplett and Sandford, after the research in one hundred nursery rhymes, reached the conclusion that “The most frequent stanza form (...) is that of four lines of four stresses each, ...”⁵¹ We can illustrate the most common structure by the famous nursery rhyme about Humpty Dumpty:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King’s horses and all the King’s men,

⁴⁸ Vladimír Nezkusil, *Spor o specifčnost dětské literatury* (Praha: Albatros, 1971) 20.

⁴⁹ Karel Čapek, *Marsyas* (Praha: Fr. Borový, 1948) 124.

⁵⁰ Robbins Burling, “The Metrics of Children’s Verse: A Cross-Linguistic Study”, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 68, No. 6 (Dec. 1966) 1418 – 1441: 1418. *JSTOR*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/670652>>.

⁵¹ Norman Triplett and Edmund C. Sanford, “Studies of Rhythm and Meter”, *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Apr. 1901) 361 – 387: 362. *JSTOR*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1412285>>.

Couldn't put Humpty together again.⁵²

The rhyme consists of four lines, each containing four stressed syllables. The effect of this pattern is intensified by the simplest rhyming scheme *aabb* linking two following lines together, which also strengthens the semantic and syntactic relations in these two units.

It seems natural that the quatrain is a typical organization of nursery rhymes with respect to the fact that they belong to folk poetry⁵³ and are interconnected with or have roots in its other forms, such as ballads and songs. The quatrain is a characteristic structure of the ballad stanza, which is widespread in oral poetry and occurs in children's verse too. The ballad stanza is defined as a stanza of four lines, where the first and third line have four stresses, the second and fourth have three stresses. Usually, there is a rhyme between the second and the last line⁵⁴. As an example of a nursery rhyme employing the ballad stanza, we can quote other popular verses describing an accident which happened to 'Jack and Jill':

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.⁵⁵

The latter type of quatrain is considered by Burling to be the same as the former one⁵⁶. At the end of each three-beat line he places a rest, which compensates the missing stress. The rest represents a pause, which should follow after the last unstressed syllable. The American scholar argues that the rest leads to more natural recitation of the verses. This sounds quite reasonable. If we try reading the lines in both ways, with and without the pause, we can see that the attempt suiting the rhythm more is the first one.

According to Triplett and Sandford, the essential feature of the nursery rhyme rhythm is the regular placement of the stress. They claim that there should

⁵² *The Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (1955; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) 25. ONRB further on.

⁵³ See Tucker 458.

⁵⁴ See Chris Baldick, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 24.

⁵⁵ NR 254.

⁵⁶ See Burling 1420.

be “stressed syllables recurring, at equal intervals of time”⁵⁷. The number of unstressed syllables between the stressed ones is not necessarily the same. And if the reader wants to preserve the regularity of the rhythm, that is to pronounce the stressed syllables at the same intervals, he has to slow down or quicken the recitation of the unstressed syllables depending on their number.

It does not mean, as it could seem from the preceding text, that other stanza forms than quatrains are excluded. Besides, many rhymes appear with various stanza organization in different publications, transcribed not by the same hand from one oral tradition. To illustrate this phenomenon we can compare the patterns and wording of the first stanza of the nursery rhyme about ‘Old King Cole’ included in several publications. I have found the quatrain structure in four publications. The words in three of them are nearly the same, there are only little alternations in the third and fourth line:

Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe, he called for his glass (bowl⁵⁸),
And he called for his fiddlers three.⁵⁹

Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
A merry old soul was he,
He called for his glass, he called for his pipe,
He called for his fiddlers three.⁶⁰

The fourth example, where the third line is different, is Hallivell’s version given by Eckenstein:

Old King Cole was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he;
Old King Cole he sat in his hole,
And he called for his fiddlers three.⁶¹

The organization of the rhyme in *The Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book* compiled by the Opies is following:

⁵⁷ Triplett 366.

⁵⁸ *The Children’s Treasury*, ed. Alice Mills (Willoughby: Global Book Publishing, 2002) 137.

⁵⁹ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* (1990; London: Bounty Books, 2005) 236.

⁶⁰ Percy B. Green, *A History of Nursery Rhymes* (1899; Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968). *Project Gutenberg*. 17 Aug 2009 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/24065>>.

⁶¹ Eckenstein 18.

Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe,
And he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.⁶²

Here the internal rhyme in the first line of the preceding quatrain structure becomes the end rhyme between the first two lines. This scheme seems to be more natural for recitation, as it suggests a pause after 'Cole' and thus can emphasize the king's name. On the other hand, the first type follows more the sentence pattern, respecting language units. The last example also makes clearer division between king's individual requests, having stronger cumulative effect. As we can see, both written forms have their own justification. Although we can encounter various stanza organization of nursery rhymes, the quatrain remains the prevailing structure.

The rhythm of verses is highlighted by rhyme, whose occurrence in various forms is typical for children's verses. I have already mentioned the usual rhyming scheme of ballad stanza (*abcb*), which influenced the form of many nursery rhymes. It has been for example preserved in the following verses about not a very promising inheritance, where there appears a full rhyme between the third and fourth line:

My father died a month ago
And left me all his riches;
A feather bed, and a wooden leg,
And a pair of leather breeches.⁶³

With this example we can illustrate an important potential function of rhyme, which the authors of *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury* describe: "Vedle rýmotvorného je rým i důležitým činitelem významotvorným, neboť zvukový paralelismus slov vstupujících do rýmového páru vyvolává i tendenci konfrontovat tato slova významově."⁶⁴ The rhyme in the discussed verses creates

⁶² ONRB 63, also in Andrew Lang, *The Nursery Rhyme Book*. Project Gutenberg. 17 Aug 2009 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/26197>>.

⁶³ NR 192.

⁶⁴ Otakar Chaloupka and Vladimír Nezkusil, *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury II*. (Praha: Albatros, 1979) 66.

a paradoxical link between the phrases ‘all his riches’ and ‘leather breeches’, thus also making a semantic connection. The expectations arisen by the first phrase are shattered by the following list of the inherited things culminating in the ‘breeches’.

Young children, however, are not able to realize such relations at first, they do not understand all the meanings fully and often join words at random only with respect to their phonetic representation. As Nezval says: “Dítě miluje rytmus a rým jako takové bez vztahu k faktickému sdělení. Proto si také řadí k sobě slova mechanicky a náhodně.”⁶⁵ This tendency towards suppressing the content and emphasizing the sound form shows itself distinctly in counting-out rhymes, which often contain a succession of both nonsense and meaningful words interconnected by the internal rhyme and consonance⁶⁶, as in “Eeny, weeny, winey, ...”⁶⁷, “Hinx, minx, the old witch winks, ...”⁶⁸, “Inter, mitzy, titzy, tool, ...”⁶⁹ or “Wire, briar, ...”⁷⁰. The recurring sounds contribute to the strength of rhythm, which has an essential function in the counting-out formulas. That also marks the playfulness of children’s verses, corresponding to the little users’ liking for the play with sounds and their natural pleasure in experimenting with language.

The mentioned internal rhyme, when two or more words rhyme within one line, is not limited only to the counting-out formulas. For example in the verse “Richard Dick upon a stick”⁷¹ the word ‘Dick’ in the middle rhymes with the final ‘stick’. The effect of the rhyme is intensified by the assonantal pair⁷² of ‘Richard Dick’. Both means mark the line with a distinctive rhythm, suiting well the purpose of the verse that is to accompany a quick riding of a hobby horse. It is in contrast to the next line “Sampson on a sow,” which employs more open vowel sounds /æ/, /o/ and /əu/ to slacken the recitation. This slowing down indicates the change in the rhythm of the movement, connected with the image of riding a sow.

⁶⁵ Nezksuil, *Spor o specifčnost* 20.

⁶⁶ More on consonance below.

⁶⁷ NR 186.

⁶⁸ NR 246.

⁶⁹ NR 264.

⁷⁰ NR 264.

⁷¹ NR 431.

⁷² We can find this definition of assonance in Baldick: “the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllables (and sometimes in the following unstressed syllables) of neighbouring words” 20.

Let us return to the end rhyme. Besides the ballad rhyming pattern we can meet a wide range of other schemes in nursery rhyme cannon, among them the simplest rhyme organization *aabb* (or even *aaaa*), which suits well verses for little children. As Chaloupka and Nezkusil explain: “V poezii nejmladších dětí [...] obvykle převažuje rým sdružený, protože účinek rýmu má regresivní povahu, předpokládá, že vnímatel uchovává v paměti předchozí verš až do okamžiku uvedení konce následujícího verše.”⁷³ The concentration of children has not yet been fully developed and the closeness of rhymed words helps them to notice the rhyme. As an example of this pattern we can give the first stanza of a rhyme originally used as a counting-out formula:

One, two, three, four, five,
Once I caught a fish alive,
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
Then I let it go again.

In these verses the rhyme has mainly a mnemonic function, since it is used as a supportive device for remembering the numerical order.

Although the *aabb* pattern appears as the most appropriate for young children, in nursery rhymes various other structures also appear. It is obviously the result of the origin of rhymes, many having been primarily used for adult entertainment. But what the verses have in common is the fact that the prevailing rhyme form is a ‘full rhyme’⁷⁴ with smooth sound, as Lukens says, “the usual end rhyme is pleasing”⁷⁵. We can find both monosyllabic masculine rhyme, which is the most frequent, like ‘beck’ – ‘neck’⁷⁶, ‘man’ – ‘can’⁷⁷, ‘ride’ – ‘side’⁷⁸, ‘life’ – ‘wife’⁷⁹, and two-syllabic feminine rhyme, for example ‘carried’ – ‘married’⁸⁰ ‘mittens’ – ‘kittens’⁸¹, ‘weedle’ – ‘feedle’⁸².

⁷³ Chaloupka and Nezkusil, *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury II* 65.

⁷⁴ As the term ‘full rhyme’, or ‘perfect rhyme’, indicates, it is used when all the consonants and vowels occurring in rhyme match. On the contrary ‘half-rhyme’, or ‘imperfect rhyme’, consists of the same consonants but different vowels. See Baldick 218.

⁷⁵ Rebecca J. Lukens, *A Critical Handbook of Children’s Literature*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Harper Collins, 1995) 237.

⁷⁶ NR 290.

⁷⁷ NR 357.

⁷⁸ NR 513.

⁷⁹ NR 462.

⁸⁰ NR 284.

⁸¹ NR 301.

⁸² NR 401.

To sum up the functions of rhyme⁸³, firstly the rhyme underlines the rhythm, the closer the rhymed words are, the more distinctive the beat becomes. The authors of “Studies of Rhythm and Meter”, when dealing with internal rhymes in children’s verses, states that “rhymes in such close proximity are themselves very emphatic.”⁸⁴ Except the internal type, the rhyme marks the boundary of the line, that is the end of a rhythmic unit. Another function, also important for children’s verses having tendency towards smoothness, is euphonic. As I have mentioned, little children often concentrate more on the sound form than on the meaning, so they appreciate a pleasing full rhyme. However, growing older, they can benefit from the last function of rhyme, which is semantic, because the rhyme can help them to realize connections between the rhymed words and to learn interrelations of semantic units.

2.2 Repetitive devices

Other typical devices which contribute to the characteristic sound form of nursery rhymes are figures⁸⁵, employing the repetition of sounds, namely consonance, alliteration and assonance. Lukens mentions their basic purpose: “The variety of sound effects in nursery rhymes, although simple, acquaints children with poetic devices and gives pleasure.”⁸⁶ This group of literary devices also includes other kinds of repetition applied on the higher level of language, that is on the level of words, phrases or sentences. Among them we can find anaphora, epistrophe and anadiplosis.

The euphonic character of nursery rhymes is sometimes highlighted by assonance employing the repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds. We can illustrate its usage by the line “A wise old owl lived in an oak”⁸⁷, where there appears the diphthong /əu/ in ‘old’ and ‘oak’ and similar diphthong /au/ in ‘owl’. This assonantal recurrence provides the verse with a slow pace, which is in correspondence with its content. Assonance can be applied in children’s

⁸³ Brukner and Filip give three functions of rhyme: ‘funkce rytmičká’, ‘funkce eufeničká’ and ‘funkce významová’. See Josef Brukner and Jiří Filip, *Větší poetický slovník* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1968) 256 – 260.

⁸⁴ Triplett and Sanford 364.

⁸⁵ In *Větší poetický slovník* ‘figure’ is defined by the following words: “prostředek básnické řeči, který napomáhá uměleckému účinku zvláštním způsobem spojení hlásek nebo slov, mluvnickou stavbou apod.” Brukner 12.

⁸⁶ Lukens 237.

⁸⁷ NR 403.

amusements, like in “Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man, ...”⁸⁸ with vowel sound /æ/ occurring in ‘pat’ and ‘man’, and /ei/ in words ‘cake’ and ‘baker’s’. The repeated sounds serve well the function of the rhyme, which is to accompany the clapping of hands.

In opposition to assonance, consonance is defined as the repetition of the same consonants in short succession.⁸⁹ A special type of consonance is alliteration, which is a typical device of the old English poetry and has a significant place in oral tradition. This means is characterized by the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of several succeeding words. In nursery rhymes it is often used with names of both people and animals, reflecting children’s love of play with language. There appears for example ‘Dicky Dilver’, ‘Barneby Bright’, ‘Barney Bodkin’, ‘Bessy Bell’, ‘Jack and Jill’, ‘Simple Simon’, bird ‘Robin Redbreast’ or a dog called ‘Blue Bell’. Alliteration and consonance in general are also characteristic for tongue twisters, since they help practise various sounds. We can illustrate this by the beginning of the rhymes about ‘Betty Botter’, ‘Peter Piper’, or ‘Thomas a Tattamus’: “Betty Botter bought some butter, / But, she said, the butter’s bitter; ...”⁹⁰, “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper; ...”⁹¹, “Thomas a Tattamus took two tees, / to tie two tups to two tall trees, ...”⁹² Tongue twisters are based on a frequent recurrence of certain consonants in a short time thus making the recitation difficult. As such, they are a useful tool for exercising speech organs.

Consonance can also become a very useful device if the author wants to increase the cacophonous tone of a verse, like in: “A raven cried, Croak! ...” These words get unpleasant sound by the repetition of the particular consonants, which correspond to the malicious behaviour of the bird.

Sound means often increase a humorous effect of rhymes, as can be seen in the preceding tongue twisters, where the comic aspect is an essential element. Beside these, humour is frequently connected with counting-out rhymes, distinguishing themselves by funny sequences of nonsense words with special

⁸⁸ NR 404.

⁸⁹ *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* gives this definition of consonance: “the repetition of identical or similar consonants in neighbouring words whose vowel sounds are different.” Baldick 49.

⁹⁰ NR 84.

⁹¹ NR 410.

⁹² NR 482.

sound forms. It is apparent that the comic effect raised by sound devices accompanies not only the mentioned types of verses, but it is an important feature of many nursery rhymes. For instance, the rhyming name of ‘Humpty Dumpty’ predestines his unfortunate fate, implying his clumsiness. However, it also contributes to the overall comic tone of the rhyme.

Next I will focus on the occurrence of anaphora, which is defined as the repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning of successive verses, half verses, or stanzas⁹³. Anaphora can have various functions, but often uniting one, as we can see in the following rhyme:

Little bird of paradise,
She works her work both neat and nice;
She pleases God, she pleases man,
She does the work that no man can.⁹⁴

Here the repeated subjective pronoun ‘she’ refers to the same and one agent, a bee, which is the solution of the riddle. The agent is introduced in the first line consisting of a metaphorical noun phrase. The following verses develop the idea by the description of the bee’s work. Each line starts with ‘she’, always adding some positive characteristic culminating in the last statement about the exclusiveness of her role in the world. So the anaphora can help the gradation of rhymes.

This device also has a strong cumulative effect, making it possible to list a range of facts introduced by the same words. That can be demonstrated with the second half of a nonsense rhyme about unreal phenomena seen by the author:

[...]
I saw a Venice glass sixteen foot deep
I saw a well full of men’s tears that weep
I saw their eyes all in a flame of fire
I saw a house as big as the moon and higher
I saw the sun even in the midst of night
I saw the man that saw this wondrous sight.⁹⁵

⁹³ See Baldick 11, Brukner 21 – 22.

⁹⁴ NR 94.

⁹⁵ NR 405.

The repeated pattern ‘I saw ...’ intensifies the speaker’s experience, as if trying to affirm its truthfulness. All the images should be confirmed by the final line where the author claims there was another witness of ‘this wondrous sight’. The rhyme has a paradoxical character, which is typical for nonsense verses. Here the verb ‘see’ is connected with things which cannot be seen in the real world. However, they can be seen in children’s imagination, where such scenes happen. Children realize the contradictory nature of the rhyme, they know that it cannot deal with reality, but they enjoy the play with the impossible, the exaggeration of the speaker.

Although having the same wording, anaphora does not necessarily have the same referent. In the infant amusement about five little pigs, the phrase ‘this little pig’ opens each line (only the last is extended by ‘and’):

This little pig went to market,
This little pig stayed at home,
This little pig had roast beef,
This little pig had none,
And this little pig cried, Wee-wee-wee-wee,
I can’t find my way home.⁹⁶

And each refers to a different pig, which is represented by child’s fingers. We call this type of reference, when we refer to the entity outside the text, ‘exophoric reference’. Saying the phrase ‘this little pig’, each time we point at a different finger, the words helping to specify the agent. Then we can continue with the description of pigs’ activities. Anaphora is again a uniting element, contributing to the regularity of the game and making it easy to remember. At the same time it opens the space for variation, as it is modified by a range of verb phrases.

Besides, anaphora can have an emphasizing function, placing the stress on the repeated words. In the following verses, a girl speaks about her lover, who is a miller:

O the little rusty dusty miller,
Dusty was his coat,
Dusty was his colour,
Dusty was the kiss I got from the miller;

⁹⁶ NR 414.

If I had my pockets
Full of gold and silver,
I would give it all
To my dusty miller.⁹⁷

Here the word ‘dusty’ recurs five times, three times in the anaphoric position, thus it becomes an essential feature in miller’s description, apparently being the consequence of his job. The result is a close semantic relation between the words ‘miller’ and ‘dusty’. Although the word ‘dusty’ has usually a negative connotation, it gains a positive meaning in the discussed rhyme, evident in the final part. The girl emphasizes that everything associated with her beloved is dusty, but she does not mind. On the contrary, she regards him highly, which she confirms by the words that she would give him ‘gold and silver’, and calls him ‘my dusty miller’, expressing positive emotions towards him.

Another kind of repetition, which frequently has a strong emphasizing effect, occurs in the final parts of language units. The term used for this device is epistrophe, defined as “the same word or phrase [...] repeated at the end of successive clauses, sentences, or lines, ...”⁹⁸. In an old song, originally for adult listeners and now included in nursery rhyme canon, three lines out of four end with the phrase ‘jolly red nose’:

Nose, nose, jolly red nose,
And what gave thee that jolly red nose?
Nutmeg and ginger, cinnamon and cloves,
That’s what gave me this jolly red nose.⁹⁹

The repeated phrase is a central motif of the verses. The appearance of the referred part of the face is obviously a result of an exuberant drinking of alcohol and as such becomes the target for mockery. The epistrophic repetition shows itself as a handy tool for ridiculing the drunkard. Nevertheless, the person puts the blame on the spices instead of the liquor. This transparent lie contributes to the overall comic character of the rhyme. The theme seems quite surprising for children’s verses, but as the Opies point out: “Bearing in mind other inappropriate pieces which entered early nursery collections it is perhaps not strange that this

⁹⁷ NR 362.

⁹⁸ Baldick 85.

⁹⁹ NR 389.

one should have been included; ...”¹⁰⁰. As we have already stated, many nursery rhymes come from the material formerly intended for the adult addressee, and so it is not unusual that the theme does not always correspond to the young age.

Similarly, the next verses, which were also originally a song, employ epistrophe for emphasizing:

Old chairs to mend! Old chairs to mend!
I never would cry old chairs to mend,
If I'd as much money as I could tell,
I never would cry old chairs to mend.

The pattern is repeated in the second stanza:

Old clothes to sell! Old clothes to sell!
I never would cry old clothes to sell,
[...]¹⁰¹

This rhyme was based on a cry of street traders, whose application required the repetition to attract the attention of customers. The repetitive aspect is reflected in the preceding nursery rhyme. Besides, the speaker expresses his / her dislike of the phrase which he / she has to shout again and again. By repeating the words he / she shows the annoying routine and stereotype of his / her work, which he / she is forced to do because of his / her poverty.

Epistrophe also appears in some riddles, where it places stress on a word important for the solution. We can show this on the rhyme whose secret word is ‘smoke’ or ‘mist’:

A house full, a hole full,
And you cannot gather a bowl full.¹⁰²

The recurrent word ‘full’ becomes a key word for finding the solution. It leads the guesser to the right answer by expressing what can be full of the unknown substance and at the same time how we cannot make a bowl full of it by gathering.

Like anaphora, epistrophe can present a useful device, when the author wants to make a list of facts or activities somehow interconnected. In the case of epistrophe, if the verses are sentences following the basic fixed word order of the

¹⁰⁰ NR 389.

¹⁰¹ NR 132.

¹⁰² NR 251.

English language, the natural uniting element can become an object, as that happens in the famous alphabet rhyme:

A was an apple-pie;
B bit it,
C cut it,
D dealt it
[...] ¹⁰³

This tool for learning the alphabet consists of lines, each, except the first and the last two, ending with pronoun ‘it’, which refers to the ‘apple pie’. Thus all the lines have the same object and the rhyme gains unity. The epistrophe makes the alphabet easier to remember, as the verses become a cohesive whole.

The last basic repetitive device on the level of words and phrases is anadiplosis, which in poetry manifests itself by the repetition of a word or a phrase at the end of one line and at the beginning of the succeeding one¹⁰⁴. In *Větší poetický slovník*¹⁰⁵ the authors regard anadiplosis as a very useful means in epic, especially folklore poetry. It contributes to building the story with logical succession and helps the addressee follow its development. We can also find this function in nursery rhymes, which often tell short stories, as the one about ‘Dicky Dilver’ and his wife:

Little Dicky Dilver
Had a wife of silver;
He took a stick and broke her back
And sold her to the miller;
The miller wouldn’t have her
So he threw her in the river.¹⁰⁶

‘The miller’ occurring at the end of the third line is repeated at the beginning of the following line. At first he is in the object position, then he becomes a subject of the next sentence. There is a different version of this rhyme, where it is clear that the story does not relate to a cruel husband but that it is a metaphorical depiction of wheat processing, the grain being represented by farmer’s wife¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰³ NR 53.

