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Child and Play. Imagination – Expression – Education

Play as a phenomenon of culture is primarily associated with imagination – thus also with fantasy, inspiration, and expression. It refers to the extensive exploration of reality by association, analogy, similarity, contrast or contact. Furthermore, imagination and creative self-expression also become a way to understand oneself, as well as a means to recognize one's identity. Expression, due to the identification of the emotional content of a work of art with the experience of both the creator and the recipient, allows one to go beyond the text, it shows the ways of freeing the artist's emotions and presents specific "pictures" of self-expression.

The theories of play and games have been well described by researchers of culture: Roger Caillois and Johan Huizinga (Huizinga 1967). The cultural determinants of play – free participation, separation, and closure within a defined space time, uncertainty, unproductiveness, conformity to norms or fictionality – focus on the following vital elements: agon (competition), alea (destiny), mimica (imitation), and linx (stupefaction) (Caillois 1967).

In this volume, we invite you to join a discussion on the phenomenon of children's play and children's folklore as we try to answer the following question: Are these elements also reflected in children's play and its literary renderings?

It seems that a child participant plays a significant role in these considerations because it is her natural and spontaneous world of play and the rich imagination reinforced with curiosity and desire to explore the world that cause a creative type of behavior and expression of thoughts. According to Swiss psychologist Édouard Claparède (1873–1940), the child exists to play. To paraphrase this statement, does the child exist to read or to be read to? Does literature addressed to children fulfil their ludic expectations? Does it compete with toys, computer games and other kinds of entertainment that do not demand fluent reading skills or the ability to interpret texts? How does it function within the economies and consumption of children's culture?

Many of the aforementioned aspects of play and its cultural, anthropological, and educational entanglements, found in the articles included in this vol-

ume, correspond with the vision of children's folklore as a collection of works, games, and language games that take the form of specific, useful texts. They take on different cultural categories. Nowadays, the classification of children's folklore introduces several of its varieties: language games (e.g., 'name-calling,' 'hypocorism,' 'garbling'), literary games (e.g., legends, fairy tales, riddles, anecdotes, proverbs), movement games (e.g., skipping, counting), fun melodies (e.g., lullabies), manual games (e.g., coloring books, stickers) – in the case of countless texts, the genological border is blurred and the genre structure becomes unfixed (Cieślowski 1975; Simonides 1976).

Researchers of children's folklore also pay attention to its fate: transformations, alterations, changeability, changes from oral to written forms (e.g., children's diaries). Joanna Papuzińska in *Folklor dziecięcy i jego losy* (*Children's folklore and its fate*) notes that scholars have been "fascinated [...] [with] these aspects of children's character that have been associated with art: freshness and unconventionality of view, simplicity, and honesty in expressing feelings, the ability to be in the world of fantasy and fabrication, greater sensitivity than adults. Taking them into account, an analogy was made between the child's psyche and the psyche of the artist as the one who did not lose the gifts of childhood. One of the research trends that influenced the development of childhood interest was the theory of cultural survival of Edward Burnett Tylor, the British anthropologist of the turn of the 20th century, the main representative of evolution (*Antropologia*, Polish edition 1910). The theory of relics investigated the remnants of old behaviors that lost their social functions and remained in the customs and culture only in the form of relics. There are relatively many such relics preserved in children's behavior: the study of children's games or the accompanying verbal texts allowed them to come across traces of ancient rituals and beliefs that have already lost their functionality and are still practiced by children's collectibles in the form of dance tricks, games or texts they produce" (Papuzińska 2010). Papuzińska also emphasizes the expansion of electronic means of social communication, which generated new forms of media currently also in the formula of children's folklore (e.g., blog entries, the language of text messages, photos collected in mobile phones, the child as an active participant in the virtual world and the child as a player of computer games).

We should not forget about the achievements of Janusz Korczak, an outstanding researcher of the culture of childhood with particular emphasis on children's morality. Korczak based his research on his own experiences (e.g., he used the method of participant observation, which he strengthened by, for example, measuring and analyzing children's quarrels and disputes, discussed collected children's life documents, analyzed items collected by children, etc.), as well as on ethnography and anthropology, using the following sections: everyday life, beliefs and superstitions, social norms, gathering, exchange.

"In Korczak's views – writes Papuzińska – one can notice the treatment of children's communities as autonomous, separate constructs about their own

system of life and values, add much higher adults than [...] societies... he was primarily interested in the social behavior of children [...] beliefs and superstitions children's dreams and life plans, game scenarios and [...] children's passion for gambling" (Papuzińska 2010).

An essential role of literary inspirations that flow from the children's subculture is also played by the carnival of the world, the poetics of absurdity, nonsense, mischievous threads and the vision of averted reality – the world upside down. These elements fit in the children's counterculture area: "In the child's psyche and morality the motifs [...] occupy [...] a special place" – writes Papuzińska – "firstly, they perform multiple compensatory functions, secondly, they subject logical verification to the reality of the child, thirdly, which results from the first two premises – a source of fun and humor" (Papuzińska 2010; Simonides 1967).

Such considerations on the cultural roots of play and the role and function of children's folklore can also be found in this volume. Moreover, readers may find articles concerning cultural realization of the image of the child and play in a wider perspective: in the context of imagination, expression, and education. The main themes of the publications are as follows: children's games and children's literature between the Enlightenment and Romanticism – historical perspective (Hans Heino Ewers); ludic adaptations and children's literature from the ludological aspect (Alicja Ungeheuer-Gołąb and Bożena Olszewska); what to play and how to play in the 21st century – diagnoses and prescriptions (Krystyna Zabawa); intertextual strategies and paraphrases of children's literature classics in the context of gamification or the ludic expectations of literacy (Maria Alcantud-Diaz, Andrea Márquez-Gómez); play in pop-culture, play in literacy education in the context of children's play with pets – from linguistic perspective (Bernadetta Niesporek-Szamburska); children's literature and art as an experience (e.g., play and imagination in picture books and toy books), the phenomenon of subversive play (Katarzyna Slany); playing with reading (based on the notion of the child as a flâneur and a voyeur: an imaginative space of streets and museums – Olga Bukhina); play with the reception of reading, linguistic playfulness as a stylistic device in children's literature, the child – reading and imagination (e.g., humorous and playful maps in children's books – Björn Sundmark); play in new media (e.g., children's reaction to war in the video game *This War of Mine* – Michał Wolski); the child – play and the consumption of children's culture (e.g., toy as a historical artifact in children's culture – Angela Bajorek); children's poetry and play (Tzina Kalogirou); the child and play in the context of embodiments of the fool figure (Anna Czernow); dance as a play and its manners of depiction and functions (Emilya Ohar, Bogumiła Staniów, Dorota Michułka); literary motifs of playing computer and video games in fantasy novels for children and young adults (Weronika Kostecka); play in political and historical context based on the theme of depicting communism for children in Soviet era picture books 1920s–1930s (Marina Balina); play in children's world with merry pictures of

the little folk based on the cartoon magazine *Veselye kartinki* (Christine Göltz); play from educational perspective: little big fun with good manners and selected examples of contemporary etiquette guides for children (Magdalena Jonca); *paidia* and *paideia*, play and ethics in children's literature (Małgorzata Wójcik-Dudek); main topoi in children's subculture and „great play” in children's folklore (Jolanta Ługowska, Alicja Baluchowa and Maciej Skowera); play and imagination in Polish language education (Barbara Myrdzik).

To commemorate the 100th birthday of Jerzy Cieślowski, the great explorer of children's folklore, children's subculture and “great play”, a separate group of texts included in this volume