¹⁰⁴ See Baldick 9 – 10.

¹⁰⁵ See Brukner 98 – 100.

¹⁰⁶ NR173.

¹⁰⁷ NR 173 – 174.

Here anadiplosis is even employed five times, always when the action gains a new agent. Anadiplosis has again a strong cohesive effect, linking the succeeding stages together.

Anadiplosis, however, does not necessarily appear only in epic verses, as can be seen in the following riddle, where it is used together with anaphora to emphasize the central motif:

Hitty Pitty within the wall,
Hitty Pitty without the wall;
If you touch Hitty Pitty,
Hitty Pitty will bite you.¹⁰⁸

The repeated Hitty Pitty refers to the hidden word, which is a nettle. The anadiplosis in the last two lines makes possible the interchange of the roles of general 'you' and 'Hitty Pitty', where 'you' is an active agent in the third line and becomes a patient in the final one, meanwhile 'Hitty Pitty' undergoes the reverse process.

Another kind of repetition occurring in nursery rhymes is a refrain, which is often applied in folklore verses. We can define a refrain as a line or several lines repeated, sometimes with little variations, usually at the same intervals, mostly at the end of stanzas¹⁰⁹. The refrain in songs and ballads, often appearing separately, can be called a 'burden'. Since a number of nursery rhymes originate from songs and ballads spread by oral tradition, they frequently reflect the structure of these folklore genres including a refrain or a burden. Among children's verses we can find a Christmas carol from before the eighteenth century containing four stanzas each ending with the one-line refrain "On Christmas Day in the morning"¹¹⁰. This recurring line is a fixed point, which specifies the time when all the activities, mentioned in the individual stanzas, happen. It is a uniting element of the song, actually expressing its theme, that is the description of Christmas Day morning.

Using a refrain, the rhyme returns again and again to the same words, gaining unity, regularity and a certain monotonousness. In the story about an unlucky ploughboy there appear a four-line refrain after each two lines. At the beginning the speaker inherits six horses from his father:

¹⁰⁸ NR 247.

¹⁰⁹ See Baldick 215.

¹¹⁰ NR 166.

My father he died, but I can't tell you how,
He left me six horses to drive in my plough:
With a whim, wham, wabble ho!
Jack's lost his saddle oh!
Blossy boys, bubble oh!
Over the brow.¹¹¹

However, he gradually loses all his fortune by disadvantageous trading. At first he sells the horses and buys a cow, then he gets a calf, next a cat and finally a mouse, which causes his complete deprivation by setting his house on fire:

I sold my cat and bought me a mouse,
But she fired her tail and burnt down my house:
With a whim, [...]

The refrain does not change through the rhyme and returns with merciless regularity signalling the inevitability of the fate. It seems that the speaker is indifferent to his own misfortunes, when he repeats after each the same words without apparently modifying them to the situation. However, the refrain undergoes an implicit shift of the meaning in the interrelation with the other verses. In the first stanza the refrain has a function of a riding cry, later it loses this purpose and obtains a contrasting role. The gap between the carelessness of the recurring lines and the adverse storyline increases. Thus the final effect is more comical than heartrending.

So far we have dealt with special types of repetition with respect to the position, but there also exist simple repetition of words and sentences, which is quite common in nursery rhymes. It can appear in an address, like in “Barber, barber, ...”¹¹², “Cobbler, cobbler, ...”¹¹³, “Willy boy, Willy boy, ...”¹¹⁴, or “Snail, snail,”¹¹⁵, trying to attract the attention of the addressed and sometimes having a mocking tone. It can emphasize a word, for instance in “Hark, hark, / The dogs do bark, ...”¹¹⁶ the anachronistic ‘hark’, having been used in the imperative meaning ‘listen’, is repeated to stress the call. Similarly in “Sing, sing, what shall I

¹¹¹ NR 193.

¹¹² NR 78.

¹¹³ NR 145.

¹¹⁴ NR 512.

¹¹⁵ NR 465.

¹¹⁶ NR 178.

sing?”¹¹⁷ the repetition places the emphasis on the verb ‘sing’, as the speaker asks what he should sing.

Recurrence is common to words that indicate the repetition of action, for example some verbs: hopping in “Come hop, hop, hop,”¹¹⁸, beating in “And he’ll beat you, beat you, beat you,”¹¹⁹, or twinkling in “Twinkle, twinkle, little star,”¹²⁰. This is also the case of interjections or verbs referring to animal language, like dog’s barking: “Bow, wow, wow,”¹²¹, sheep’s bleating: “Baa, baa, black sheep,”¹²², or pig’s squealing: “And this little pig cried, Wee-wee-wee-wee-wee,”¹²³. The repetition also appears with other interjections: with fiddling in “Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee, went the fiddlers.”¹²⁴, with knocking in “Thumpaty, thumpaty, thump.”¹²⁵, or with singing in: “Fa, la, la, la, lal, de;”¹²⁶.

The repetition on the level of the actual text (‘la parole’) is interconnected with the recurrence on the level of the underlying language system (‘la langue’)¹²⁷. In nursery rhymes we can encounter ‘a multiple recurrence of a sentence pattern’¹²⁸, which can help the gradation of verses:

If all the seas were one sea,
What a *great* sea that would be!
If all the trees were one tree,
What a *great* tree that would be!
[...]

The structure of a complex sentence with a conditional clause and an exclamatory main clause is repeated with the alternation of its wording, when instead of ‘sea’

¹¹⁷ NR 131.

¹¹⁸ NR 93.

¹¹⁹ NR 67.

¹²⁰ NR 474.

¹²¹ NR 177.

¹²² NR 101.

¹²³ NR414.

¹²⁴ NR 157.

¹²⁵ NR 444.

¹²⁶ NR 97.

¹²⁷ Culler writes about the essential linguistic concept founded by Ferdinand de Saussure: “The basic distinction on which modern linguistics rests, [...], is Saussure’s isolation of *langue* from *parole*. The former is a system, an institution, a set of interpersonal rules and norms, while the latter comprises the actual manifestations of the system in speech and writing.” Jonathan Culler, “Introduction: “The Linguistic Foundation” (1975)”, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, revised ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) 73 – 75: 74.

¹²⁸ Tárnyiková regards this device as “a rather mechanical way of cohesion, [...] achieved by the multiple application of the same sentence pattern.” Jarmila Tárnyiková, *From Text to Texture* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2002) 39.

in the first sentence appears ‘tree’ in the next, ‘axe’ in the third and ‘man’ in the fourth variation, so developing the imaginary scene. All these lexical units are united in the last four lines, where the sentence pattern is used again, only not with a simple but multiple conditional clause:

[...]
And if the *great* man took the *great* axe,
And cut down the *great* tree,
And let it fall into the *great* sea,
What a splish-splash that would be!¹²⁹

The carefully built-up image, whose major feature is greatness, falls apart in the final line where all the great disappears with a big ‘splish-splash’. The contrast between the meaning of the word ‘great’ and the overall nonsensical content contributes to the humorous and playful character of the verses.

Another syntactic device used in nursery rhymes is recursiveness, which can be defined as a multiple application of certain rules in the construction of a sentence¹³⁰. Recursiveness presents a useful tool for the accumulative rhymes. As an example we can discuss the most famous and popular one about Jack and his house, where we find a multiple usage of interconnected relative clauses. The poem starts with one-line stanza and continues with stanzas which are each one line longer than the preceding one. The line is added at the beginning of each stanza, taking over the role of the main clause from the following line, which is transformed into a dependent relative clause. For this accumulating structure the rhyme is called accumulative. It can be illustrated by the first three stanzas:

This is the house that Jack built.

This is the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the rat,
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

The process goes on until the last eleven-line stanza:

¹²⁹ NR 451.

¹³⁰ See Tárnayková 40 – 41.

This is the farmer sowing his corn,
That kept the cock that crowed in the morn,
That waked the priest all shaven and shorn,
That married the man all tattered and torn,
That kissed the maiden all forlorn,
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn,
That tossed the dog,
That worried the cat,
That killed the rat,
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.¹³¹

This gradual development of verses can show the child listener that there exist relations between the individual items and teach him / her to recognize and make such connections in reality.

Tárnyiková mentions another function of recursiveness: "... the stereotypical recursiveness can be a supportive means of good memorising. This is the reason why recursiveness is so frequently applied in limericks or nursery rhymes, ..."¹³². It is possible to say in general that devices based on repetition help the listener or reader to remember the rhymes. To sum up, the other functions of recurrence are emphasizing and cumulating effects and foremost underlining the rhythm.

2.3 Tropes

At the end of this chapter I would like to focus on tropes, which use "words in senses beyond their literal meaning"¹³³, namely on personification, simile, metaphor, and irony.

The most common trope in children's verses is personification, when animals, things or ideas gain human attributes and abilities.¹³⁴ In nursery rhymes it is common that animals behave like people: a fly marries a humble-bee in

¹³¹ NR 272.

¹³² Tárnyiková 41.

¹³³ Baldick 264.

¹³⁴ Baldick defines personification as "a figure of speech by which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human,..." 190.

“Fiddle-de-dee, fiddle-de-dee, ...”¹³⁵, birds help to build a kirk in “When I was a little girl, ...”¹³⁶, a cow give a penny to a piper in “There was a piper had a cow, ...”¹³⁷, or a cat wears a petticoat in “Pussy cat Mole jumped over a coal ...”¹³⁸.

It is not rare that the animals can speak, like the sheep answering her master in “Baa, baa, black sheep, ...”¹³⁹, the dove and the wren talking in “The dove says, Coo, Coo, what shall I do? ...”¹⁴⁰, or the pig speaking in “This pig got in the barn, ...”¹⁴¹. The children’s verses do not personify only animals, although that happens most often, but also things, for example in “On Christmas Eve I turned the spit, ...”¹⁴² a pot plays with a ladle, in “Oranges and lemons, / Say the bells of St. Clement’s.”¹⁴³ various bells speak, or in “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, ...”¹⁴⁴ a star peeps through curtains. We can consider personification to be the trope closest to children’s thinking, as Nekusil writes: “... je nepochybným projevem typicky dětského animismu, artificialismu a tendence k antropomorfizaci neživých skutečností, ...”¹⁴⁵. At first children attribute human abilities to animals and inanimate things surrounding them, believing for example they can speak to each other. Later they begin to differentiate and use personification for play.

In nursery rhymes we can also meet simile, which explicitly compares two things, actions or feelings¹⁴⁶. In the dialogue between the dove and the wren, the latter says she has ten young ones “And keep them all like gentlemen.”¹⁴⁷, expressing she takes a proper care of them. When an adult plays with a baby an infant amusement “Round and round the garden / Like a teddy bear; ...”¹⁴⁸, he / she compares the movement of a finger on the palm to a bear going in the circle. A more poetic simile can be found in “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, ...” by Jane Taylor, where she compares the star to a precious stone for its glitter: “... Like a

¹³⁵ NR 201.

¹³⁶ NR 222.

¹³⁷ NR 416.

¹³⁸ NR 425.

¹³⁹ NR 101.

¹⁴⁰ NR 181.

¹⁴¹ NR 413.

¹⁴² NR 143.

¹⁴³ NR 398.

¹⁴⁴ NR 474 – 475.

¹⁴⁵ Vladimír Nekusil, *Studie z poetiky literatury pro děti a mládež* (Praha: Albatros, 1983) 143.

¹⁴⁶ See Baldick 237.

¹⁴⁷ NR 181.

¹⁴⁸ NR 215.

diamond in the sky.”¹⁴⁹ This is quite a conventional simile, but it can be useful for children, as they learn to make such connections.

More complicated and less overt than simile is the trope called metaphor, when we refer to a thing, idea or action with an expression normally denoting another thing, idea or action on the basis of some common quality¹⁵⁰. Metaphor is typical for riddles, where it is used as a key to the mystery word, like in the following old rhyme:

Old Mother Twitchett has but one eye,
And a long tail which she can let fly,
And every time she goes over a gap,
She leaves a bit of her tail in a trap.¹⁵¹

Old mother with one eye represents a needle. She has a tail which stands for a thread and which becomes shorter, because it is left in a trap creating the seam. Another example of metaphor can be found in these verses:

Daffy-down-dilly is new come to town,
With a yellow petticoat, and a green gown.¹⁵²

Here the bloom of daffodil is compared to colourful clothes. In general metaphor does not appear in nursery rhymes so frequently as personification.

Last trope I am going to deal with is irony, which is based on the inconsistency of the literal meaning and the real significance of a statement¹⁵³. In the nursery rhyme starting “I had a little dog, and his name was Blue Bell, ...”¹⁵⁴ the speaker, after asking the dog to do some work, praises him that “he did it very well”. The positive words are however in contrast to the following description how the dog fulfills none of the three tasks. Irony can originate in some political issue, which is the case of the rhyme about a disobedient donkey, a modified reaction to “The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act” (1822)¹⁵⁵:

If I had a donkey that wouldn't go,
Would I beat him? Oh no, no.
I'd put him in the barn and give him some corn,

¹⁴⁹ NR 474 – 475.

¹⁵⁰ See Baldick 153.

¹⁵¹ NR 381.

¹⁵² NR 166.

¹⁵³ See Baldick 130.

¹⁵⁴ NR 101 – 102

¹⁵⁵ See NR 180.

The best little donkey that ever was born.¹⁵⁶

There is obvious inconsistency between the superlative attribute and the fact that the donkey does not want to go. It is usual that some positive word or phrase is used to express the opposite meaning, like in the following verses:

Three wise men of Gotham
They went to sea in bowl,
And if the bowl had been stronger
My song had been longer.

The characteristic of the three men does not quite correspond to their foolish act. We can see from the preceding samples that the effect of irony is foremost humorous, or it can emphasize something negative. However, young children do not always understand this ironic subtext, as they are not used to decoding all the possible meanings.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to sum up the main features of the nursery rhyme form. The most important are the regular rhythm and sound devices. It is common that children's verses employ some kind of repetition to emphasize the beat or some meaning and to increase the memorability. I have also discussed the basic tropes appearing in nursery rhymes, of which personification prevails.

¹⁵⁶ NR 180.

3 Occurrence of nursery rhymes

In Britain and the USA, nursery rhymes are well-known to a wide range of audience, they belong to common knowledge and cultural awareness and they create the basis for literary education. As such they appear in various contexts and functions. In this chapter, I would like to specify these occurrences. At first, we can make the basic division into two groups, which will have several subgroups. The first category is the case when nursery rhymes appear independently fulfilling their primary functions, the other is when their usage is intertextual.

3.1 Primary occurrence

In this section I would like to deal with nursery rhymes as a genre of children's literature, which I call primary occurrence. By this I do not mean that it is their first appearance, as most of the pieces had undergone various developments before entering nursery rhyme cannon, but that nowadays their occurrence in children's literature is regarded as basic.

Nursery rhymes can be considered as the preliminary stage of children's literature, which is reflected in the following ones. To specify this category, we should discuss the term 'children's literature' at first.

3.1.1 Children's literature

Children's literature, although standing on the edge of literature, is a significant part of it. The term itself has not a clear definition. "The disparities between the various definitions of 'children's literature', 'children', and 'literature', are problematic to children's literature criticism because they undermine the goal it sets itself."¹⁵⁷ To describe what children's literature (in Czech 'literatura pro děti a mládež'¹⁵⁸) means, we can start with literature in

¹⁵⁷ Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, "Defining Children's Literature and Childhood", *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1998) 17 – 31: 22.

¹⁵⁸ Toman's definition in *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury*: "Pojmem literatura pro děti a mládež označujeme oblast literární tvorby záměrně určené věkově vymezenému okruhu nedospělých posluchačů a čtenářů (do 14 – 15 let) nebo také oblast umělecké literatury původně psané pro dospělé, ale recipované dětmi a mládeží. Běžně se též užívá synonymního pojmenování dětská literatura, případně literatura pro mládež." *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury* (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita, Pedagogická fakulta 1992) 42.

general: "..., literature is traditionally described as the body of writing that exists because of inherent imaginative and artistic qualities."¹⁵⁹ Besides, Lukens mentions two basic functions of literature. "Literature at its best gives both pleasure and understanding. It explores the nature of human beings, the condition of humankind."¹⁶⁰ These characteristics are typical for both literature for adults and children's literature. Firstly, the work of literature should have aesthetic qualities, it may touch the universal truth, reveal the human substance and enrich knowledge, but at the same time its purpose is to please the reader. So children's and adult literature have features in common.

The differences between children's literature and the other works of written arts stem from their addressee. The specification of the children's literature reader is usually done by setting the age boundary¹⁶¹. Karín-Oberstein describes the close relationship between the child reader and literature: "The intimate interconnections between definitions of reading children and children's literature are fully evident here: in many ways, critics define them as one and the same thing, and children's literature is often spoken of as if it had been written by children expressing their needs, emotions and experiences."¹⁶² The last statement limits children's literature only to the works where the author writes from the position of a child. But this approach cannot be applied to all children's literature. There exist works written for children where the authors keep the adult voice.

Besides, children's literature does not involve only the works written for children. It also includes the works originally written for adult readers, but later also accepted by children. Therefore children's literature is usually divided into two groups: intentional and unintentional literature. Čeňková describes these two groups in *Vývoj literatury pro děti a mládež a její žánrové struktury*: "Intencionální literární díla jsou dětem a mládeži adresována tvůrci, [...] Neintencionální odnož představuje veškerou četbu dětí a mládeže, v níž se ocitají slovesné projevy [...], které si LPDM přisvojuje ..." ¹⁶³.

¹⁵⁹ Rebecca J. Lukens, *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*. 5th ed. (Oxford: Harper Collins, 1995) 1.

¹⁶⁰ Lukens 8.

¹⁶¹ See Footnote 158.

¹⁶² Lesnik-Oberstein 25.

¹⁶³ Jana Čeňková, *Vývoj literatury pro děti a mládež a její žánrové struktury* (Praha: Portál, 2006) 12.

The important role in the specification of children's literature is played by its functions, which are motivated by its intended readers. The following functions are usually considered as the basic functions of literature in general: aesthetic, cognitive, and educational. Tenčík deals with functions of children's literature in an essay in *Zlatý máj*, differentiating these from the functions of literature for adults: "... (literatura pro děti a mládež) má své zvláštní funkce, tj. takové, které nemá literatura pro dospělé."¹⁶⁴ As Tenčík mentions, the functions of literature for adults are determined by an adult person of the particular reader's type, but the functions of children's literature have a subjective nature, depending on the child's development.

When discussing children's literature, some theoreticians consider the educational function to be its necessary feature. However, many theoreticians emphasize the differentiation of the children's literature from didactic kind of books, among them Lesnik-Oberstein: "The first and most basic step critics take in defining 'children's literature' – and one which still receives primary emphasis in discussions around children's books – is to differentiate books used for didactic or educational purposes from 'children's literature'."¹⁶⁵

In her opinion children's literature should mainly bring joy to the reader: "To the children's literature critic the outstanding characteristic of 'children's literature' is that it is supposed to speak to the reading child through amusement and inherent appeal, and not through primarily didactic messages, ..."¹⁶⁶ Didactic messages can be involved in children's literature, but should not be too overt and unnatural. The specification of children's literature by its didactic function can undermine its subject. Nezkusil thinks didactic-ethical concepts lead to underestimation of its artistic value.¹⁶⁷

As the base for the treatment of children's literature he prefers its aesthetic function. Many other authors agree with this approach. Tenčík calls the aesthetic function principal¹⁶⁸, similarly Toman presents it as essential and

¹⁶⁴ František Tenčík, "K otázce zvláštních funkcí slovesnosti pro děti a mládež", *Zlatý máj* 1969, 341-346: 341.

¹⁶⁵ Lesnik-Oberstein 23.

¹⁶⁶ Lesnik-Oberstein 23.

¹⁶⁷ See Nezkusil, *Spor o specifčnost* 10.

¹⁶⁸ Tenčík 344.

unsubstitutable¹⁶⁹. The aesthetic function is the most complex, integrating the others. In general the aesthetic function has a dominant position¹⁷⁰ in art.

The aesthetic function is closely associated with terms aesthetic norm and aesthetic value, which are discussed by Jan Mukařovský in *Studie z estetiky*¹⁷¹. He emphasizes the dynamic and changeable nature of these categories. Distortion of the existing aesthetic norm ('foregrounding', in Czech 'aktualizace') contributes to the aesthetic effect of art. The development of aesthetic norms is dialectical, an old system being replaced by a new one.

Nezval believes that the specificity of children's literature can be only given by the modification of aesthetic function: „Specifičnost dětské literatury, pokud vůbec máme právo o ní hovořit, může být tedy jediné záležitostí zvláštní modifikace estetické funkce.“¹⁷² In comparison to the child reader, Nezval describes the adult reader as a person with a developed system of reception: “V relacích literatury pro dospělé má čtenář charakter bytosti společensky zařazené, bytosti sociální, s bohatším obsahem psychiky, s hlubší znalostí sebe sama, s fixovanými konvencemi vnímání, s určitou sumou faktických poznatků, která za normálních okolností je vždy bohatší než u dítěte, s bohatší zkušeností z recepce umění, s pevněji zakotvenými sociálně (v obecném i konkrétním slova smyslu) determinovanými konvencemi vnímání uměleckých děl.”¹⁷³ Since the child reader undergoes the first contact with various systems, such as social or cultural ones, he / she has to learn the particular norms and relations in a certain stabilized context. Children's literature is an essential and useful means for presenting aesthetic norms to children and as such it should include distortions which the reader is able to recognize. Children's literature acquaints the child reader with aesthetic norms, providing him / her the base for further approach and evaluation of written art.

To conclude, the term children's literature is not clearly defined. There are several aspects used in its specification. Generally, these originate from the supposed child reader, which assigns special functions to it. The essential function, which interconnects the other functions, is aesthetic. Its nature is

¹⁶⁹ Toman 47.

¹⁷⁰ See Aleš Haman, *Úvod do studia literatury a interpretace díla* (Jinočany: H&H, 1999) 43.

¹⁷¹ See Jan Mukařovský, *Studie z estetiky* (Praha: Odeon, 1966).

¹⁷² Nezkušil, *Spor o specifičnost* 11.

¹⁷³ Nezkušil, *Spor o specifičnost* 14.

different from the aesthetic function of literature for adults. Jarmila Suloková expresses the basic purpose of children's literature: "Již od útlého dětství by se měly děti seznamovat s knihami, jejichž prostřednictvím mohou získat kladný vztah k literatuře, rozvinout estetické cítění a vytvořit si trvalou potřebu vlastního čtenářství."¹⁷⁴ Children's literature should not be didactic straightforwardly, but it should be educational in such a way that it teaches children how to perceive literature and recognize aesthetic qualities.

3.1.2 Functions of nursery rhymes

When we focus on the genre of nursery rhymes, we can find similar basic functions as we encounter in children's literature in general, namely entertaining, practical, cognitive, educational, social, magic and uniting aesthetic function¹⁷⁵. In the following text I would like to discuss each function with respect to their application in nursery rhymes. For illustration I quote verses included in publications intended for children and their parents or educators¹⁷⁶. The boundaries between the individual functions are not strict, since they are usually interconnected and put into effect together.

a) Entertaining function

The entertaining aspect of children's verses can play an essential role for arising children's interest in them. When young children are introduced to rhymes naturally with the emphasis on amusement, they create more easily a positive relationship to literature in general. Many nursery rhymes fulfil this function, as their effect is often funny and enjoyable.

The types of children's verses which have an especially strong entertaining function are those intended for play, such as infant amusements or rhymes

¹⁷⁴ Jarmila Sulovská, "Faktory ovlivňující dětské čtenářství", *Současnost literatury pro děti a mládež* (Liberec: Katedra českého jazyka a literatury, Ped. F. Technické univerzity v Liberci, 2004) 73-80: 73.

¹⁷⁵ See Chaloupka and Nezkusil, *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury I* (Praha: Albatros, 1973) 40 – 47.

¹⁷⁶ I use these collections: Julian Dakin, *Songs and Rhymes for the Teaching of English. English Pupil's Book* (1968; Harlow: Longman, 1997); *The Nursery Rhyme Book*, ed. Andrew Lang, *This Little Puffin ...*, ed. Elizabeth Matterson (1969; London: Penguin Books, 1991); *The Children's Treasury*, ed. Alice Mills (Willoughby: Global Book Publishing, 2002); *The Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (1955; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); *Collins English Nursery Rhymes for Young Learners* (1986; London: Collins ELT, 1990); *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* (1990; London: Bounty Books, 2005); *Nursery Rhymes* (Wigston: Bookmark Limited, 1998).

accompanying games in general. These are usually associated with certain movements, like the following verses:

Round and round the garden

Like a teddy bear;

One step, two step,

Tickle you under there.¹⁷⁷

Saying the first two lines, the speaker makes circles with his / her index finger on the baby's palm, then he / she continues with steps up the arm and with the final line he / she tickles under the armpit, which should make the child laugh. Other popular infant amusements are for example "Leg over leg,"¹⁷⁸ when the child is bounced on the adult's ankle, or the finger / toe rhyme "This little pig went to market,"¹⁷⁹ all bringing joy to the addressee. I deal more with different types of movement accompanied by rhymes in the next part.

Furthermore, rhymes which can be classified as games are riddles. Carpenter defines them as "a form of guessing game in which one person challenges another to identify something that is described in enigmatic terms", observing that they have occurred in "most cultures since ancient times"¹⁸⁰. Like most of nursery rhymes these were originally meant mainly for adult entertainment, later entering children's folklore. The rhyme about 'Humpty Dumpty' representing an egg, which has been enjoyed since long time ago and has many equivalents in other languages¹⁸¹, is well-known to present-day children and can be found, with little modifications, nearly in every nursery rhyme book¹⁸². There appear other riddles, whose solution is concrete, like a star in "I have a little sister, / They call her Peep, Peep, ..." ¹⁸³, or an answer consisting of more parts for the rhyme beginning "Two legs sat upon three legs, / With one leg in his lap; ..." ¹⁸⁴, where two legs is a man, three legs, a stool, one leg represents a leg of

¹⁷⁷ Mills 122.

¹⁷⁸ Matterson 22.

¹⁷⁹ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 216.

¹⁸⁰ Carpenter 451.

¹⁸¹ The Opies give the names for Humpty Dumpty in other languages: 'Boule, boule' (France), 'Thille Lille' (Sweden), 'Lille-Trille' (Denmark), 'Hillerin-Lillerin' (Finland), 'Annebadadeli' (Switzerland), and 'Trille Trölle', 'Etje-Papetje', 'Wirgele-Wargele', 'Gigele-Gagele', 'Rüntzelken-Püntzelken', and 'Hümpelken-Pümpelken' (different parts of Germany). NR 252.

¹⁸² Dakin, *Pupils' Book*, rhyme 60, Lang 129, Matterson 39, Mills 140, ONRB 25, *Collins English Nursery Rhymes* 11, *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 57, *Nursery Rhymes* 20.

¹⁸³ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 106.

¹⁸⁴ Mills 18.

mutton and four legs, a dog. On the other hand there exist more complicated riddles, which hide an abstract word, for instance ‘an equal’ in “What God never sees, ...”¹⁸⁵, or a mathematical-linguistic catch, such as the one about “Elizabeth, Elspeth, Betsy and Bess”¹⁸⁶, who went together to a bird’s nest, where they found five feathers, each took one, but still four were left there. Here the solution, based on the fact that the given names are variants of one name, is not easy for young children. The riddles can help the children learn to make semantic connections, understand metaphorical images and abstract concepts. So the guessing process is not only entertaining, but applies the cognitive function as well.

The types closely associated with games are counting-out rhymes and tongue twisters. They have both distinct practical function discussed below. However, they can be used also for amusing children, because, as I have already stated, they satisfy children’s liking for play with sounds and language¹⁸⁷ and they usually bring fun. In general, entertaining function is prominent in the rhymes which have humorous effect.

The last aspect which I would like to mention concerning the given function is that entertainment is also provided by the story-telling character of a number of nursery rhymes, in Lukens’s words: “Many of them, [...] are the most tightly constructed stories.”¹⁸⁸ Sometimes they deal with insignificant action, like the verses about the journey of “Pussy cat”¹⁸⁹ to London, where she frightens a mouse. On the other hand they can describe the whole life in a few lines, which is for example the case of “Solomon Grundy”¹⁹⁰. Children are likely to be attracted by a story and they appreciate the brevity and simplicity of nursery rhymes stories, which they can easily remember and return to them.

b) Practical function

The practical function of nursery rhymes, accompanying them from the ancient times, besides amusing a child, is soothing him / her to sleep. For this purpose adults, especially mothers, employ lullabies¹⁹¹, which they usually sing. The verses can be opened with quietening interjections followed by the address of

¹⁸⁵ ONRB 154.

¹⁸⁶ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 229.

¹⁸⁷ See above in the part on structure.

¹⁸⁸ Lukens 235.

¹⁸⁹ Dakin, *Pupils’ Book*, rhyme 58.

¹⁹⁰ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 48.

¹⁹¹ Carpenter explains the origin of the term ‘lullaby’: “The first part of the word is supposed to derive from ‘lu, lu’ or ‘la, la’, sounds to be used by mothers or nurses.” 326.

the child, like “Hush-a-bye, baby, ...”, “Hush thee, my baby, ...”, “Hush-a-baa, baby, ...”, or “Hush, little baby, ...”¹⁹². More often the baby is promised a reward for his / her nice behaviour: a mocking bird and other lures in “Hush, little baby, don’t say a word, / Papa’s going to buy you a mocking bird.”¹⁹³, or bread and milk or custard in “Hush a baby, my doll, I pray you don’t cry, / And I’ll give you some bread and milk by and by;”¹⁹⁴. But sometimes they are threatened with a punishment: in “Baby, baby, naughty baby,”¹⁹⁵ they are warned that, if they are not still, Bonaparte will come and tear, beat and eat them. So lullabies can have an angry tone, but in general they are pleasing.

When we focus on counting-out formulas from the point of their pragmatic function, their purpose is clearly specified as choosing the central player or eliminating a person from the game. In *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* counting-out rhymes are regarded as “a preliminary to games in which one child must be chosen to take an undesirable role ...”¹⁹⁶. Nezval mentions the necessary consequence of this usage, which is the typical form of counting-out formulas and which I have already analyzed¹⁹⁷: “Tomu [účelu] je podřízen tvar rozpočítadla – monotónní rytmus slov, jež zpravidla nedávají smysl, nebo slov „umělých“, jež neobsahují význam ...”¹⁹⁸ For illustration we can quote a famous rhyme, used for counting-out or sometimes for running game:

Eenny, weeny, winey, wo,
Where do all the Frenchmen go?
To the east and to the west
And into the old crow’s nest.¹⁹⁹

Nezval explains the application of the nonsensical sequence as the opening line: “... zde zvláště dobře mohou navodit rytmický impuls.”²⁰⁰ The rhythm is then preserved in the following verses, highlighted by the rhyme between the stressed monosyllabic words, which makes possible to place emphasis on the final word said when pointing at the chosen person.

¹⁹² ONRB 18 – 19.

¹⁹³ *Collins English Nursery Rhymes* 48 – 49.

¹⁹⁴ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 226

¹⁹⁵ ONRB 20.

¹⁹⁶ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 361.

¹⁹⁷ See above in the part on structure.

¹⁹⁸ Nezkusil, *Spor o specifičnost* 20.

¹⁹⁹ ONRB 111.

²⁰⁰ Nezkusil, *Studie z poetiky* 139.

To the rhymes with obvious practical function we can add those employed in children's games, already mentioned above considering their entertaining aspect. Their pragmatic role is defined by the purpose of their application, which usually is to accompany some activities and movements. Such connections are based on the natural way with which children take part in play. Thanks to their vivid imagination, they easily accept that a thing or part of the body becomes something else, or identify the activities they are involved in with the situation described by the verses.

The rhymes intended mainly for the youngest, commonly called infant amusements, are recited or sang by an adult to illustrate play with different parts of baby's body. According to the parts and to the activities employed, Carpenter specifies eleven categories²⁰¹. Among them we can find 'finger rhymes', when the speaker points to each finger starting with thumb, like "Thumb bold, / Thibitythold, / Langman, / Lick pan, / Mammie's wee man."²⁰², 'face rhymes', using child's features, for example "Knock at door, / Pull the bell, / Lift the latch, / And walk in."²⁰³, or 'hand rhymes', accompanying clapping of hands, for instance "Pease pudding hot,"²⁰⁴. The last is usually performed by older children, who enjoy games played together with their friends and which are more complicated than infant amusements, like "Here we go 'round the mulberry bush,"²⁰⁵, when at first the participants go round in the circle and then mimic various activities, or "London Bridge is broken down,"²⁰⁶, when two players make a bridge from hands and the others walk under it.

These games based on the interrelation of movements and verses contribute to the physical development of children, as Kenney writes in an article on the benefits of nursery rhymes, children "develop both large ("Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes") and small ("Eensy Weensy Spider") muscles, and

²⁰¹ These categories are: 'finger rhymes', 'toe rhymes', 'face rhymes', 'nose rhymes', 'knee songs', 'Bo-peep', 'tickling rhymes', 'jumping rhymes', 'hand rhymes', 'foot or leg rhymes', and 'hand tricks'. Carpenter 270.

²⁰² ONRB 4.

²⁰³ Matterson describes the game: At first "pretend to knock on the forehead", then "lightly pull a lock of hair", "lightly pinch the nose" and at last "pretend to put your fingers on his mouth". 16.

²⁰⁴ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 183. In the old version of the rhyme there was 'porridge' instead of 'pudding': "Pease porridge hot, / Pease porridge cold, / Pease porridge in the pot / Nine days old. // Some like it hot, / Some like it cold, / Some like it in the pot / Nine days old." The Opies describe the game: "[Children repeat] the rhyme faster and faster until one of the players breaks the sequence through addleheadedness or exhaustion." NR 406 – 408.

²⁰⁵ *Nursery Rhymes* 21.

²⁰⁶ Lang 98, for detailed description and history of this game see Delamar 218 – 219.

gain coordination skills.”²⁰⁷ Besides there is a special type of rhymes for exercising speech organs, usually called ‘tongue twisters’ or less often ‘tongue trippers’, for instance the following one:

Swan swam over the sea,
Swim, swan, swim!
Swan swam back again,
Well swum swan!²⁰⁸

To have the desired effect tongue trippers are based on consonantal repetition of sounds²⁰⁹, here of the cluster /sw/.

When we focus on mental faculties, we can say in general that nursery rhymes show useful for natural memory training. These verses usually become the first longer stretches of language which children learn by heart, as they hear them again and again, at the beginning only listening, later joining the speaker. The memorability is definitely given by the nursery form, which I discuss in the second chapter.

Beside the fact that this is characteristic of nursery rhymes in general, the collections include verses especially designed as mnemonic devices. They present certain fundamental pieces of knowledge in an organized rhymed structure, which helps children to remember them, thus contributing to their further learning process. Typical subjects for this kind of verses are alphabet and numerical sequences. A famous alphabetical rhyme, whose first records date back to the seventeenth century, is the one starting “A apple pie;”²¹⁰. To support remembering basic numbers we can use “One, two, three, four, five, / Once I caught a fish alive; ...”²¹¹, for practice of numbers from one to ten using fingers, or “One, two, / Buckle your shoe, / [...] / Nineteen, twenty, / My plate’s empty.”²¹², containing the first twenty numbers. In addition, there exist rhymes for memorizing some other information, for example from the story of “Solomon Grundy”²¹³ children can learn the days of the week, from the rhyme “Mr. East

²⁰⁷ Susan Kenney, “Nursery Rhyme: Foundation for Learning”, *General Music Today* Fall 2005: Vol. 19. Issue 1: 28 – 31. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 30 Oct 2008 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=20359070&site=ehost-live>>.

²⁰⁸ ONRB 157.

²⁰⁹ See above in the section about literal devices.

²¹⁰ Lang 46 - 47.

²¹¹ Matterson 256.

²¹² *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 215.

²¹³ *Nursery Rhymes* 8.

gave a feast; ...”²¹⁴ the four cardinal points, or from “Thirty days has September, ...”²¹⁵ how many days each month has.

Nursery rhymes not only develop memory, but they also contribute to improving practical language skills, of both a native speaker and a learner of English as a second language. Practical mastering of language is based on the acquisition of the language system, depending mainly on the cognitive function, which I discuss below. The author of *Songs and Rhymes for the Teaching of English*²¹⁶ Julian Dakin deals with the possibilities of the nursery rhymes application in English classes, specifying these areas, where the verses can be a useful device for practice and improvement: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures and conversational exchanges.

The development of language is associated with learning literary competence, which the usage of nursery rhymes can also support, as Mills argues: “Research into children’s early literary competence and their development as readers has emphasised the importance of listening to stories and rhymes, and children’s early play with consciously patterned forms of language.”²¹⁷ Hearing or reading nursery rhymes, infants encounter their first pieces of simple poetry, which introduce them to some basic literary devices. And although it is not a deliberate process, children store this experience and can build upon it later, when exploring more complex literary works.

To the skills developed by nursery rhymes we can add musical abilities, since they are a useful tool for training the basic rhythm and, as Kenney claims, they are “excellent preparation for developing the singing voice.”²¹⁸

c) Cognitive function

From their birth children explore the surrounding world, at first mainly by their senses, later adding intellectual effort. Their primitive notion of reality gradually develops into a more complex system which changes dynamically depending on the stimuli provided. Lukens writes about the initial state of children’s mind development, stating that children’s literature should correspond

²¹⁴ ONRB 92.

²¹⁵ Mills 126.

²¹⁶ Julian Dakin, *Songs and Rhymes for the Teaching of English. Teacher’s Book* (1968, Harlow: Longman 1997).

²¹⁷ Colin Mills, “Books for Younger Readers”, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1998) 377 – 385: 379.

²¹⁸ Keney.

to their abilities: “Since their experiences are more limited, children may not understand the same complexity of ideas. Since their understanding is more limited, the expression of ideas must be simpler – both in language and form. Related to the necessity for simplicity in the expression of ideas are vocabulary and attention span.”²¹⁹

Many nursery rhymes meet this demand, as they are often simple, short and regular, but it is not rare that verses offer more levels for interpretation, the easiest based on literal and more complicated on figurative meaning. To illustrate the variety of approaches to some verses, we can look at the popular rhyme about ‘Humpty Dumpty’. The youngest infants only perceive and enjoy the sound pattern. Small children take the text as it is, as the story about an unfortunate fall of a figure called ‘Humpty Dumpty’. Older ones realize that the rhyme can be about an egg falling down and breaking or that it can criticize proud people. It is not necessary that children understand rhymes fully from the beginning. The verses should not be very difficult, however, at the same time they should not underestimate their addressee. If there appear unknown words, or some hidden ideas, it offers a challenge to a child, whose natural curiosity leads him / her to try to discover their meaning.

When we compare nursery rhymes to each other, we can see that there is a great diversity of the degree of difficulty, corresponding to the stages of children’s development. To the youngest the surrounding world seems to consist of entities independent on each other: “skutečnost se dítěti otevírá ve víceméně nespojitých zlomcích”²²⁰ Little children cannot see connections and they do not differentiate between reality and representation of this reality by means of language. This fact manifests itself in a higher frequency of onomatopoeic words in children’s poetry, with which the reality enters the space of language. Typical are words imitating animal sounds, which sometimes become the topic of a rhyme, like “What does the cat say? Meow, Meow. / What does the dog say? Bow Wow ...”²²¹. Other sounds are reflected too, for example bell ringing: “ding-dong”²²², blowing “Puff, puff, puff”²²³ or riding a horse: “Tri, tre, tre, tree”, “Gallop-a-trot”, “Hobbledy-

²¹⁹ Lukens 7.

²²⁰ Chaloupka and Nezkusil, *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury I* 41.

²²¹ Dakin, *Pupils’ Book*, rhyme 3.

²²² *Collins English Nursery Rhymes* 47.

²²³ ONRB 24.

hoy”²²⁴. Children concentrate on rhythm and sounds, not considering the meaning, which also shows in the use of nonsense words and close interrelation of the rhythm and extralinguistic activities. This is especially the case of game rhymes discussed above with regard to their entertaining and practical function.

Gradually children start to realize that their environment consists of certain structures, they learn to understand various relations and become involved in creating them. There are rhymes which describe such possible relations, like the one beginning:

This is the key of the kingdom,
In that kingdom there is a city,
In that city there is a town,
In that town there is a street,
[...]²²⁵

These verses show how a superior notion can develop into an interconnected sequence. They start with the widest word kingdom, then continue as far as to the concrete basket with flowers, and in reverse order they return to the kingdom and its key.

This development of thinking is inseparably interconnected with language acquisition. At first children learn to name things, perceiving words as separate units, later they begin to make sentences and then organize them into structures. Nursery rhymes provide an endless source for consolidation and expansion of vocabulary knowledge and also offer a variety of basic language patterns in use, which can be illustrated by Dakin’s suggestions of grammar areas, where the verses can be applied: ‘Tenses’, ‘Auxiliary verbs’, ‘Subordinate clauses’, ‘Conjunctions’, ‘Special types of verbs’, ‘Interrogative’, ‘Negative’, ‘Types of adverbs and prepositions’, and ‘Uncountable nouns’²²⁶.

Nursery rhymes contain vocabulary from various thematic groups, from simple to more complicated. There appear words referring to the world which is close and familiar to children, like family members in lullabies, and various activities or parts of the body practised in infant amusements. Common

²²⁴ Lang 187.

²²⁵ Dakin, *Pupils’ Book*, rhyme 82.

²²⁶ Dakin, *Teacher’s Book* 15 – 16.

protagonists of rhymes become animals, both domestic and wild²²⁷, people of various jobs, age and characters. In *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* we can find for example: farmer, barber, mason, king, baker, miller, piper, cobbler etc. We also encounter children characters with typical names: Tom, Tommy, Willy, Willie, Georgie, John, Johnny, Jacky, Jack, Jill, Jane, Margery, Mary, Betty etc. Some verses, both fantastic and realistic, relate to old people, like those about “Old Mother Hubbard”²²⁸ and “Old King Cole”²²⁹. There exists a special type of nursery rhymes, often fantastic, dealing with a person in a humorous way, usually emphasizing some strange characteristic or habit, or describing an incident, which starts with the structure “There was ...”, for instance “There was an old woman tossed up in a basket, ...”²³⁰, “There was an old woman who lived in a shoe; ...”²³¹, or “There was a fat man of Bombay, ...”²³². Sometimes these verses have the form of limerick²³³, like the following one:

There was an old woman of Norwich,
Who lived upon nothing but porridge;
Parading the town,
She turned cloak into gown,
This thrifty old woman of Norwich.²³⁴

This form inspired Edward Lear and he used it plentifully in his nonsense poetry.

When reading or listening to nursery rhymes young addressees meet not only concrete vocabulary, but they are also exposed to abstract concepts. Children’s verses contain the basic laws of nature. They imply the constant move, the cycle of seasons, of days, of night and day, of birth and death, for example the rhyme “Monday’s child is fair of face”²³⁵ presents the days of the week, “Mr Moon, you’re up too soon, ...”²³⁶ shows the alternation of day and night, “The

²²⁷ In Mills there are for example kittens, cats, mice, dogs, pigs, sheep, owls, crows, frogs, robins, spiders, cows, rabbits etc.

²²⁸ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 201.

²²⁹ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 236.

²³⁰ *Collins English Nursery Rhymes* 31.

²³¹ Dakin, *Pupils’ Book*, rhyme 99.

²³² Mills 18.

²³³ Baldick gives this definition of limerick: “an English verse form consisting of five anapaestic lines rhyming *aabba*, the third and the fourth lines having two stresses and the others three.” 139.

²³⁴ Lang 161.

²³⁵ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 62.

²³⁶ Matterson 148.

North wind doth blow, ...”²³⁷ deals with the start of winter, or “The farmer sows his seeds, ...”²³⁸ describes the growing of grain. The verses can depict the transience of life and things. Fleeting time is pictured by the short rhyme about the life of “Solomon Grundy”²³⁹ or by “Tick Tock / goes the clock, / Telling the time / All by itself. / Round and round / The two hands go, ...”²⁴⁰. The game “London Bridge is falling down, ...”²⁴¹ is based on the fact that no work of man can last forever. Nursery rhymes can show the relation between cause and effect, like in “When the wind blows, / Then the mills goes; ...”²⁴². The interconnections are also depicted by cumulative rhymes, which are believed to have originated in Hebrew chant “Has Gadyo”²⁴³.

A special category of rhymes contributing to children’s cognitive development is nonsense verses. Genčiová describes the character of such rhymes: “záměrné odklonění od reality, podivínství, excentričnost, hra se slovy i pojmy, přemety logiky, humor a smích.”²⁴⁴ The main feature of these pieces is humour, which is caused by play with fantastic images and illogical connections. A typical example of a nonsense verse is the following popular rhyme:

Hey diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over
the moon.
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away
with the spoon.²⁴⁵

The rhyme presents an unreal image, where the animals, the dish and the spoon are personified. It is a kind of topsy-turvy world, where anything is possible. Nezkusil discusses the cognitive process based on nonsense: “Jazykem se utváří

²³⁷ Matterson 140.

²³⁸ Dakin, *Pupils’ Book*, rhyme 101.

²³⁹ Mills 108.

²⁴⁰ Dakin, *Pupils’ Book*, rhyme 68.

²⁴¹ *Nursery Rhymes* 11.

²⁴² *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 233.

²⁴³ See Delamar 103.

²⁴⁴ Miroslava Genčiová, *Literatura pro děti a mládež (ve srovnávacím žánrovém pohledu)*, (Praha: SPN, 1984) 55.

²⁴⁵ *Nursery Rhymes* 28.

toliko určitý vztah, popř. určitá představa, tu však čtenář konfrontuje s realitou a na základě vlastní zkušenosti dospívá k nemožnosti její skutečné existence.”²⁴⁶

Children come to differentiate between an imaginary and the real world.

From nursery rhymes young addressees can also learn the logics of figurative language, again described by Nezkusil: “... základem této logiky je procesuální pohyb k zformování subjekt-objektových vztahů ke skutečnosti, k vybudování pojmové a operační struktury opírané čím dál méně o vnitřní nediferencované pocity a čím dál více o vztahovou skladbu světa samotného.”²⁴⁷

The type of nursery rhymes employing figurative language to a higher extent is riddles, where the children learn to guess some entity often from the metaphorical description.

d) Educational function

Educational role is the most questionable aspect of children’s literature in general and approach to it has changed through centuries. The main emphasis on this function was placed in the past, when only works with moral ambitions and serious messages were accepted as suitable for children. “Until the middle of the eighteenth century, most verse for children was didactic and severe, expressed through in lessons, fables (with morals, of course) and hymns.”²⁴⁸ The attitude changed during the nineteenth century, also thanks to the outstanding authors Lewis Carroll (1832 – 1898) and Edward Lear (1812 – 1888), who employed humour and nonsense in their writings with great ingenuity. Genčiová describes Lear’s approach to his young readers: “Lear jako první básník na světě děti nementoruje, [...], nýbrž hraje si s nimi jako rovný s rovnými.”²⁴⁹ Literary works started to be used not only to educate but also to entertain their young addressees.

Nowadays, the educational aspect is not regarded as essential in children’s literature. It does not mean that it should be eliminated from works completely, as Hunt says: “It is arguably impossible for a children’s book [...] not to be educational or influential in some way; ...”²⁵⁰, but it should be subordinate to aesthetic qualities and not to stick out from the work.

²⁴⁶ Nezkusil, *Studie z poetiky* 158.

²⁴⁷ Nezkusil, *Studie z poetiky* 185.

²⁴⁸ Morag Styles, “Poetry for Children”, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1998) 190 – 205: 191.

²⁴⁹ Genčiová 55.

²⁵⁰ Peter Hunt, “Introduction”, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1998) 1 – 13:3.

In the collections of nursery rhymes, we meet pieces that break this rule and express moral overtly, usually using sentiment and emotional appeal:

Dearly loved children,
Is it not a sin,
When you peel potatoes,
To throw away the skin?
For the skin feeds pigs
And pigs feed you.
Dearly loved children,
Is this not true?²⁵¹

We cannot consider such verses to be a bearer of aesthetic value, as Miko says: “Estetická problematika [...] spočíva medziiným v tom, že “myšlienka”, “poznanie”, hodnotenie netrčí z textu v osobitnej formulácii, vo výslovnom poučovaní, ...”²⁵². Other rhymes which have explicit instructive effect are those originating in proverbs, like: “Early to bed, and early to rise, / Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”²⁵³, but these avoid sentimentalism and can be regarded as demonstration of folk wisdom.

What is interesting about children’s verses is the fact that they quite often present a sad story describing an accident or some misfortune, like falling of “Jack and Jill”²⁵⁴ down the hill, of “Humpty Dumpty”²⁵⁵ from a wall, or of a cradle with a baby in “Hush-a-bye baby”²⁵⁶, “Little Bo-peep”²⁵⁷ losing a sheep or an old woman her cows in “There was an old woman had three cows,”²⁵⁸. It is not rare that death is included. In some rhymes animals die, for example in a variation of the old ballad about a wooing frog “There was a frog lived in a well”²⁵⁹, where the frog is swallowed by a duck, or in the rhyme beginning “Who killed Cock Robin”²⁶⁰, where the topic is again a violent death and burial. Some verses contain

²⁵¹ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 141.

²⁵² František Miko, “Poetika najmenších”, *Zlatý máj* 1978, 246 – 252: 251.

²⁵³ Lang 83.

²⁵⁴ Mills 67.

²⁵⁵ Matterson 39.

²⁵⁶ Mills 137.

²⁵⁷ *Nursery Rhymes* 5.

²⁵⁸ ONRB 66.

²⁵⁹ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 104 – 105.

²⁶⁰ Mills 132 – 133.

the death of a person, for example “My father he died, ...”²⁶¹ or “Ten little Indians”²⁶², where the Indians disappear one by one until only the last is left.

There are tendencies to criticize the usage of nursery rhymes containing negative or fantastic images. For instance, McDonald concentrates in her article on verses which, according to her, “help to promote negative self-images” and “encourage children to be cruel to people who are different” or present “an outright lie”²⁶³. She demonstrates her opinion for example on the rhymes starting “I have a little sister, / They call her Peep, Peep, ...”²⁶⁴ or “Hey! diddle, diddle,”²⁶⁵. According to the author the former teach children to mock handicapped people, the latter makes them to believe absurdities. The shortcoming of her argumentation is the fact that she completely ignores possible figurative interpretation and that children realize soon that the fantastic action depicted by the verses cannot happen in reality.

I agree with Delamar who claims that “There’s simple truth, humanity – good and bad, fact and fantasy. ... Children who have been exposed to Mother Goose have learned not only the basics of life, but have had their minds stretched to outer limits.”²⁶⁶

e) Social function

Since the first nursery rhymes are usually told or sung to a baby or a child by an older person, they can contribute to the development of interpersonal relations and communication: “Reading or hearing a nursery rhyme – teaching or learning a nursery rhyme – is a two-way communication. There’s interaction.”²⁶⁷ This is the beginning of his / her integration into society. The child starts to enter into relations with his / her peers and make friends usually by the means of play. The nursery rhymes especially those accompanying such games can support this process towards finding a place in the society.

²⁶¹ Lang 90.

²⁶² Dakin, Pupils’ Book, rhyme 97.

²⁶³ Mary Palmer McDonald, “Rhyme or Reason? A Microscopic View of Nursery Rhymes”. *The Journal of Negro Education*, Summer 1974: Vol. 43, No. 3: 275 – 283. *JSTOR*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2966519>>.

²⁶⁴ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 106.

²⁶⁵ Mills 100.

²⁶⁶ Delamar 21.

²⁶⁷ Delamar 22 – 23.

f) Magic function

Toman describes the magic function “[projevuje se] výraznou aktualizací rytmu, užíváním zaklínacích formulí a výskytem motivů symbolizujících přírodní síly, fantastické bytosti a kouzelné věci.”²⁶⁸ Magic function can be characterized as special, because it is considered to be typical for children’s literature, which is caused by the close interrelation with folklore, where magic has a significant role. It also originates in children’s syncretic approach to language, when they identify the reality with words. Chaloupka writes about the result of this fact: “[Děti věří] v možnost nalézt taková slova, jimiž si člověk nakloní tajemné přírodní síly.”²⁶⁹

We can find these special words also in nursery rhymes, like in “Abracadabra, wizzy woo, / I can fly and so can you.”²⁷⁰, when the speaker believes he / she can make themselves fly by using the magic formula “Abracadabra ...”. Similarly, children attach magic power to counting-out formulas employing extensively sound devices. Iona Opie mentions their effect: “Rhymes and assonance give an almost spell-like authority, ...”²⁷¹.

Magic function is also foregrounded in verses which are associated with customs and charms²⁷², like the one used in the past when churning: “Come, butter, come,”²⁷³. Similar invocations, when the speaker asks the addressed to do something, are directed to animals or natural phenomena, for instance a ladybird in “Ladybird, ladybird, / Fly away home, ...”²⁷⁴, a snail in “Snail, snail, put out your horns ...”²⁷⁵, or rain in “Rain, rain, go away, ...”²⁷⁶. To these rhymes with emphasized magic effect, we can add the rhymes which originate in religious practice. This is the case of a prayer beginning “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, /

²⁶⁸ Toman 48.

²⁶⁹ Chaloupka and Nezkusil, *Vybrané kapitoly z teorie dětské literatury I*, 42.

²⁷⁰ Dakin, *Pupil’s Book*, rhyme 36.

²⁷¹ Iona Opie, “Playground Rhymes and the Oral Tradition”, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1998) 177 – 189: 184.

²⁷² See the encyclopaedia *Lidová kultura*, where the authors describe the character of charms: “zařikávání, [...] - slovní rituál založený na víře v magickou moc slova, jehož smyslem je odčinit nebo napravit nepříznivou nebo nechtěnou situaci...” *Lidová kultura. Národopisná encyklopedie Čech, Moravy a Slezska. 3. svazek*, ed. Stanislav Brouček and Richard Jeřábek (Praha: Mladá fronta, 2007) 1196.

²⁷³ ONRB 75.

²⁷⁴ Mills 32.

²⁷⁵ ONRB 75.

²⁷⁶ *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* 246.

Bless the bed that I lie on ...”²⁷⁷, which is nowadays regarded more as “a night-spell”²⁷⁸.

g) Aesthetic function

In the part defining children’s literature I tried to specify the role of the aesthetic function, which should be regarded as superior to the other functions when literary work is evaluated. We can see from the previous analysis that individual nursery rhymes can have certain functions emphasized but still in general the aesthetic function has an important position.

Aesthetic function should produce a special feeling in the addressee, which is called aesthetic pleasure: “... význačná vlastnost estetické funkce je libost, kterou vyvolává.”²⁷⁹ It can be reached by the distortion of some conventional form, of some existing norm. For children this foregrounding can happen only with respect to their knowledge. In their point of view, the norm can be the normal form of spoken language. It gains aesthetic function, when the language is organized into rhymes with a strong rhythm, with the emphasis on repetition and regularity.

Nursery rhymes can play an important role in children’s development of aesthetic perception, as they represent the form which is later distorted. Hrabák stresses existence of such patterns: “V literárním vývoji se často objevují formy, které se mohou uplatnit jen na pozadí forem starších, neboť je jaksi přehodnocují. Tak např. neúplný rým se plně uplatní jen tehdy, jestliže existuje v povědomí čtenářstva rým úplný nová forma zde přehodnocuje starou tradiční.”²⁸⁰ So the regular form of nursery rhymes is later replaced by other forms of poetry, which further develop children’s appreciation of aesthetic values.

3.2 Intertextual occurrence

The term ‘intertextuality’, which was coined by Julia Kristeva, is defined by Baldick as “the various relationships that a given text may have with other texts”²⁸¹. Texts are not independent units, but they enter a complex system of interrelations, as Lubomír Doležel says: “Literární texty neustále přesahují hranice

²⁷⁷ ONRB 17.

²⁷⁸ NR 358.

²⁷⁹ Mojmir Grygar, *Terminologický slovník českého strukturalismu* (Brno: Host, 1999) 83.

²⁸⁰ Josef Hrabák, *Studie o českém verši* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1959) 328.

²⁸¹ Baldick 128.

individuálních mluvních aktů a vcházejí do složitých přenosových řetězců.”²⁸²

The literary development is viewed as a dynamic process, where the works influence each other. Readers understand a particular text differently depending on their previous experience with other works.

I concentrate on the case of intertextuality when one text is referred or alluded to in another text. The text which is a source for the allusion is called ‘pre-text’, the text using the reference ‘active text’²⁸³. In my work the pre-text becomes a certain nursery rhyme. However, I also mention the type of intertextuality when the source text is not a particular nursery rhyme, but nursery rhymes as a genre, whose form or feature is imitated in another work.

Since nursery rhymes are spread among wide range of people, they are frequently echoed in various contexts: “Any body of literature as popular as the rhymes that comprise nursery or Mother Goose lore, could expect to be copied, parodied, and twisted.”²⁸⁴ In this section I would like to specify various types of intertextual usage of nursery rhymes, making the basic division into literary and non-literary texts. I deal in detail with intertextual occurrence in prose, which I try to demonstrate with concrete examples. For illustration I also give some examples appearing in poetry.

3.2.1 Literary texts

3.2.1.1 Prose

At first I concentrate on three aspects of prosaic works, where the rhymes can be reflected, which are title, plot and characters. In the last part I try to show other possible applications. These categories are not of course independent, but they are interrelated and overlap each other.

a) Title

The first thing which a reader usually focuses on when he encounters a new book is its title. And this can decide about his interest in the work. The title labels the work and gives the first information about it and is usually associated

²⁸² To describe this process Doležel uses the term ‘literární transduke’. Lubomír Doležel, *Kapitoly z dějin strukturální poetiky* (Brno: Host, 2000) 185.

²⁸³ See Tárníková 68.

²⁸⁴ Delamar 253.

with its central theme: “Název [...] dává jakýsi klíč k jeho chápání.”²⁸⁵. To name their work the authors sometimes use allusion, whose source can become a nursery rhyme.

The American author Ken Kesey (1935 – 2001), a follower of Beatniks and a predecessor of Hippies, called his most famous work *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), which is the final line of a modified version of the following counting-out formula:

Charley, barley, buck and rye
What's the way the Frenchmen fly?
Some fly east, and some fly west,
And some fly over the cuckoo's nest.²⁸⁶

Kesey makes the connection even clearer by quoting the ending of the rhyme on the introductory page: “... one flew east, one flew west, / One flew over the cuckoo's nest”²⁸⁷. The central theme of the novel is the conflict between a system and an individual, who does not conform to its rules. This is depicted by the battle which takes place in a mental hospital between a patient, incorrigible troublemaker McMurphy, and dominating ‘Big Nurse’, Miss Ratched, who is “the servant of what is referred to as the “Combine”, or “system”, ...”²⁸⁸. The term combine is used by the narrator Chief Bromden, a huge American-Indian, to describe the unknown force which rules the society, here represented by the oppressive medical institution and embodied in Miss Ratched.

One connection which is offered by the allusion to the nursery rhyme is based on the fact that the phrase ‘cuckoo's nest’ can mean in slang ‘a psychiatric institution’²⁸⁹. Both have negative connotations, both the cuckoo's nest and the mental asylum do not produce a notion of a pleasant place. Faggen describes the effect of the title: “... [it] playfully invites the comparison between the workings of civilization and those of nature.”²⁹⁰, when only the strongest can survive. We can see similarity between the society and cuckoo's behaviour, the society

²⁸⁵ Libor Pavera and František Všetíčka, *Lexikon literárních pojmů* (Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2005) 354.

²⁸⁶ This is a variant of the better-known rhyme starting “Eeny, weeny, winey, wo,...”, NR 186 – 187.

²⁸⁷ Ken Kesey, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962; London: Penguin Books, 2002).

²⁸⁸ Martin Procházka et al, *Lectures on American Literature* (Praha: UK, 2002) 288.

²⁸⁹ Jonathan Green, *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* (1998; London: Cassell, 2004) 299.

²⁹⁰ Robert Faggen, “Introduction”, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962, London: Penguin Books, 2002) ix – xxii: xvi.

outcasting those who are different in the same way as the young cuckoo throws out the other eggs.

However, there is also an obvious connection between the content of the novel and the original function of the words used in the title. This is the final part of the counting-out formula with which a person is chosen as the central player or eliminated from the game. The counting out also takes place in the conflict between McMurphy and the Big Nurse. Miss Ratched represents strict discipline, manipulating the patients into submissiveness and obedience. On the contrary redheaded Mac is a rascal loving wild humour, but foremost he can see in the other patients human beings, who have right to live their own lives with freedom. The rivals cannot exist together in the same ward. One of them has to loose, one of them has to be eliminated, McMurphy or Miss Ratched. And it seems to be the joker McMurphy who is beaten. After attacking the Big Nurse physically, he is sent to the operating table to undergo lobotomy. When he is returned to the ward, the Chief comments on Miss Ratched's act: "she made her last play"²⁹¹ and because he cannot leave "... something like that sit there in the day room with his name tacked on it for twenty or thirty years so the Big Nurse could use it as an example of what can happen if you buck the system."²⁹², Bromden suffocates that something. Mac dies, his body is eliminated from this world but his intellectual legacy lasts, the other patients becoming less submissive and the Chief running away. The light-heartedness of children's game referred to in the title is in contrast to the seriousness of the conflict between the two protagonists.

A year after Kesey's work, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s (1922 – 2007) novel warning against the misuse of science was published under the title *Cat's Cradle* (1963). This postmodernist novel shows how a scientific invention, here substance called 'ice-nine', can turn against its creator and cause the end of the world. The whole novel is based on mystification, on the play with the notion of reality, the author creating a fictional island republic of San Lorenzo with its own special religion Bokononism. Vonnegut used references to existing events and works and at the same time quoted fictional books, mainly *The Books of Bokonon*. The author admits the novel is based on fiction, opening the novel with the sentence: "Nothing in this book is true". And to support his statement he adds a quote from

²⁹¹ Kesey 277.

²⁹² Kesey 278.

The Books of Bokkonon: “Live by the foma that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy.” Foma, meaning “harmless untruths”²⁹³ is one of many words Vonnegut coined for San Lorenzo religion.

However, the narrator, journalist John, presents the book as his own experience, appearing as a reliable source. At the beginning he explains that he planned to write a book about the day when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, “The book was to be factual”²⁹⁴. When collecting the material for it, he writes to the children of the bomb inventor Felix Hoenikker, who is already dead. The title of the novel is related to the experience which is described by Newt, Hoenikker’s youngest son. He remembers how on the day when the bomb was dropped his father was playing with a string, making a string figure from it called ‘cat’s cradle’. Then he came to little Newt and tried to play with him, showing him the cat’s cradle and singing: “Rockabye catsy, in the tree top”, [...], “when the wind blows, the cray-dull will rock. If the bough breaks, the cray-dull will fall. Down will come cray-dull, catsy, and all.”²⁹⁵, which is a modified version of “the best known lullaby both in England and America, ...”²⁹⁶ about a cradle falling down with a baby. The scientist’s attempt terrified the young boy, as Newt was not used to seeing his father’s unpleasant features from such a close distance. Besides, the spelling of ‘cray-dull’, which contains the word ‘dull’ with a negative connotation, instead of cradle indicates a distorted recitation and maybe Hoenikker’s approach to his environment. This event illustrates the character of Hoenikker, who is not interested in anything else except his work, even not in his own children. Newt says that his father had never played with him and hardly ever spoken to him. And just on the day when Hoenikker’s terrible invention is used, he tries to play with his little son, which has an absurd effect “... , emphasizing the distance between the scientist and his creation: Felix is playing a game while thousands are killed”²⁹⁷. The great scientist regards the surrounding world including people to be only an instrument for his play. The novel can be

²⁹³ Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Cat’s Cradle* (London: Penguin Books, s. a.) 6.

²⁹⁴ Vonnegut 7.

²⁹⁵ Vonnegut 13.

²⁹⁶ The words of the lullaby are: “Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree top, / When the wind blows the cradle will rock; / When the bough breaks the cradle will fall, / Down will come baby, cradle, and all.” NR 70.

²⁹⁷ Tracy M. Caldwell, “Literary Contexts in Novels: Kurt Vonnegut Jr.’s *Cat’s Cradle*” (Great Neck Publishing, 2006) *EBSCO*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 13 Mar 2008 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=18908216&site=lrc-live>>.

interpreted as a warning against scientific research without considering its negative consequences.

Another example of a work referring to a nursery rhyme with its title is a novel by Robert Penn Warren (1905 – 1989) called *All the King's Men* (1946). For this work the author, who is an important representative of New Criticism, received the Pulitzer Prize. The novel depicts steep ascent of William Stark, starting as an insignificant regional politician and finally becoming a feared governor, whose power is based on corruption and intimidation. To gain his popularity he appeals to poor people, at first with honest intentions but later it becomes rather a useful pose, as Hilský writes: “demagogicky se staví do role mesiáše chudých a zastánce utiskovaných, ...”²⁹⁸. For writing this work, Warren was inspired by a real person of Huey Long, a Louisiana governor, who also made advantage of his popularity among the poor citizens.

There exist two levels for interpretation of the title. One is directed outside the novel, to the source of reference which is the famous rhyme about ‘Humpty Dumpty’. By calling his novel *All the King's Men*, Warren creates a parallel between the life of Willie Stark and the fate of nursery figure ‘Humpty Dumpty’, who falls from a high place and can’t be put together by “all the king’s men”²⁹⁹. The nursery rhyme is traditionally regarded as a warning against excessive pride, which is sure to be followed by a “great fall”³⁰⁰. Reaching the high position, William Stark is intoxicated with power and carries out his plans without scruples. Finally he loses control of the situation, when he is shot by Doctor Adam Stanton, who cannot accept the governor’s love affair with his sister. Similarly to Humpty Dumpty, Stark’s life ends in a great fall without possibility of remedy.

The other explanation of the title can be found inside the text. The novel also describes those who help Stark to win the election and to maintain his power, among them the narrator Jack Burden. For idealism or fear, or since they are bribed these people fulfil the governor’s tasks, thus becoming his men, “all the king’s men”.

There are more cases, when the authors take the nursery rhyme cannon as a source for the title of their works, for example A. J. Cronin called his novel

²⁹⁸ Martin Hilský, “Doslov”, *Všichni jsou zbrojnoši královi*, by Robert Penn Warren, trans. A. J. Šťastný (Praha: Odeon, 1977) 581 – 589: 582.

²⁹⁹ NR 252.

³⁰⁰ NR 252.

A Song of Sixpence (1964) and its sequel *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1969) after the rhyme “Sing a song of sixpence”³⁰¹, Ellery Queen wrote novel *There was an Old Woman* (1943) inspired by the verses “There was an old woman who lived in a shoe”³⁰², Chester Himes referred in the title of his novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) to the counting-out formula “Eena, meena, mina, mo, ...”³⁰³, Rudyard Kipling wrote a short story “Georgie Porgie”, which alludes to “Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie, ...”³⁰⁴, and Agatha Christie, discussed below, used nursery rhymes in her titles more times.

b) Plot

The intertextual use of nursery rhymes for constructing plot is attractive for the writers of detective stories. This method was applied several times by the English author Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976), who became famous for her detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. In some of her works the murderer uses a nursery rhyme as a pattern for his crime, for instance in the novel *Nigger Island* (1939), later modified and published under the title *And Then There Were None*³⁰⁵, and in *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953). In other cases the detective recollects a certain nursery rhyme because of the circumstances accompanying the murder and the investigation, as in *One, Two, Buckle my Shoe* (1940), *Five Little Pigs* (1942), or *Hickory Dickory Dock* (1955). In the short-story “Three Blind Mice” (1950), which has also a version for the stage called *The Mousetrap* (1952)³⁰⁶, the nursery song “Three blind mice, see how they run! ...”³⁰⁷ is employed by the murderer as a recurring background motif.

I would like to analyse the application of a nursery rhyme in the detective novel *And Then There Were None*³⁰⁸, whose plot is based on the variation of the

³⁰¹ NR 470.

³⁰² NR 522.

³⁰³ NR 184.

³⁰⁴ NR 217.

³⁰⁵ In 1940 the book was published in the USA as *Indian Island*.

³⁰⁶ *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture* writes about this play: “... a mystery play [...] which has been running continuously in West End of London since its first performance in 1952. No other play has ever been performed for so long anywhere in the world.” *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, ed. Jonathan Crowther (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 358.

³⁰⁷ NR 360 – 361. The same nursery rhyme is used in the title of Ed McBain’s detective novel *Three Blind Mice* (1990).

³⁰⁸ Agatha Christie, *And Then There Were None* (1939; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007)

rhyme “Ten little nigger boys went out to dine; ...”³⁰⁹ quoted on the introductory page:

Ten little soldier boys went out to dine;
One choked his little self and then there were Nine.

Nine little soldier boys sat up very late;
One overslept himself and then there were Eight.

[...]

One little soldier boy left all alone;
He went and hanged himself

And then there were None.

Frank Green, 1896³¹⁰

The story takes place on a lonely island with the symptomatic name ‘Soldier Island’. There is only one house on it, where a group of ten people meet, believing they are going to spend a pleasant time there. The only one who knows the truth is judge Lawrence Wargrave, the prospective murderer. Wargrave has a strong sense of justice and at the same time an irresistible urge to commit a murder, and not a common one but a chain of perfect homicides. When a doctor tells him that he is terminally ill, it appears to be the right moment to satisfy both his inclinations. He resolves to find ten people who are responsible for a crime, but it is not possible to prove their guilt at court, and to take justice into his own hands. When planning the murders, the judge recollects children’s verses: “A childish rhyme of my infancy came back into my mind – the rhyme of ten little soldier boys. It had fascinated me as a child of two – the inexplicable diminishment – the sense of inevitability.”³¹¹ Wargrave decides to use the verses as a guideline for his ghastly plan, which is to be carried out on Soldier Island. To amplify the effect of his act, he prepares the scene with special care, placing in each bedroom a piece of paper with the text of the child rhyme and on the round table in the dining room ten little china figures of soldier boys. Choosing his victims, the judge invites them under various pretences to the island, pretending to

³⁰⁹ NR 386 – 387.

³¹⁰ Christie, *And Then There Were None*, 9.

³¹¹ Christie, *And Then There Were None* 304 – 305.

have been invited himself. All of them expect the arrival of their hosts, but they never come, because they actually do not exist.

In the evening the ten people have to listen to a record which accuses each, including the judge, of a homicide. It is followed by confusion and much speculation of its origin. This is ended by the first murder, whose victim is the young man Marston, choked with poisoned whisky, which resembles the death of the first soldier boy. In the same way the other murders reflect the tragic ends of the nursery soldiers. Each homicidal act is accompanied by vanishing of one china figure, supporting the atmosphere of fear. Wargrave pretends to be the sixth victim in accordance with the sixth stanza of the rhyme: “Five little soldier boys going in for law; / One got in Chancery and then there were Four.”³¹², making himself able to complete his plan. After his last victim Vera Claythorne hangs herself, the judge commits suicide.

The characters gradually realize the inevitability of their fate, which can be illustrated by General Macarthur’s words: “None of us will ever leave ...”³¹³. The more murders are committed, the more there is suspicion and tension among the people who are left alive. The situation becomes unbearable for the involuntary participants, who regard the homicides to be an act of a mad person, as Vera says: “It’s all mad! The whole thing of going by the rhyme is mad! [...] It’s like some horrible child playing a game.”³¹⁴ The connection of the rhyme and the murders intensifies the callousness of its creator, which is mentioned by one of the victims: “He’s a playful beast. Likes to stick to his damnable nursery jingle as closely as possible.”³¹⁵ The judge really plays with his victims, exposing them to a psychological pressure. The innocent nursery rhyme is turned into a homicidal instrument. Wargrave, who considers his plan to be ingenious, takes the role of a merciless executor. Although in the letter he leaves after himself, Wargrave emphasizes that all his victims were guilty of a murder, it cannot diminish the cruelty of his act.

Similarly, various nursery rhymes provided an inspiration for the murderer in *The Bishop Murder Case* (1928) by S. S. Van Dine (1888 – 1939). The story describes a sequence of four finished and one attempted murder, all associated

³¹² Christie, *And Then There Were None*, 9.

³¹³ Christie, *And Then There Were None*, 114.

³¹⁴ Christie, *And Then There Were None*, 264 – 265.

³¹⁵ Christie, *And Then There Were None*, 215.

with some nursery rhyme. The first person who dies is Joseph Cochrane Robin, nicknamed 'Cock Robin' and seems to be killed with a bow and arrow like his bird namesake in the rhyme "Who killed Cock Robin?"³¹⁶. The second is John E. Sprigg shot at the top of his head like the nursery John Sprig who was shot "thro' the middle of his wig, ..." ³¹⁷. The third victim the hunchback Drukker, who is called by his child friends Humpty Dumpty after the famous nursery figure³¹⁸, is found dead at the foot of a wall, the fourth John Pardee lying shot on the table, where there is a house build from cards, which reminds the rhyme "This is the house that Jack built ..." ³¹⁹. The last victim should be a little girl called Madeleine Moffat, and she should die in accordance with the verses about "Little Miss Muffet"³²⁰, but fortunately she is saved before she suffocates in a locked closet.

All the crimes happen in the neighbourhood of Professor Dillard's house, a meeting place of mathematicians. The murders are carried out with precision and without an obvious motive. It seems that their author commits them only for his entertainment. Detective Vance who is trying to solve the murders calls them "devilish parody"³²¹. He is persuaded that the murderer is a man with a brilliant mind who becomes detached from the surrounding world leading "a life of tense abstract speculation and emotional repression."³²². Such person can regard the common life as a trifle and the other human beings as unimportant, "... as if he were saying cynically: 'Behold! This is the world that you take so seriously because you know nothing of the infinitely larger abstract world. Life on earth is a child's game – hardly important enough to make a joke about.'" ³²³ Unfortunately, the person makes a joke, as he amuses himself by committing the nursery murders. Vance sees it as an outlet of repressed emotions, which takes the form of an infantile play: "... the most serious and dignified will seek an outlet in the most childish games."³²⁴ And as it is revealed at the end, the murderer is really a

³¹⁶ NR 151.

³¹⁷ NR 340.

³¹⁸ NR 252.

³¹⁹ NR 269 – 270.

³²⁰ NR 382.

³²¹ S. S. Van Dine, *The Bishop Murder Case* (1928). Chapter VIII, Act two. *Project Gutenberg*. 13 Jun 2009 <<http://www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200241.txt>>.

³²² Van Dine, Chapter XXI.

³²³ Van Dine, Chapter XXI.

³²⁴ Van Dine, Chapter XXI.

respectable man, old Professor Dillard, who out of jealousy wants to put the blame on his young colleague.

Similarly to Christie's novel, the children's verses become the background of heartless crimes, here even more dreadful, as the murderer kills innocent people. The connection of a child's game and a homicide has a terrible effect: "There was something unutterably horrible in the juxtaposition of this juvenile card structure and violent death."³²⁵ The murderer takes the other human being only as figures for his play.

c) Characters

Some literary works offer comparison between their characters and nursery figures, by paralleling their fate, like that of Humpty Dumpty and Willie Stark discussed above. The connection can be emphasized by the names of protagonists resembling the nursery characters, as we have seen in *The Bishop Murder Case*.

However, sometimes the relation between characters is not only based on comparison, metaphor or parallel, as nursery figures can enter the world of other works directly. This happens for example in the story for children by Maggie Browne (1867 – 1932) whose title is *Wanted – A King* (1890). The frame of the story is created by the scene of a girl Merle lying ill in bed and watching a screen with pictures of the nursery rhymes. When she falls asleep, in her dream she gets into the Nurseryland, Endom. On her journey around this land she meets various characters from nursery rhymes. These explain to her that Endom is ruled by cruel Grunter Grim, who has caused confusion of nursery rhymes wording and spread them among people. The nursery figures claim that the rhymes which Merle knows, and which are also familiar to the reader, are not correct. The rhyme characters complain that they have to behave as the verses say and undergo unpleasant situations, for example the girl encounters an old woman from the rhyme "There was an old woman who lived in a shoe."³²⁶, who has to give her children broth for dinner and then whip "them all soundly"³²⁷. Whenever the girl meets a new nursery figure, she recalls the corresponding verses. The unhappy rhymes ask Merle to save the Nurseland, which she can do by finding a new king.

³²⁵ Van Dine, Chapter XXII.

³²⁶ Maggie Browne, *Wanted – A King* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890) 28. 13 Jun 2009 <<http://www.archive.org/stream/wantedakingorhow00brow#page/n7/mode/2up>>.

³²⁷ NR 522.

This has to be only the most content child, who is, as Merle finally discovers, ‘Baby Bunting’ from the lullaby “Bye, baby bunting”³²⁸. The author based the whole story on nursery rhymes, expecting the child reader to reveal the individual verses together with the little girl, and so to be actively involved in the story.

Browne followed with Merle’s story her more famous predecessor Lewis Carroll (1832 – 1898), the author of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872). In comparison to Browne’s story Carroll’s works appear more complex, being based on ingenious play with language and meaning and not offering an overt moral. *Wanted: A King* bears a more explicit message, since Merle is given a clear task, that is to return order to the Nurseland and she is told to “Defy, Deride, Desist, Deny, / Heed not growl, or scowl or sigh.”³²⁹. On the contrary Alice wanders around ‘Wonderland’ without any special aim. She is not assigned with the role of a heroine who should fight against evil, she is there to explore the strange and fantastic world. This fact contributes to the overall character of the work, which is humorous and entertaining, providing a boundless play with imagination.

On her journey around ‘Wonderland’ Alice is lead by a child’s curiosity and desire for knowledge. In this land, where everything is possible, she experiences extraordinary adventures, growing big and shrinking small again in a moment, or her neck getting long like a telescope. She also meets various strange figures, among them the nursery ‘King and Queen of Hearts’³³⁰, who rule ‘Wonderland’. At the end of the story Alice takes part in a trial, where the rhyme is recited as an accusation:

The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
All on a summer day:
The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,
And took them quite away!³³¹

The trial, as everything else in ‘Wonderland’, goes on according to twisted rules, Queen insisting on “Sentence first – verdict afterwards”³³². When Alice is threatened with execution, the queen and the king, and their subjects change into

³²⁸ NR 71.

³²⁹ Browne 92.

³³⁰ NR 427.

³³¹ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865; London: Penguin Books, 1994) 131.

³³² Carroll 145.

ordinary cards which fly upon her. At that moment the little girl wakes up on the lap of her grown-up sister.

Carroll also includes nursery figures in *Through the Looking Glass* describing Alice's adventures in the world behind the mirror, where Alice meets for example Tweedledum and Tweedledee³³³, or Humpty Dumpty. The writer uses the nursery characters because they are familiar to children and they can easily enter children's imagination and their dreams. They can also remind the adult readers of their childhood. At the same time the nursery characters perfectly fit the absurd world Carroll creates. It is the world full of curious creatures and speaking animals. It is the world where croquet is played with flamingos and hedgehogs and a baby can turn into a piglet. The Czech translator of Alice's adventures Skoumal describes them with these words: "... v obou Alenčiných příbězích je plno nesmyslu, plno šibalství, plno legrace."³³⁴ And it is really nonsense and humour which is the main feature of Carroll's works.

d) Other references

Besides the preceding categories, there appear other applications of nursery rhymes with various functions.

Having dealt with nursery characters entering Carroll's work in the previous part, I cannot avoid to mention one more rhyme referred to in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and that is "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, ..." by Jane Taylor, whose first stanza is this:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.³³⁵

It was parodied by Carroll in the following way:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at!
Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.

³³³ These are characters of a nonsense rhyme, who are preparing to fight with each other when "a monstrous crow" frightens them. NR 501.

³³⁴ Aloys Skoumal, "O autorovi Alenčiných dobrodružných příběhů", *Alenka v kraji divů a za zrcadlem*, by Lewis Carroll, trans. Aloys a Hana Skoumalovi (Praha: Albatros, 1983) 160.

³³⁵ NR 474.

Twinkle, twinkle – ”³³⁶

When Hatter is singing this song at ‘a mad tea party’, he asks Alice if she knows it. To which Alice answers: “I’ve heard something like it, ...”³³⁷. As a little English girl she is sure to have heard the nursery rhyme about the twinkling star and so Hatter’s song seems familiar to her.

Carroll’s famous version is based on the reader’s knowledge of the former rhyme, as it contributes to the comic effect. The person who knows Taylor’s song expects that the first line of Hatter’s song will end with ‘star’. However, this expectation is broken as Carroll replaces the original word with ‘bat’. By this the song gains much more ordinary and less poetic theme. ‘Star’ has a very positive and noble connotation, giving light and showing the way, and it is compared to a precious stone in Taylor’s version. On the other hand ‘bat’ is traditionally associated with negative meaning³³⁸, as it is an animal of night. Besides, the comparison between ‘a bat’ and ‘a tea-tray’ does not seem quite appropriate and sounds funny. The comic tone is intensified by the speaker’s question about the bat’s intention. The originally serious verses become playful and humorous by Carroll’s modification.

Both Taylor’s original and Carroll’s parody were further used by Kurt Vonnegut in *Cat’s Cradle*:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Shining in the sky so bright,
Like a tea tray in the night,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.³³⁹

By connecting the two versions, Vonnegut creates a new one, where the star is compared to a tea tray. It’s typical for Vonnegut’s work that he plays with texts and that the rhyme is presented, as if it were an existing piece, when the narrator

³³⁶ Carroll 85 – 86.

³³⁷ Carroll 86.

³³⁸ This can be illustrated by phrases, where ‘bat’ is used: ‘blind as a bat’ (not able to see well), ‘have bats in the belfry’ (to act crazily), ‘old bat’ (an unattractive old woman). See Green, *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang*.

³³⁹ Vonnegut 71.

calls it an “immortal poem”³⁴⁰. John mentions that it was included in the book about San Lorenzo to illustrate its dialect, where the poem would go like this:

Tsvent-kiul, tsvent-kiul, lett-pool store,
Ko jy tsvantoor bat voo yore.
Put-shinik on lo shee zo brath,
Kam oon teetron on lo nath,
Tsvent-kiul, tsvent-kiul, lett-pool store,
Ko jy tsvantoor bat voo yore.³⁴¹

This should be the phonetic demonstration of San Lorenzo dialect, the rhyme is applied here with practical function to show the difference. Its inclusion adds to the elaborate image of the fictional republic. Besides, the distorted version contains the word ‘bat’, which could be a playful reminder of Carroll’s parody.

As we could see in the preceding text, it is common that nursery rhymes or references to them appear in children’s literature. This is also the case of several works written by Beatrix Potter (1866 – 1943), among them *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903). In this story squirrel family go to an island to collect nuts, always bringing an offering to an owl Old Brown living there in a hollow oak tree³⁴². All the squirrels approach the owl with respect, except cheeky Nutkin, who tries to provoke him with riddles, which are well-known nursery rhymes or their variations. These are somehow associated with the situation. For instance, when the squirrels bring the present of six beetles, “which were as good as plums in *plum-pudding*”³⁴³, Nutkin begins to recite the riddle: “Old Mr. B! riddle-me-ree, Flour of England, fruit of Spain, ...”³⁴⁴, for which *plum-pudding*³⁴⁵ is the answer. Nutkin does not expect the owl to solve his riddles, he employs them rather to annoy the old bird. However, Old Brown seems to be undisturbed by the young squirrel’s impertinence until Nutkin jumps onto his head imitating the wind from the riddle “Arthur O’Bower has broken his band, / He comes roaring up the land! ...”³⁴⁶. Nutkin is punished for his impudence by losing his tale, being lucky enough not to lose his life. Nursery rhymes are applied in this tale as a means of

³⁴⁰ Vonnegut 71.

³⁴¹ Vonnegut 71.

³⁴² This could be an echo of the rhyme beginning “A wise old owl lived in an oak;” NR 403.

³⁴³ Beatrix Potter, *Squirrel Nutkin* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1903). *The Project Gutenberg*. 20 Aug 2009 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/14782>>.

³⁴⁴ Potter.

³⁴⁵ NR 190.

³⁴⁶ Potter, NR 64.

communication, which should irritate the addressee. They also contribute to the gradation of the story.

A modified nursery rhyme which appears in the last book of *The Forsythe Saga* (1921), called *To Let* (1921), by John Galsworthy (1867 - 1933) has a similar function. One of the main characters, Fleur recites to her lover the following verses, which are based on the rhyme “Tom, Tom, the piper’s son, ...”³⁴⁷, where she only changes the name and father’s job:

Jon, Jon, the farmer’s son,
Stole a pig, and away he run!³⁴⁸

Fleur uses the rhyme to tease the man, who wants to become a farmer.

Another example of an allusion to a nursery rhyme can be found in the first part of the famous fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (1954 – 55) by J. R. R. Tolkien (1882 – 1973), which is called *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954). During their journey across Middle-Earth, Frodo and his friends arrive to the village of Bree, where they decide to stay overnight in the inn called ‘The Prancing Pony’. When one of them entertains the other guests with stories from their homeland Shire, Frodo, being afraid he could disclose the purpose of their journey and mention the ring, tries to attract the attention to himself by singing a song. The first piece coming to his mind is “rather a ridiculous song”³⁴⁹. Frodo says that it is the favourite one of Bilbo, who made up its words. The song is a playful expansion of the famous nonsense rhyme “Hey diddle diddle”³⁵⁰, using the individual lines to make a story of thirteen stanzas. It is about an inn, where they have such good beer that even ‘the Man in the Moon’, which is a character from other nonsense rhymes³⁵¹, comes there for a drink one night. There the ostler

³⁴⁷ NR 493.

³⁴⁸ John Galsworthy, *The Forsythe Saga* (1922; Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004) 546.

³⁴⁹ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings. Part I. The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001) 209.

³⁵⁰ NR 240, see above.

³⁵¹ In NR there are three rhymes about ‘the Man in the Moon’: one is a mocking rhyme describing the man in the moon as a foolish drinker of wine: “The man in the moon drinks claret, / But he is a dull jack-a-dandy; / Would he know a sheep’s head from a carrot / He should learn to drink cider and brandy.” NR 348, next, also mocking, goes like this: “The man in the moon, / Came down too soon, / And asked his way to Norwich; / He went by the south, / And burnt his mouth / With supping cold plum porridge.” NR 346, and the last is about the man, who is in the moon for punishment: “The Man in the Moon was caught in a trap / For stealing the thorns from another man’s gap. / If he had gone by, and let the thorns lie, / He’d never been Man in the Moon so high.” NR 349. In *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang* we can find that ‘man in the moon’ means ‘a fool, an eccentric’, or that in the nineteenth century it was used about ‘the person, necessarily anonymous and quick to disappear, who pays out bribes at elections’, Green 769.

owns a cat playing fiddle and the landlord keeps a dog “that is mighty fond of jokes”³⁵². They also have a cow and “the rows of silver dishes and the store of silver spoons!”³⁵³. ‘The Man in the Moon’ gets drunk and falls asleep. When the day is coming, the cat plays “hey-diddle-diddle”³⁵⁴ to wake him up. The last but one stanza describes the bedlam which breaks out, strikingly resembling the nursery rhyme:

With a ping and a pong the fiddle strings broke!
the cow jumped over the Moon,
And the little dog laughed to see such fun,
And the Saturday dish went off at a run
with the silver Sunday spoon.³⁵⁵

Although Frodo feels awkward at first, he is successful with his performance, receiving a long applause from his audience, as the song “tickled their fancy”³⁵⁶. Pleased with his success, Frodo repeats the song, leaping at the words about the jumping cow. This turns out to be an incautious act, since he is playing with the ring and disappears for a while. The original intention of Frodo to conceal information is not fulfilled, as he himself loses control of the situation, being enraptured by the song. Here the nursery rhyme serves as the basis for the song with entertaining function, which also influences the further development of the story.

An allusion with a more serious function appears in the novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) by Ernest Hemingway (1899 – 1961), which is set in World War I. During the tedious retreat from the front-line, the main character, an American volunteer serving in the Italian army, is falling asleep in the car when these words come to his semi-conscious mind: “In bed I lay me down my head. Bed and board. Stiff as a board in bed. Catherine was in bed now between two sheets, [...] Blow, blow, ye western wind. [...] Christ, that my love were in my arms and I in my bed again ...”³⁵⁷ Half-asleep and half-awake, the exhausted man recollects the rhyme from his childhood, which is the beginning of a child prayer “Now I lay me

³⁵² Tolkien 209.

³⁵³ Tolkien 210.

³⁵⁴ Tolkien 210.

³⁵⁵ Tolkien 211.

³⁵⁶ Tolkien 211.

³⁵⁷ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (London: Campbell, 1993) 179 – 180.

down to sleep, ...”³⁵⁸. This is interwoven with words from other verses³⁵⁹ by the means of association. Remembering the childhood and the other verses, he wishes to be in safety, being close to his love and resting comfortably.

Besides the given examples, there are many other authors who employ nursery rhymes in their works, for instance Aldous Huxley refers to children’s verses in *Brave New World* (1932) to “stress the social infantilism, and serve a satiric purpose for the perceptive reader”³⁶⁰, James Joyce includes allusions to nursery rhymes both in *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939), working with archetypes³⁶¹, Virginia Woolf uses a line from “Sing a Song of Sixpence” as a recurring motif in *Between the Acts* (1941).

3.2.1.2 Poetry

Poetry can become a part of a prosaic work, which happened in some examples analyzed above. I tried to show the relation of the verses to the surrounding text. In this section I would like to mention some examples of intertextual usage of nursery rhymes in poetry.

a) Children’s poetry

It is natural that many authors of children’s poetry were inspired by nursery rhymes. And it is not rare that later their verses become included into the nursery rhyme cannon, which is for example the case of already mentioned Lear and Carroll. To them we can add A. A. Milne (1882 – 1956), who became famous by creating the popular bear figure ‘Winnie-the-Pooh’. The rhymes included in the stories and also published independently often have the character of nursery rhymes, which can be illustrated by the following verses:

What is the matter with Mary Jane?

³⁵⁸ The prayer goes like this: “Now I lay me down to sleep, / I pray the Lord my soul to keep; / And if I die before I wake, / I pray the Lord my soul to take.” NR 26.

³⁵⁹ See “Notes” in Hemingway 309.

³⁶⁰ Peter M. Larsen, “Synthetic Myths in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*”, *English Studies* Dec 81, Vol. 62 Issue 6: 506 – 508: 507. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 13 Mar 2008

<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=7904806&site=lrc-live>>.

³⁶¹ For analysis of nursery rhymes in Joyce’s work see Mabel P. Worthington, “Nursery Rhymes in *Finnegans Wake*”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 70, No. 275 (Jan. – Mar., 1975) 37 – 48. JSTOR. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/536500>>.

She's crying with all her might and main,
And she won't eat her dinner – rice and pudding again –
What is the matter with Mary Jane?³⁶²

The rhyme is the same for all the lines and the structure uses repetition, the first line being repeated as the last.

Other authors preserve the form of nursery rhymes, making the content more contemporary, for example Spike Milligan writes about a worm who would like to watch television:

Today I saw a little worm
Wriggling on his belly.
Perhaps he'd like to come inside
And see what's on the Telly.³⁶³

b) Poetry for adults

Foremost, the nursery rhymes represent a good tool for parody: “Nursery rhymes in particular have frequently been used for purposes of literary parody.”³⁶⁴, when a kind of nursery rhyme is composed by imitating the style of a particular author. For example the contemporary poet Wendy Cope (1945) wrote “A Nursery Rhyme” with the subtitle “as it might have been written by William Wordsworth”. The poem, which the narrator presents as his own distant memory, is based on the children’s verses beginning “Baa, baa, black sheep, / Have you any wool? ...”³⁶⁵. It is expanded into four stanzas in blank verse rhyming regularly *abab*. Similarly to Wordsworth’s style, it is opened with a lyrical description of a country scene, using a poetic language. Its peace is broken by bleating of “The blackest thing that ever wore a fleece”, the third stanza going on like this:

I walked towards him on the stony track
And, pausing for a while between two crags,
I asked him, ‘Have you any wool upon your back?’

³⁶² A.A. Milne, *A World of Winnie-the-Pooh* (London: Egmont Books, 2001) 128.

³⁶³ *Mini Beasties*, ed. Michael Rosen (London: Puffin Books, 1993) 19.

³⁶⁴ Joseph C. Hickerson and Alan Dundes, “Mother Goose Vice Versa”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Jul. – Sep. 1962: Vol. 75, No. 297, “Symposium on Obscenity in Folklore”: 249 – 259: 258. *JSTOR*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/537726>>.

³⁶⁵ The nursery rhyme continues like this: “...Yes, sir, yes, sir, / Three bags full; / One for the master, / And one for the dame, / And one for the little boy / Who lives down the lane.” NR 101.

Thus he bespake, 'Enough to fill three bags.'³⁶⁶

Nursery rhymes are not only employed for parody, but they are also applied by some authors in their poetry to contribute to its meaning. For instance the means of nursery rhymes are used by Theodore Roethke (1908 – 1963) in the verses returning to his childhood: "... protože se ve své poezii programově vracel do dětství, nechybí ohlasy říkanek ani v jeho vlastních verších."³⁶⁷ Among Roethke's verses influenced by nursery rhymes we can find the poetic sequence "Where Knock is Open Wide" included in *Praise to the End!* (1951). This consists of reminiscences of Roethke's childhood intermingled with his thoughts about serious life issues. The first stanza has a simple rhythmic structure, containing nursery vocabulary 'kitten', 'Papa' and 'Mamma', but not a usual content:

A kitten can
Bite with his feet
Papa and Mamma
Have more teeth.³⁶⁸

It indicates the character of the whole poem, which besides others expresses the author's ambivalent relationship to his father. A recurrent motive of the poem becomes fishing, as Roethke recollects going fishing with his father, but also uses it as a metaphor for escape from his life: "Fish me out". Nursery rhymes are further reflected, for example by "Sing me a sleep-song, ...", "There was a mooly man ...", by alliteration "Winkie will ...", or by repetition "Water birds went ching. Went ching." The light-heartedness of children's verses form is in contrast with the seriousness of the poem's content, whose ending is quite hopeless:

Maybe God has a house.
But not here.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ Wendy Cope, "A Nursery Rhyme, as it might have been written by William Wordsworth", *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (London: Faber and Faber 1986). *Literature Online*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008

<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:po:Z300565100:3>.

³⁶⁷ Josef Jařab. "Dnešní americká poezie a současní američtí básníci", *Dítě na skleníku* (Praha: Odeon, 1989) 7 – 25: 9.

³⁶⁸ Theodore Roethke, "Where Knock is Open Wide", *Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (Anchor Books, 1975). *Literature Online*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 29 Oct 2008

<http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=Z400209415&divLevel=4&queryId=../session/1225279251_19056&trailId=11CADD6D965&area=Poetry&forward=textsFT&warn=Yes&size=6Kb>

³⁶⁹ Roethke.

Children's verses are also echoed in the poem by Jackie Kay (1961) called "The Underground Baby Case", which is presented as a personal account of a woman who takes care of a baby left in the underground, not wanting to return him to his mother. She describes how she soothed and entertained the baby, using the phrases from the nursery rhymes "sing the song sixpence"³⁷⁰ and "King's Horses"³⁷¹, the onomatopoeic words 'puff puff'³⁷² and nonsense lullaby words:

[...]

I said There there mummy's here.

Don't worry about a thing.

And then I started to sing the song sixpence,
and the song diamond ring.

Ali bali ali bali be ali bali ali bali be.

[...]

I'm trying to remember:

Little Red. Puff puff. King's Horses.³⁷³

Here, the application of nursery references is based on their primary function. The behaviour of the woman, the attachment to a strange child, is explained by the last stanza, where the woman recollects her own daughter dying, using these words to depict the burial: "... the earth later, soft as a robin's breast, / eating my tiny baby up."³⁷⁴ The positive description of ground is in contrast to its role, which is to cover the baby. The whole poem expresses the disability to accept the tragic loss.

With the preceding examples, I have tried to illustrate some applications of nursery rhymes in poetry, where they can be used as a means of parody, their simple form can contrast the seriousness of a theme, or they can develop the content of a poem. The numerous uses of children's verses confirms the special role they have in literature, as Delamar writes: "The wide range of uses, misuses,

³⁷⁰ See the nursery rhyme "Sing a song of sixpence", NR 470.

³⁷¹ See "Humpty Dumpty", NR 252.

³⁷² 'Puff, puff, puff' appears in the nursery rhyme beginning "Jeremiah, blow the fire, ...", NR 286.

³⁷³ Jackie Kay, "The Underground Baby Case", *Setkání na Welwyn Street – Encounters on Welwyn Street*, ed. and trans. Jitka Herynková (Olomouc: Votobia, 1996) 128 – 137: 128 – 129.

³⁷⁴ Jackie 136.

abuses, distortions, parodies, and such to which Mother Goose verses have been subjected only points up the large place they hold in the world of literature.”³⁷⁵

3.2.2 Non-literary

The authors of the article “Mother Goose Vice Versa” write that “Mother Goose does indeed thrive in American oral tradition, especially in the form of parody”³⁷⁶, demonstrating it on the samples they have collected, among them the following verses:

Hickory dickory dock,
Three mice ran up the clock.
The clock struck one.
And two ran down.³⁷⁷

It is common that there are verses using the form of nursery rhymes for a special addressee, situation or event, like the “Contribution towards nursery rhymes (for use of infant students in new school of dramatic arts)”:

‘Tis the voice of the Prompter,
I hear him quite plain;
He has prompted me twice,
Let him prompt me again.³⁷⁸

Besides numerous modifications of rhymes, there appear various humorous interpretations in magazines or newspapers, which are sometimes presented as serious. For example the article called “Subversive Nature of Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes”³⁷⁹ deals with the FBI’s list of fairy tales and nursery rhymes not complying with federal regulations.

Sometimes a phrase from a nursery rhyme can enter language, for instance the phrase “Three Blind Mice” is used in sport as a derogatory phrase for

³⁷⁵ Delamar 272.

³⁷⁶ Hickerson 249.

³⁷⁷ Hickerson 251.

³⁷⁸ “Contribution towards Nursery Rhymes”, *Punch, or the London Charivari*, Nov. 7 1891: Vol. 101, reprint 2006: 15. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 13 Mar 2008 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=22334299&site=lrc-live>>.

³⁷⁹ R. L. Conder, “Subversive Nature of Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes”, *National Review*, 31 Aug 1979: Vol. 31, Issue 35: 1087. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 13 Mar 2008 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=6078107&site=lrc-live>>.

referees³⁸⁰, or “yes-sir-no-sir-three-bags-full-sir” from the rhyme “Baa, baa, black sheep, ...” is “aimed at someone who seems incapable of challenge any form of authority”³⁸¹. The latter rhyme has also found a place in linguistics, where the term ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep dialect’ is informally used to describe the varieties of English which allow the structure ‘Have you any wool?’ instead of ‘Do you have any wool?’³⁸².

Children’s verses are also often referred to in other fields of culture, like in music, films, cartoons, on television, or computer. For example Ella Fitzgerald sang a song “Organ Grinder’s Swing” containing the allusion to the famous counting-out formula “Eena, meena, mina, mo, ...”, the same rhyme appears in Tarantino’s film *Pulp Fiction*, a modified version of “One, two, buckle my shoe ...” is recited by children in *Nightmare on Elm Street* movies, the rhyme “Who killed Cock Robin?” is echoed in the *Fables* comic series, and so on.³⁸³

As we can see English nursery rhymes are used in various contexts. This is what differentiates them from Czech children’s rhymes, which is also mentioned by Cingrošová in her work comparing English nursery rhymes and Czech children’s folklore: “... přesahují ‘n. r.’ svým významem oblast dětské literatury a plní důležitou úlohu i v jiných oblastech. To je něco, co naprosto nemůžeme říci např. o českém drobném folklóru.”³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Blind_Mice>.

³⁸¹ Green 1305.

³⁸² See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baa,_Baa,_Black_Sheep>.

³⁸³ For more examples see <<http://wikipedia.org>>

³⁸⁴ Sabina Cingrošová, *Anglické “Nursery Rhymes” ve srovnání s dětským folklórem českým*. Diplomová práce (UK, 1979) 6.

4 Translation

Translation is an uneasy process, when the translator tries to find an adequate way to express the meaning represented by a text in one language using another language, and at the same time preserve important features of the source texts. In this chapter I would like to deal with approaches to the translation of nursery rhymes into the Czech language depending on their function, and also to show some problems which are associated with it.

4.1 Primary occurrence

The result of translating process is influenced by the intention of the translator, that is by the purpose of his / her work. Comparing the Czech translations of nursery rhymes, we can see that their form depends on the function they have in the target language. In accordance with it the translator follows the original faithfully or approaches it with more freedom. I will try to show the differences with concrete examples.

Word-for-word translation, or literal translation³⁸⁵, is typical for the nursery rhymes used for teaching English, where only the lexical meaning is regarded as relevant, the other features like rhythm and rhyme are neglected. The Czech version is usually placed beside the English original so that the comparison of words is possible. The following example is taken from the English textbook for children *Come and Play*:

Wee Willie Winkie runs through
the town,
Upstairs and downstairs in his
nightgown,
Rapping at the window, crying
through the lock,
“Are the children all in bed,
for now it’s eight o’clock?”

³⁸⁵ Robinson describes the literal translation in this way: “the segmentation of the SL into the individual words and TL rendering of those word-segments one at a time.” Douglas Robinson, “Literal Translation”, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 1998) 125 – 127: 125.

Maličký Willie Winkie běhá
po městě,
po schodech nahoru a dolů
v noční košili,
ťuká na okno, volá skrze
zámek:
„Jsou všechny děti v posteli?
Je už osm hodin!“³⁸⁶

Here the practical and cognitive functions predominate over the other functions, the translator concentrating on the meaning of the individual words to help the learners with new vocabulary. There are only slight modifications which are necessary with respect to the target language, for example the transposition of transgressive form of ‘rapping’ into more common form in Czech, which is the appropriate present tense form of ‘ťukat’. This approach is definitively accompanied by the loss of some aspects characteristic for the source text, as can also be noticed in the translation of the tongue twister “Peter Piper ...”³⁸⁷ in *Angličtina plná her*, which necessarily loses the rich consonance of the original: “Dudák Petr sebral spoustu nakládaných paprik. Kde je ta spousta nakládaných paprik, které dudák Petr sebral.” However, they fulfil the intended function, because such Czech texts can be considered as the support for understanding of the English version, not as independent rhymes.

Another type of translation, which treats the source text in a more complex way and at the same time tries to stick to the original as much as possible, appears in the publications also meant mainly for didactic purposes and again including both original and translated versions. However, the practical and cognitive functions are not the only stressed ones, as they are accompanied by an attempt to preserve other aspects of the source text, not just the semantics. This approach can

³⁸⁶ Věra Urbanová, and Vlasta Rejthartová, *Come and Play* (Ústí nad Labem: Dialog, 1991) 253.

³⁸⁷ The tongue twister goes like this: “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper. Where is the peck of pickled pepper Peter Piper picked?” Jana Hanšpachová a Zuzana Řandová: *Angličtina plná her* (Praha: Portál, 2005) 115.

be found in two bilingual publications, *Anglické písničky pro děti*³⁸⁸ and *Anglická říkadla – Nursery Rhymes*³⁸⁹.

The former is meant as a source book for parents and teachers presenting various English songs and their translations, among them nursery ones, with music, vocabulary and notes. There is also included the following lullaby:

Hush little baby don't say a word
Daddy gonna buy you a mockingbird
If that mockingbird don't sing
Daddy's gonna buy you a diamond ring
If that diamond ring turns brass
Daddy's gonna buy you a looping glass
[...]

Tiše děťátko, už ani slovíčko!
Droзда ti koupí tvůj tatínek.
Pokud drozd nezazpívá maličko,
koupí ti z diamantů prstýnek.
Až se diamant změní v mosaz,
potom ti táta koupí zrcátko.
[...]³⁹⁰

In my opinion an important feature of the original is lost by the translation. The English version is based on recurrence of sentence pattern³⁹¹ and regular rhyme scheme *aabbcc* ..., linking always two succeeding lines and so contributing to the structure and logics of the lullaby. Each conditional sentence represents interconnected whole, the rhyme emphasizing the cause and effect. Since regularity accompanies also Czech rhymes³⁹², it seems appropriate that some kind of regularity should appear in the translation of the discussed lullaby. Although it is impossible to preserve the rhymes between the same words, “Jen zřídka se

³⁸⁸ Christopher Barickman, *Anglické písničky pro děti*, trans. Andrea Jandejsková (Brno: Computer Press, 2008).

³⁸⁹ *Anglická říkadla – Nursery Rhymes*, trans. Zdenka Strnadová (Praha: Práh, 2005).

³⁹⁰ Barickman 25 – 26.

³⁹¹ See above in chapter on form.

³⁹² For example the Czech rhyme beginning “Byl jeden domeček,...” has two parts, the second being based on the recurrence of a question and its answer: “Kde je ta ryba? / Kočka ji snědla. / Kde je ta kočka? / Do lesů zaběhla. [...]” *Velká kniha českých říkadel* (Praha: Fragment, 2008) 86 – 87.

stane, aby v češtině souzněla dvě slova, která významem odpovídají právě rýmové dvojici předlohy; ...”³⁹³, the translator should try to find a regular rhyming scheme, which would suit the form of children’s verses. This did not happen in the given example, as the rhyming pattern changes in the course of the lullaby, at first being *abab*, then *cddc* and the last eight lines rhyming in couples. However, it is obvious that when looking for the rhymes the translator was limited by the purpose of the book, which requires semantic accuracy.

Regularity could also have been supported by the repetition at the beginning of lines. In other types of verses the recurrence could be considered as a shortcoming, but in children’s rhymes, Czech including³⁹⁴, it is a common device.

Anglická říkadla – Nursery Rhymes contains only the texts of nursery rhymes and their translations, being more close to children’s literature without didactic purpose. However, it also places emphasis on the practical function, having the subtitle “Užitečná zábava”. It is obvious that the translator had an ambition to create not merely a semantic equivalent, but verses suitable for recitation together with children. She succeeds for example in the translation of the following short rhyme:

What are little boys made of?
Snips and snails
And puppy-dog’s tails.

Z čeho jsou udělaní malí kluci?
Z kostek a provázků
a z hadích ocásků.³⁹⁵

The Czech phrase ‘z hadích ocásků’ suits well the rhythm and content of the verses. Unfortunately, the translator’s intent is not always fulfilled, as her verses are sometimes clumsy and awkward. For instance she translated the beginning of the rhyme “Tom, Tom, the piper’s son, / Stole a pig and away did run ...” as “Pošťákův syn Petr Pomekáč / ukradl prase, že ho dá na pekáč ...”³⁹⁶, using unnatural surname or nickname form ‘Pomekáč’ to create the rhyme.

³⁹³ Jiří Levý, *Umění překladu* (Ivo Železný, Praha 1998) 228.

³⁹⁴ Repetition for example appears in the following verses: “Povídám, povídám pohádku, / že pes přeskočil hromádku. / Povídám, povídám druhou, ...” *Velká kniha českých říkadel* 77.

³⁹⁵ Strnadová.

³⁹⁶ Strnadová.

In the last category I would include the Czech texts which handle English nursery rhymes with more freedom, often only as an inspiration, sometimes becoming adaptations³⁹⁷ or new rhymes altogether rather than translations. Such type of texts appears in *Klíč od království*³⁹⁸ by Josef Brukner and in two works by Pavel Šrut, *Kočka v houslích*³⁹⁹ and *Šišatý švec a myšut*⁴⁰⁰. Although the rhymes and poems in these publications depart furthest from the source texts in the semantic sense, I consider them to be closest to the substance of nursery rhymes, preserving their form based on regularity and repetition and also their humorous and nonsense character. In the case of nursery rhymes I agree with Feldek who says that sometimes it is more important to translate the essential feature of the text rather than the text itself: "... dôležitejšie ako verne preložiť text originálu je verne preložiť princíp týmto textem ilustrovaný."⁴⁰¹

Klíč od království is a collection of children's rhymes from several countries, among them England. Its author Josef Brukner emphasizes that in spite of their various origins rhymes have common features: "Pokusil jsem se tedy přetlumočit všechna ta říkadla, říkačky a povídačky tak, abych zdůraznil jednotu světa říkadla ..." ⁴⁰² *Klíč od království* definitely enriches the Czech literature for the youngest, fulfilling its essential functions. I consider some pieces included to be examples of skilful, careful and creative translation. To illustrate this I would choose the beginning of the rhyme about wonders seen by the speaker:

I saw a peacock with a fiery tail
I saw a blazing comet drop down the hail
I saw a cloud with ivy circled round
I saw a sturdy oak creep on the ground

[...]

I saw the man that saw this wondrous sight.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁷ Bastin emphasizes that adaptation should not be regarded as a translation: "..., the concept of adaptation requires recognition of translation as non-adaptation, as a somehow more constrained mode of transfer", but I think that the boundary is not always clear. Georges Bastin, "Adaptation", *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 1998) 5 – 8: 5.

³⁹⁸ Josef Brukner, *Klíč od království* (Praha: Albatros, 1985).

³⁹⁹ Pavel Šrut, *Kočka v houslích* (Liberec: Severočeské nakladatelství, 1969).

⁴⁰⁰ Pavel Šrut, *Šišatý švec a myšut* (Praha and Litomyšl: Ladislav Horáček – Paseka, 2007).

⁴⁰¹ Feldek, L., *Z řeči do řeči* (Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1977) 49.

⁴⁰² Brukner, cover.

⁴⁰³ NR 405.

Viděl jsem páva s ocasem v plameni,
viděl jsem kometu podpálit stavení,
viděl jsem oblaka posetá růžemi,
viděl jsem dub, který plazil se po zemi,
[...]
viděl jsem člověka, který to viděl též.⁴⁰⁴

The structure of the original, which I discussed in the chapter about the nursery rhyme form, is based on the recurrence having a strong cumulative effect. The regularity is supported by the rhyming scheme *aabb*... The translator succeeded to preserve the structure without the disruption of the content, poetically expressing the fantastic images.

I agree with Hausenblas who says that “... dítě zpravidla nepřístupuje k četbě knížky překladové jinak, než k původní.”⁴⁰⁵ I can confirm this from my own experience, since as a child I perceived the rhymes contained in *Klíč od království* as original. The translator of children’s literature becomes even more invisible than the translator of literature for adults. I think that children’s acceptance of the rhymes can also indicate how successful his / her work was.

The other author I would like to mention in this part who works with nursery rhymes is Pavel Šrut. In the preface to *Kočka v houslích* the author himself admits that at first he planned to translate nursery rhymes, but then he began to create his own verses: “Chci říci, že jsem přestal překládat a začal si víc vymýšlet. ... Snad jsem plul jinou cestou, snad jsem se jinou cestou dostal blíž.”⁴⁰⁶ Similarly he writes about the first part of *Šišatý švec a myšut*: “Oddíl Šišatý švec nabízí volné překlady, parafráze, variance a inspirace anglickými říkadly a popěvkami, ...”⁴⁰⁷ So the author points out to the readers that they cannot regard his rhymes as a faithful translation of nursery rhymes, since he uses them more as inspiring material for his work. In my opinion, this intention of Šrut’s was neglected by Macurová, who analyzed *Kočka v houslích* as if it were translation of English nursery rhymes, in the conclusion calling it “první soubornější překlad

⁴⁰⁴ Brukner 110.

⁴⁰⁵ Karel Hausenblas, “Čeština překladové prózy pro děti (několik poznámek)” *O překládání literatury pro děti a mládež* (Praha: SČP, 1988) 9 – 17: 9.

⁴⁰⁶ Šrut, *Kočka v houslích* 5.

⁴⁰⁷ Šrut, *Šišatý švec a myšut* 75.

anglického dětského folklóru⁴⁰⁸. From this point of view it is obvious that *Kočka v houslích* cannot be considered an adequate representation of nursery rhymes in Czech language. However, I think the main contribution of Šrut's works in relation to nursery rhymes is the fact that he preserves their humorous and nonsense character, which he develops in his verses employing play with language, and presents them to Czech readers.

Nevertheless, among his rhymes we can find such that I would consider to be a successful translation, for example the English rhyme "If all the seas were one sea, ...", which I analyzed above, has the first stanza in Czech going like this:

Kdyby jednou všechna moře
bylo jedno velemoře,
jeminé jak velké moře by to mohlo být!⁴⁰⁹

This structure, repeated four times with replacing the word 'moře' by 'strom', 'pila' and 'muž', corresponds with the source text well. There are some slight modifications, like instead of the English two-word phrase 'great sea' the author uses the compound 'velemoře' in the target language, which I think depicts adequately the original stress. Or the amazement and emphasis expressed in the source text by the exclamatory sentence structure "What a great sea that would be!" is supported in Czech by the word 'jeminé'. Besides, Šrut substitutes 'pila' meaning 'saw' for its co-hyponym 'axe' appearing in the original, as it suits better the rhythm of Czech verses and as well as the rhyme in the last stanza. Only in this last stanza the author adds an aspect not present in the source text, which is the personalization in the final line:

[...]
a kdyby ten veliký strom
do velemoře spadl,
slyšel bych to veliké žbluňk
až k nám na zahradu!⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Alena Macurová, "Překlad jako první interpretace textu", *Antologie teorie uměleckého překladu*, ed. Milan Hrdlička and Edita Gromová (Ostrava: Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity, 2004) 238 – 241: 241.

⁴⁰⁹ *Kočka v houslích* 29.

⁴¹⁰ *Kočka v houslích* 29.

Another example which could be regarded as an adequate equivalent to the source text, is Šrut's rhyme based on the English verses "The barber shaved the mason, / As I suppose, / Cut off his nose, / And popped it in a basin."⁴¹¹:

Na mou duši,
na tvou duši,
holič holil zedníka.

Na mou duši,
obě uši
oholil ten nešika.⁴¹²

Here Šrut employs devices typical for nursery rhymes, but not appearing in the source rhyme, like repetition of words and consonance. Besides, in the Czech version the barber is explicitly evaluated as clumsy. Although the original is modified quite freely, the basic comic effect of the rhyme is preserved.

Generally, Šrut develops further the original rhyme playfully, as it for example happens in Šišatý švec and myšut with the English verses beginning "There were two birds sat on a stone, ..." ⁴¹³ In Šrut's rhyme the birds sit on a fence, which at the end also flies away:

[...]
Když druhý uletěl
a nikdo na plotě,
lalala lalala bum.

i ten plot uletěl.
A bylo po plotě,
lalala lalala bum.

The Czech verses are similar to the original in their simplicity, only they develop further the image of a gradual disappearance, including the fence in it. This ending is close to the English version in one aspect, that is in the fact of the fence

⁴¹¹ NR 79.

⁴¹² *Kočka v houslích* 12.

⁴¹³ It continues in the following way: "... Fa, la, la, la, lal, de; / One flew away, and then there was one, / Fa, la, la, la, lal, de; / The other flew after, and then there was none, / Fa, la, la, la, lal, de; / And so the poor stone was left alone." NR 97.

becoming animate. The stone in the original is even personified being described as ‘poor’.

By the preceding examples, I tried to show that in the translation of children’s literature the resulting text depends mainly on its purpose. When nursery rhymes are intended as a tool for teaching English, the translators are limited by the semantic meaning, which they have to preserve. When the verses should also have other functions, not only the practical one, the translations become more adequate as the translators try to follow the rules of children’s rhymes, that is the regular rhythm and rhymes. The last approach, when the authors work with the source text with more freedom, using it as an inspiration seems to me the most enriching for children’s literature, although their work cannot be considered as translation in its true sense. However, Brukner and Šrut are closest to Štefánková’s description of the good translator of children’s literature: “... jej špecifickosť si vyžaduje prekladateľa s nesmiernym citom pre slovo, pre výraz, pre rozvíjanie príbehu a jeho pointy, a navyše s vtipným a ľahkým perom.”⁴¹⁴

4.2 Intertextual occurrence

As I tried to show in the preceding chapter, nursery rhymes referred to in other works have various functions in these texts. Generally, there are two possible ways translators can deal with an allusion to a nursery rhyme, they can either employ an existing Czech rhyme or try to translate the reference by their own words. However, the choice of a method necessarily depends on the function of the allusion in the translated text. The translator should try to reach the functional equivalence, which is considered to be the essential prerequisite of good translation⁴¹⁵. In accordance with this, one of the basic aims of translation is to produce the effect on the readers close to the effect of the original, “... the

⁴¹⁴ Mária Štefánková, “Redaktor jako spolutvorca textu (Preklad a redigovanie literatúry pre deti predškolského a mladšieho školského veku)”, *14x o prekladu*, ed. Andrej Rády (Praha: JTP, 1998) 60 – 65: 60.

⁴¹⁵ Dagmar Knittlová explains the term functional equivalence: “Znamená to, že nezáleží na tom, použijeme-li stejných či jiných jazykových prostředků, ale na tom, aby plnily stejnou funkci, a to pokud možno po všech stránkách, tedy nejen významové věcné (denotační, referenční), ale i konotační (expresivní, asociační) a pragmatické.” *K teorii a praxi překlada* (Olomouc: UP Olomouc, 2000) 6.

general believe is that the translator should achieve an ‘equivalent effect’⁴¹⁶. The text in the target language should communicate a similar meaning as it was expressed by the source text: “Docílení optimální komunikační hodnoty překládaného textu a tím i jeho adekvátního komunikačního efektu na čtenáře by mělo být jedním ze základních překladatelových úkolů.”⁴¹⁷

At first I would like to deal with the translation of titles based on nursery rhymes. Kufnerová writes about the title translation that “Titul literárního díla, [...], má při překladu v jistém ohledu výsadní postavení, [...].”⁴¹⁸. It means that the translator should deal with the title with a special care, as it represents the whole work. When the title consists of an allusion, it is probable that some aspect will be lost by the translation. The translator has to decide which meaning of the title is essential with respect to the work.

This can be demonstrated by the approach to the translation of Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. The Czech translator Jaroslav Kořán regarded the allusion to the counting-out formula, that is the sense of elimination, as the most relevant and chose a Czech counting-out rhyme, all of which he quotes on the introductory page:

Jeden, dva, tři –
my jsme bratři;
kterej je to mezi námi,
co si zalez do tý slámy:
ten, ten, nebo ten,
vyhod’me ho z kola ven.⁴¹⁹

Kořán used the last line as the title of his translation called *Vyhod’me ho z kola ven*, which seems adequate, although the associations implied by ‘the cuckoo’s nest’ are lost. On the other hand, this aspect was emphasized by the translators of the film and stage versions, calling Forman’s film *Přelet nad kukaččím hnízdem*,

⁴¹⁶ David Connolly, “Poetry Translation”, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 1998) 170 – 176: 174.

⁴¹⁷ Milan Hrdlička ml., “Nad jedním pokusem dosáhnout „též“ komunikačního efektu výchozího a cílového textu”, *14 x o překladu*, ed. Andrej Rády (Praha: JTP, 1998) 21 – 23: 21.

⁴¹⁸ Zlata Kufnerová et al, *Překládání a čeština* (Jinočany: H&H, 1994) 149.

⁴¹⁹ Ken Kesey, *Vyhod’me ho z kola ven*, trans. Jaroslav Kořán (1962, Praha: Maťa, 2001) 7. This is a colloquial version of the counting-rhyme, which can be found for example in Bartoš with the following wording: “Jeden, dva, tři, / my jsme bratři, / který je tu mezi námi, / co si zalez do té slámy? / Ten nebo ten, vyhod’me ho ven.” František Bartoš, *Naše děti* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1949) 106.

and the theatre adaptation *Tam, kde má hnízdo kukačka, Přelet nad hnízdem kukačky* or *Kukaččí hnízdo*⁴²⁰. For the Czech reader there is not a lexical connection between ‘the cuckoo’s nest’ and ‘a mental hospital’, but the negative connotation of ‘cuckoo’, which also indicates the elimination of the different ones, is preserved. In my opinion both approaches are possible, only the use of the word ‘přelet’ seems to me inconsistent with the meaning of the novel and I would prefer the titles avoiding it.

Kořán also translated Vonnegut’s *Cat’s Cradle*, for which he used a more general title *Kolíbka* in Czech. The title suits the connection with Newt’s experience, as in one of Czech children’s games there exists a string figure called ‘kolíbka’, so it is adequate with respect to pragmatics. Since ‘kolíbka’ is not specified as in the source language, it is more easily associated with the abstract meaning it implies, that is a beginning or a birth of something, here for example of a scientific invention, of the new religion, but foremost of the destruction of the world. In the translation of the lullaby sang by Hoenikker the translator stuck to the original, using the source text, not replacing it with a Czech rhyme, which is appropriate as the lullaby is interconnected with the surrounding text: “Houpy-hou, houpy-hou, kolíbá se kočička, až na vršku stromečka, [...], A když vítr zafouká, spadne dolů hloupouká. Spadne číča pod stromeček, spadne rovnou na zadeček.”⁴²¹ Here it is not necessary that the reader should perceive it as an existing rhyme and I think the translator depicted well Hoenikker’s ridiculing recitation. Kořán preserved the function of the lullaby, which contributed to the little boy’s terror.

Warren’s *All the King’s Men* appeared in Czech with the title *Všichni jsou zbrojnoši královi*⁴²², translated by Šťastný. The translator transformed the original verbless title into a sentence, thus adding an aspect which is not explicitly expressed by the source title. It says that everybody is Stark’s subject and has to obey his orders and wishes. The title also hides a certain irony, because in the end it turns out that not all the men are ‘king’s men’. The allusion to the nursery rhyme paralleling Stark’s and Humpty Dumpty’s fate is necessarily lost, since for the common Czech reader the connection is not accessible.

⁴²⁰ See L. Bosch, “Beatnik, hraničář a šprýmař Ken Kesey a jeho cesty za”, *Vyhodíme ho z kola ven*, by Ken Kesey, trans. Jaroslav Kořán (1962, Praha: Maťa, 2001) 389 – 401: 401 – 402.

⁴²¹ Kurt Vonnegut Jr., *Kolíbka*, trans. Jaroslav Kořán (1963; Praha: Mladá fronta, 1976) 15.

⁴²² R. P. Warren, *Všichni jsou zbrojnoši královi*, trans. A. J. Šťastný (1946; Praha: Odeon, 1977).

The translators of Christie's detective novels usually use a reference to the same nursery rhyme in the title as appears in the original. Mostly the titles are translated word by word, for example *A Pocket Full of Rye* becomes *Kapsa plná žita*⁴²³, *Five Little Pigs* was translated as *Pět malých prasátek*⁴²⁴, "Three Blind Mice" are called "Tři slepé myšky"⁴²⁵. From the three versions of the detective novel about the multiple homicide on a remote island, *Ten Little Niggers*, *Ten Little Indians*, and *And Then There Were None*, the translator chose the first one, calling it in the same way *Deset malých černoušků*⁴²⁶, which is also the name of the stage adaptation. All the mentioned titles have preserved the interrelation with the original rhymes and as these are included in the text, the readers get the explanation, even if they do not know the verses. On the contrary, a quote from the rhyme does not appear in the translation of *One, two, buckle my shoe*, as it was published in Czech under the title *Nástrahy zubařského křesla*⁴²⁷. This explicitly indicates the place of a murder and so reveals more from the story than the original title, which I would consider as a disadvantage in a detective story.

Only one of Christie's novels I have studied was translated with the use of an existing Czech rhyme and that is *Hickory Dickory Dock*. This novel was published in Czech under the title *Zlatá brána otevřená*⁴²⁸. From comparison of two different translations, it can be seen how the translator has to approach the translated work consistently and to consider carefully all the connections of the rhyme in the text. The allusion in *Hickory Dickory Dock* is based on the setting, as the story takes place in a hostel in the street called 'Hickory Road', so it evokes the rhyme quoted in the title and on the introductory page⁴²⁹. The rhyme also appears twice in the text. First, its beginning is recited by the murderer, not revealed yet, who employs it with a mocking purpose playing with the word 'dock', which can mean the place at a court where the accused person stands

⁴²³ Agatha Christie, *Kapsa plná žita*, trans. Jan Zábrana, *Tříkrát slečna Marplová* (1953; Praha: Odeon, 1972).

⁴²⁴ Agatha Christie, *Pět malých prasátek*, trans. Ma-Fa (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1969).

⁴²⁵ Agatha Christie, "Tři slepé myšky", trans. Alena Hartmanová, *15 pátračů*, ed. Jan Zábrana (1950; Praha: Grafoprint-Neubert, 1995).

⁴²⁶ Agatha Christie, *Deset malých černoušků*, trans. J. Z. Novák (1947; Praha: Odeon, 1988).

⁴²⁷ Agatha Christie, *Nástrahy zubařského křesla*, trans. Jan Čermák (1940; Praha: Knižní klub, 2001).

⁴²⁸ Agatha Christie, *Zlatá brána otevřená*, trans. Marek Roesel (1955; Praha: Zeras, 1990, 1994), Agatha Christie, *Zlatá brána otevřená*, trans. Edda Němcová (1955; Praha: Knižní klub 2008).

⁴²⁹ The wording of the rhyme is this: "Hickory dickory dock / The mouse ran up the clock / The clock struck one / The mouse ran down / Hickory dickory dock." Agatha Christie, *Hickory Dickory Dock* (1955, London: HarperCollins Publisher, 2002) 5.

during the trial: "..., the mouse ran up the clock. The police said "Boo", I wonder who, will eventually stand in the Dock?"⁴³⁰. Second, at the end of the novel the rhyme is also quoted by Poirot, who, after "The clock behind him struck one.", says: "The clock struck one, / The mouse ran down / Hickory, dickory, dock,"⁴³¹.

The first translator of *Hickory Dickory Dock* employed the Czech rhyme "Zlatá brána otevřená" adequately for the basic reference, where the English rhyme occurred, calling the street "U Zlaté brány" and so providing the right hint for the Czech reader. The text of the Czech rhyme mentioning the beheading also suits well the plot of the book, as the street with the symptomatic name is the place of murders. That is the reason why it can be recollected by the two characters. Although the Czech rhyme cannot be used by the murderer for the play with language, it is enough when he recites it without modifications, as it indicates that the speaker is considering who will become the accused one: "... at' je to ten nebo ten, prašíme ho koštěm."⁴³² Similarly to the original the rhyme expresses the character of the murderer, who kills other people to protect his interests not caring who will be the victim and is entertained by it. The translator also preserves the link between the situation and Poirot's words at the end of the book, when he replaced the clock strike with a fall of a broom: "Uklízeče na chodbě upadlo koště. / Herkule Poirot tiše zamumlal: ..." ⁴³³ I think that the translator solved the translation of the allusion skilfully.

The other translator used the title of his predecessor, also calling the detective novel *Zlatá brána otevřená*, but she did not create a sufficient link with the text, retaining the English name of the street 'Hickory Road'. So it is not quite clear, why the murderer recites the given rhyme. Neither why at the end it is repeated by Poirot when he hears the clock strike: "Hodiny za ním odbily. / "Zlatá brána otevřená ..." / prohlásil Hercule Poirot."⁴³⁴.

Besides, there is one more reference in *Hickory Dickory Dock* to nursery rhymes, which is the name of the hostel keeper called Mrs. Hubbard. This reminds the famous nursery character 'Old Mother Hubbard' I already mentioned in the historic part. This allusion is lost, as both the translators used the original name.

⁴³⁰ *Hickory Dickory Dock* 233.

⁴³¹ *Hickory Dickory Dock* 304.

⁴³² Christie, *Zlatá brána otevřená*, trans. Roesel, 223.

⁴³³ Christie, *Zlatá brána otevřená*, trans. Roesel 287.

⁴³⁴ Christie, *Zlatá brána otevřená*, trans. Němcová 207.

However, since it is not so relevant for the text, it does not appear as a shortcoming. It would be probably difficult to find an adequate Czech name, since there does not exist such a well-known nursery figure.

When a nursery rhyme serves as a guideline for the structure of the text, the translator is more limited, since he / she has to preserve the elements of the rhyme important for the story: "...je dobře vidět, že fakt zapojení textu do významového ustrojení textu jiného ovlivňuje překlad značnou měrou. [...] především v tom, že vyžaduje důsledné respektování obsahově tématické výstavby textu výchozího, jenž má v textu, do něhož je zapojen, jistou funkci."⁴³⁵ So when translating the rhyme, on which Christie's book *And Then There Were None* is based, it is necessary to use the same pattern of the original rhyme about "ten little niggers (soldiers, Indians)", where the boys disappear one by one, and also similar hints occurring in the rhyme indicating how the individual characters will die. In accordance with this rule, Novák created in his translation an adequate version of the verses, where the first four lines are following:

Deset malých černoušků hostil děda Vševěd,
jeden z nich se zakuckal, zbylo jich jen devět.
Devět malých černoušků chtělo sypat kosům,
jeden se včas nevzbudil, zbylo jich jen osum.

[...]⁴³⁶

The second line containing the word 'zakuckal' corresponds with the death of the first victim. Similarly the last cited verse implies that the second person dies when sleeping. Beside the individual connections, the translator managed to capture well the character of children's verses with regular rhythm and rhymes, which, as I discuss in the preceding chapter, also has an important role in the novel.

The translator of *The Bishop Murder Case* faces a more complicated problem, as she / he has to solve the interconnection not only between the rhymes and the situation, but also the relation to the names of the characters. For example the detective Vance recollects the rhyme "Who killed Cock Robin? / I, said the Sparrow, / With my bow and arrow, / I killed Cock Robin."⁴³⁷, when he hears the name of the murdered person, which is Robin, and that he was found with an

⁴³⁵ Macurová 239.

⁴³⁶ Christie, *Deset malých černoušků*, trans. J. Z. Novák 6.

⁴³⁷ NR 151.

arrow in his breast. Later the detective learns that Robin's middle name is Cochrane, so when shortened to Cock it fits the rhyme as well. There appears another person connected with the case, whose name is also related to the verses and that is Sperling meaning 'sparrow' in German.

The translator of the Czech version called *Královské vraždění*⁴³⁸ mostly retained the names from the original. She only had to make such modifications which were necessary for the interrelation between the names and the applied rhymes. When altering the names, the translator correctly preserved the unity in that sense that she used foreign names for all the characters. It is interesting how she dealt with the first murdered person. She changed his middle name into Leopold and his surname into Hart, so the detective can find out the following: "Jak se to teď jeví, jakýsi pan Joseph Leopold Hart – zkráceně Lev Hart – byl zabit lukem a šípem ..." ⁴³⁹ When the names are connected together they give the nickname of the dead person. In accordance with that the animal 'levhart' becomes the killed one in the Czech version of the nursery rhyme. Its first stanza is this:

Kdo zabil levharta?
Já to byl, vrabec dí,
můj šíp mu přece
vězí v osrdí.⁴⁴⁰

In my opinion, there is one shortcoming of this translation and that is the form of the rhyme, which does not sound like children's verses.

One could ask a similar question as Markham, one of the characters, does: "Markham popuzeně vstal. „Co má jméno zavražděného společného s případem?" ⁴⁴¹, but I think that the Czech translator captured well an important aspect of the text, which has to function in details in the same way as the murderer's brain works.

The names of the nursery figures entering two Carroll's stories about little Alice present only a minor problem for the translator in comparison to the translation difficulty of the whole books, since they are based on the play with

⁴³⁸ The translator Maxová says in the postscript that she used some ideas of her predecessor, the translator Stanislava Jílovska. S. S. Van Dine: *Královské vraždění*, trans. Alena Maxová (1928; Praha: Mladá fronta, 1989).

⁴³⁹ S. S. Van Dine, *Královské vraždění*, trans. Alena Maxová 12.

⁴⁴⁰ S. S. Van Dine, *Královské vraždění*, trans. Alena Maxová 14.

⁴⁴¹ S. S. Van Dine, *Královské vraždění*, trans. Alena Maxová 12.

language. Both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* were translated brilliantly by Aloys and Hana Skoumalovi and were published together under the name *Alenka v kraji divů a za zrcadlem*⁴⁴². Since the Queen and the King play an important role in 'Wonderland', and since such characters appear commonly in Czech children's literature, they can easily be used in the Czech version too, which happens in Skoumal's translation. They also include the same nursery rhyme about the Queen of Hearts, as it is interconnected with the situation, translating it like this:

Srdcová Královna napekla vdolky
jedenkrát o žních
Srdcový spodek jí ukradl vdolky,
hned bylo po nich!⁴⁴³

The content of the original verses is nearly the same, only the translators for example applied a necessary domesticating shift, when using Czech cakes 'vdolky' instead of English 'tarts'. Concerning other nursery figures entering Carroll's works it is adequate when the translator creates a corresponding character in the target language. It does not matter that they are new for the Czech readers, because the worlds which Alice explores are occupied by various strange creatures and many of them are made up. For instance, the Skoumals called 'Tweedledum' and 'Tweedledee' aptly as 'Tydliták' and 'Tydlitek', preserving the playful and humorous character.

When the quoted nursery rhyme is parodied, the translator may need to change it to reach a similar effect. In Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* it is the case of the famous parody of "Twinkle, twinkle, little star". To substitute it adequately, the Skoumals used Sládek's rhyme "Modrá očka"⁴⁴⁴ related to a similar subject, using the beginnings of the first and third stanza as the first and third lines and completing these by their own verses, which also mention a 'bat' as the Carroll's parody does:

Hvězdičky už vyšly, červánek už zhas,
netopýr nám lítá po obloze zas.

[...]

⁴⁴² Lewis Carroll, *Alenka v kraji divů a za zrcadlem*, trans. Aloys a Hana Skoumalovi (1940; Praha: Albatros, 1983).

⁴⁴³ Carroll, *Alenka v kraji divů a za zrcadlem*, trans. Aloys a Hana Skoumalovi 68.

⁴⁴⁴ Josef Václav Sládek, *Zlaté slunce, bílý den* (Praha: Albatros, 1982).

Ve hnízdečku sladce, tiše usnul pták
a svačina sviští vzhůru do oblak.

Sviští, sviští – ⁴⁴⁵

Even if the reader does not recognize Sládek's verses, the rhyme has a similar comic effect as the English parody does. To achieve this, the translators used a contrast as well, here between the poetic and lyrical original and the inserted light verses, and an unusual collocation also appearing in the fourth nonsense line: 'svačina sviští'.

As I have already mentioned, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" and Carroll's parody were both used by Vonnegut Jr. for creating a new version in *Cat's Cradle*. This double connection is necessarily lost in the translation, because the pretexts are not available for the Czech readers. However, the parodying aspect is not so relevant for the rhyme, as it is mainly used for the demonstration of San Lorenzan dialect. I think that Kořán managed to translate both versions, the normal and distorted one, very skillfully:

Bliká, bliká hvězdička,
kde se vzala maličká?
Na zem dolů jasně září,
utopená v kalamáři.
Bliká, bliká hvězdička,
kde se vzala maličká?

Buhliky, buhliky dechichka,
dehe vhála bahlichka?
Nahasem dolhu žasne hazí,
huto phána f kahmalhaží.
Buhliky, buhliky dechichka,
dehe vhála bahlichka? ⁴⁴⁶

Similarly to Vonnegut's version, where there was an unusual simile comparing the star to a tea-tray, the translator applied a non-conventional metaphor for situating the star: 'utopená v kalamáři', which is in the contrast to the fact that it shines brightly. Besides, he preserved the pleasant sound of the

⁴⁴⁵ Carroll, *Alenka v kraji divů a za zrcadlem*, trans. Aloys a Hana Skoumalovi 45 – 46.

⁴⁴⁶ Vonnegut Jr., *Kolíbka*, trans. Kořán 86.

original rhyme⁴⁴⁷. With respect to the source text, the distortion in the Czech rhyme seems adequate as well, as the author created a transcription of an unusual pronunciation with strange words and their division, but still reminding the unmodified version.

As we can see from the discussed examples, the translation of an allusion to a nursery rhyme can represent not an easy task for a translator, since the reference is based on the reader's knowledge of the alluded rhyme. This requires a careful analysis of the function of the nursery rhyme in the source text and according to that the translator should try to find the adequate equivalent.

⁴⁴⁷ In my opinion this does not happen in the translation of the original nursery rhyme by Jandějsková: "Třpyť se, třpyť se, hvězdičko! / Jak moc tě toužím znát, / když nad světem tak vysoko / svítíš jako diamant. / Třpyť se, třpyť se, hvězdičko! / Jak moc tě toužím znát." Barickman 4.

Conclusion

Nursery rhymes play a significant role in the English-speaking world. They are well-known to the general public and as such they are applied to fulfill numerous functions in various contexts. In my work I concentrate on applications of nursery rhymes in literature.

In the first chapter I defined the term nursery rhymes, described briefly the first publications containing nursery rhymes and discussed possible origins of nursery rhymes, which had usually been intended for adults' entertainment before entering children's folklore. The most common sources of children's verses were songs or ballads. The nursery rhymes created primarily for children include lullabies and infant amusements.

Next I analyzed the form of nursery rhymes. They usually consist of quatrains with a regular rhythm and rhyme. The most typical literal devices of nursery rhymes are those based on repetition, such as consonance, assonance, anaphora or epistrophe. These support the pleasant sound, make the recitation easy and help the addressee to remember them. The most common trope employed in nursery rhymes is personification, which is closest to children's thinking.

The first two chapters provided a basis for the following chapter, where I discussed the occurrences of nursery rhymes, dividing them into two basic categories, primary and intertextual. In the former I tried to show that nursery rhymes are an important genre of children's literature, as they represent the first stage in children's literary development. By the use of examples from several collections of nursery rhymes I illustrated the basic functions of nursery rhymes, such as the practical and entertaining ones, emphasizing the importance of the aesthetic function.

The latter category includes the cases when nursery rhymes are used for reference and allusion, both in literary and non-literary texts. I concentrated on the intertextual application of nursery rhymes in prose, where these can be employed in the title of a work, for the structure of a plot, they can be related to characters, or they can be referred to in the text with various functions. These applications are often interconnected, for example a rhyme can be used in the title and at the same time as the structure of the text. We could see that nursery rhymes are mostly

employed in detective stories, especially in the works of Agatha Christie. For illustration I included some examples of intertextual use of nursery rhymes in poetry and non-literary texts.

In the last chapter I dealt with translation of nursery rhymes into Czech in relation to the type of their occurrence. First I discussed possible approaches to the translation of nursery rhymes as a genre of children's literature. We could see from the given examples that the form of the text in the target language depends mostly on its purpose. If the translated rhymes should become a valuable part of Czech children's literature, I think that it is better when the translator does not stick to the source text, but he should treat it more creatively, preserving its essential features and character, which are regularity and humour.

Next I chose several examples of intertextual use of nursery rhymes in prose and tried to show how various translators dealt with these texts. As nursery rhymes are mainly known to English readers, an allusion to these rhymes can present a translation problem which needs a careful approach. Definitely, the translator should consider an allusion in relation to the whole work, analyzing its functions, and on the basis of this analysis try to find the adequate solution.

Resumé

Anglická říkadla nazývaná „nursery rhymes“ jsou v dnešní době, podobně jako česká říkadla, považována za součást dětské literatury. Oproti českým říkadlům však „nursery rhymes“, ve své původní podobě či různých úpravách, pronikají daleko více do ostatních oblastí anglické kultury, jako je například hudba, tisk a televize. Především však jsou intertextuálně využívány v literatuře, kde plní různé funkce. Ve své práci se zabývám jak primárními funkcemi nursery rhymes jakožto žánru dětské literatury, tak jejich intertextuální aplikací. V druhé podobě jejich výskytu se zvláště soustředím na možnosti využití v próze.

V první kapitole se stručně zmiňuji o prvních publikacích obsahujících „nursery rhymes“ a možných původech těchto říkanek. Dále analyzuji jejich formu s ohledem na celkovou strukturu a také na jednotlivé literární prostředky, jako jsou figury a tropy. Ve třetí kapitole, rozdělené na dvě části, se věnuji možnostem výskytu „nursery rhymes“ v jejich primární a intertextuální aplikaci. V poslední kapitole se zabývám možnými přístupy k překladu „nursery rhymes“ právě v závislosti na jejich použití.

Termín „nursery rhymes“ se v Anglii rozšířil poté, co byla v roce 1806 vydána kniha Jane a Anne Taylorových *Rhymes for Nursery*, pro kterou se vžil pozměněný název „Nursery Rhymes“. V americkém prostředí se pro tento žánr udržel starší termín „Mother Goose’s rhymes“, tedy „Říkanek Matky Husy“. Tento název souvisí s tradiční postavou ústního folklóru, která byla do Anglie přenesena pravděpodobně v 17. století z Francie, kde se v postavě vypravěče objevovala „la Mère Oye“. Za první publikaci s „nursery rhymes“ určenou dětem se považuje slabikář *A Little Book for Little Children* ze začátku 18. století. Ten byl následován mnoha dalšími sbírkami a antologiemi. Za zmínku stojí například *Tommy Thumb’s Pretty Song Book* z roku 1744 obsahující dodnes populární „Bah, bah, a black sheep“, nebo sbírka publikovaná před rokem 1780 pod názvem *Mother Goose’s Melody*. Posledně jmenovaná publikace je spojována se jménem Johna Newberyho, průkopnického vydavatele dětské literatury – i když se nikdy nepotvrdilo, že stál skutečně u jejího zrodu. Za zlomové se považuje také dílo Jamese Orchardy Halliwella, které bylo vydáno v roce 1842 pod názvem *The*

Nursery Rhymes of England. Jedná se o jednu z prvních publikací, v nichž jsou kromě textů říkanek zahrnuty i poznámky týkající se jejich původu.

V dnešní době se běžně používá okolo 500 říkanek, z nichž, jak uvádí významní odborníci na dětská říkadla Iona a Peter Opie ve své knize *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, je asi polovina více než dvě stě let stará. Protože verše předcházející dnešním „nursery rhymes“ byly předávány především ústně, u mnoha z nich není možné doložit přesný původ. Je však zřejmé že většina dnes známých říkanek byla původně určena dospělému adresátovi. Výjimku tvoří ukolébavky (lullabies) a říkadla používaná jako doprovod her (infant-amusements, games-rhymes). Nejčastějším zdrojem „nursery rhymes“ byly písně a balady, ale můžeme také zmínit například divadelní hry či politické pamflety. V oblibě jsou historické výklady, ve kterých různí autoři spojují vznik jednotlivých „nursery rhymes“ s konkrétními reálnými postavami či událostmi dějin. Přestože jsou tyto interpretace populární, často neexistují dostatečné důkazy pro jejich hodnověrnost.

Forma „nursery rhymes“ je zřetelně dána jejich základním použitím, tedy faktem, že jsou především určeny dítěti k hlasité recitaci či zpěvu, nebo dítěti jako posluchači. Pro „nursery rhymes“ je proto charakteristický pravidelný rytmus a rým a též další prostředky, které činí jejich zvukovou podobu příjemnou.

Z hlediska celkové struktury anglického dětského říkadla je nejčastější stavební jednotkou čtyřverší, což je mimo jiné i důsledek vývoje „nursery rhymes“. Ty mají často původ ve folklorních žánrech jako je lidová píseň či balada, pro které je typické, že strofa se skládá ze čtyř veršů. Nejdůležitějším prvkem dětských říkadel je pravidelný rytmus, který je obvykle zvýrazněn plným koncovým rýmem, někdy i rýmem vnitřním. Pravidelný rytmus „nursery rhymes“ také podtrhují prostředky založené na opakování. V dětských říkadlech se proto hojně vyskytují různé typy figur. Jedná se jak o figury vyznačující se opakováním hlásek, tedy o konsonanci a asonanci, tak o figury tvořené opakováním slov či frází, jako je anafora, epifora a epanastrofa. Kromě toho, že dochází u „nursery rhymes“ ke zřejmému opakování v rovině ‚parole‘, se sklon k pravidelnosti projevuje i v rovině jazykového systému, například je v jednom říkadle použita několikrát tatáž větná struktura.

Oproti figurám nejsou tropy kromě personifikace tak časté. Přesto se v dětských říkadlech setkáváme například s metaforou či přirovnáním. Personifikace však převažuje, neboť je nejbližší způsobu myšlení dítěte, které přisuzuje stejné schopnosti jako má člověk i zvířatům či neživým věcem z okolního světa.

Výskyt „nursery rhymes“ je možno rozdělit do dvou základních skupin, které označuji jako výskyt primární a výskyt intertextuální. Primárním výskytem mám na mysli „nursery rhymes“ v jejich původní podobě používané jako žánr dětské literatury. Do druhé kategorie řadím intertextuální aplikaci „nursery rhymes“, tedy jejich využití v jiných textech.

„Nursery rhymes“ jsou významnou součástí dětské literatury, neboť jsou většinou první literaturou vůbec, se kterou se dítě v raném věku setkává. Dětská říkadla mohou tedy být považovány za jakýsi první stupeň literárního vývoje jedince. Dětská literatura obecně se vyznačuje několika základními funkcemi, které se v různé míře uplatňují i u „nursery rhymes“. I když je někdy u dětské literatury kladen důraz na výchovný aspekt, většina teoretiků dětské literatury se domnívá, že výsadní postavení náleží funkci estetické, která má jednotící charakter a jako taková je nadřazená funkcím ostatním.

Jednotlivé funkce se odlišnou měrou projevují u různých typů říkadel, což ukazují na konkrétních příkladech. Obecně hraje významnou roli funkce zábavná, protože může značně ovlivnit pozornost malého posluchače. S touto funkcí je možné se setkat u většiny „nursery rhymes“, neboť mnohé z nich mají humorný účinek. Především je ale charakteristická pro říkadla, která se používají při hře s malým dítětem (infant amusements) či při herní činnosti větších dětí (game-rhymes) a s nimi úzce související rozpočítadla (counting-out rhymes) a hádanky (riddles). Výrazným komickým efektem důležitým pro zábavnou funkci disponují „nursery rhymes“ založené na opakování hlásek, jako například jazykolamy (tongue-twisters).

U uvedených typů říkadel se velkou měrou projevuje i funkce praktická, protože dříve jmenované druhy veršů slouží k doprovodu hry nebo výběru ústředního hráče a jazykolamy představují užitečný prostředek k procvičení mluvidel. Některá říkadla podporují rozvoj dalších praktických dovedností, jako jsou například pohybové, jazykové a hudební. Funkce praktická doprovází od

počátku nejstarší typ říkadél určený dětem, a to ukolébavky (lullabies), které od pradávna používaly především matky k utišení svých nemluvňat.

Prostřednictvím „nursery rhymes“ se dítě seznamuje zjednodušenou formou s okolním světem a se vztahy, které v něm fungují. Dětské říkanky tedy také uplatňují funkci kognitivní, neboť rozvíjejí myšlení a napomáhají s ním souvisejícímu osvojování jazyka. Kognitivní funkce se zřetelně projevuje u říkadél nonsensových (nonsense), která nesmyslem a převrácením logiky poukazují na pravou podobu skutečnosti.

V souvislosti s říkadly můžeme též zmínit funkci výchovnou, která by však neměla mít formu otevřeného moralizování. Sociální funkce „nursery rhymes“ je dána tím, že nejprve bývají malým dětem předčítány starší osobou, tedy dochází nutně k interakci. Při hrách doprovázených recitací veršů navazuje dítě také sociální vazby se svými vrstevníky.

Zvláštní funkcí dětské literatury je funkce magická. Ta je výrazná u „nursery rhymes“, které mají původ v náboženských rituálech či zařikání (charms).

Poslední funkce, kterou jsem se zabývala, je funkce estetická. Jak jsem již uvedla, jedná se v literatuře o funkci nejdůležitější. Tato funkce by neměla být zanedbávána ani v literatuře pro nejmenší, právě naopak by se měla stát její nedílnou součástí, neboť její v manifestace v základní podobě hraje pro dítě významnou roli z hlediska dalšího rozvoje vnímání literárních děl.

Jak bylo řečeno již v úvodu, vedle primárního použití „nursery rhymes“ se s nimi setkáváme i v jiném kontextu, tedy v aplikaci intertextuální. Znamená to, že „nursery rhymes“ představují pre-text, který se odráží v jiném textu, kde se nachází citace či aluze k němu odkazující.

Prozaické texty, kde se vyskytují reference k „nursery rhymes“, můžeme rozdělit do skupin podle toho, zda říkanku využívají v názvu, ve struktuře zápletky, nebo na ni odkazují postavou díla. Do čtvrté, poslední, skupiny jsem zařadila ostatní texty, ve kterých se aluze objevuje v jiné funkci. Jednotlivé skupiny se samozřejmě překrývají, neboť například říkanka použitá v názvu může sloužit i jako předloha zápletky.

Titul inspirovaný „nursery rhyme“ má kupříkladu román *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* od Kena Keseyho, postmoderní román *Cat's Cradle* Kurta

Vonneguta Jr., či *All the King's Men* od Jiřana Roberta Penn Warrena. Říkadlo reflektované názvem je vždy propojeno s námětem díla.

Odkazy k říkankám se hojně objevují v názvech děl významné autorky detektivních románů a povídek Agathy Christie. Ta také používá texty říkanek k vystavění zápletky, uvedme například *And Then There Were None*; *One, Two, Buckle my Shoe* nebo *Hickory Dickory Dock*. Propojení říkadla a struktury díla je typické pro detektivní žánr. „Nursery rhymes“ využívá jako šablonu i vrah z detektivního románu S. S. Van Dina nazvaného *The Bishop Murder Case*, kde jednotlivým říkankám odpovídá nejen situace vraždy, ale souvisí s nimi i jména obětí. V detektivních příbězích slouží bezstarostnost dětských veršů často ke zdůraznění bezcitnosti vraha.

Postavy z „nursery rhymes“ mohou do díla vstoupit i přímo. Děje se tak například v příběhu pro děti od Maggie Browne nazvaného *Wanted – A King*, ve kterém se malá holčička dostane do království „Nurserydom“ obývaného známými postavami z dětských říkadel. Browne svým dílem následovala slavnějšího spisovatele Lewisa Carrolla a jeho příběhy o malé Alence pojmenované *Alice in Wonderland* a *Through the Looking Glass*. Alenka se na svém putování podivuhodnými kraji setkává s různými prapodivnými stvořeními, mezi jinými i s králem a královnou z říkanky „Queen of Hearts“ nebo s nejpopulárnější postavou „nursery rhymes“, kterou je „Humpty Dumpty“.

Knihu *Alice in Wonderland* jsem zahrnula i do poslední skupiny, protože obsahuje snad nejznámější parodii na „nursery rhymes“ vůbec. Tou je báseň „Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!“ odvozená od neméně slavné předlohy Jane Taylorové „Twinkle, twinkle, little star“. Z těchto dvou verzí vytvořil Vonnegut další ve svém románu *Cat's Cradle* a tu využil k ilustraci údajného dialektu fiktivního ostrova, kde se román z větší části odehrává. „Nursery rhymes“ se dále objevují v několika dílech Beatrix Potterové, například v příběhu o veveřím nezbedovi *Squirrel Nutkin*, který se pomocí hádanek snaží rozhněvat starou sovu. Podobně má funkci komunikační i říkadlo citované v posledním díle trilogie *The Forsyte Saga* od Johna Galsworthyho, kde jedna z hlavních hrdinek recituje upravenou verzi říkadla „Tom, Tom, the piper's son“, aby poškádčila svého milého. Odkazy na „nursery rhymes“ se objevují také v dílech jiných autorů, například v trilogii *The Lord of the Rings* od J. R. R. Tolkiena, nebo ve válečném románu Ernesta Hemingwaye *A Farewell to Arms*.

Vedle prozaických děl jsem uvedla pro ilustraci i několik příkladů z poezie, kde jsou „nursery rhymes“ oblíbeným prostředkem parodie. Také však mohou aluze odkazující k dětským veršům dokreslovat obsah básně. Nebo jejich forma může posloužit jako protiklad k vážnému tématu, což jsem ukázala na básni od Theodora Roethkeho. Vedle literárních textů se „nursery rhymes“ objevují například ve filmu nebo v novinách.

V poslední kapitole své práce jsem se věnovala možným přístupům k překladu „nursery rhymes“ v závislosti na jejich funkci. Nejprve jsem se zaměřila na primární výskyt, kde je překlad zřetelně ovlivněn účelem, kterému je výsledný text určen. Pokud se jedná o text obsažený v publikaci pro výuku anglického jazyka, kde je umístěn vedle anglického znění, je zřejmé, že překladatel musí zachovat především sémantický význam. Proto se takový překlad věrně drží zdrojového textu. Další typ překladu se objevuje v publikacích, které také kladou důraz na sémantickou přesnost, ale zároveň se snaží zachovat i jiné aspekty předlohy, jako je rytmus a rým. Za největší přínos pro českou dětskou literaturu však považuji *Klíč od království* od Josefa Bruknera a dvě sbírky Pavla Šruta *Kočka v houslích* a *Šišatý švec a myšut*. Jmenovaní autoři přistupují k „nursery rhymes“ s největší volností. Jejich díla obsahují verše, které se většinou nedají považovat za překlad „nursery rhymes“ v pravém slova smyslu. Přesto ale zachovávají základní znaky anglických říkadél, jako je pravidelnost formy, humor, nesmyslnost a hravost.

Překlad intertextuálního užití „nursery rhymes“ může pro překladatele znamenat nelehký úkol, neboť dané aluze jsou úzce spjaty s anglickou kulturou a proto často u českého čtenáře nevyvolají potřebné asociace. Obecně může překladatel řešit odkaz k určitému anglickému říkadlu dvěma způsoby. Buď ho nahradí existující českou říkankou, nebo se přidrží původního textu a dané verše přeloží. České říkadlo využil například překladatel Keseyho románu, když ho nazval *Vyhod' me ho z kola ven*. Pokud je dílo s říkankou více propojeno, je nutné zachovat informace důležité pro tuto vazbu. V každém případě musí překladatel zvážit všechny souvislosti, ve kterých „nursery rhyme“ vystupuje.

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Anotace diplomové práce

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Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky Filozofické fakulty UP v Olomouci

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Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jitka Zehnalová, Ph.D.

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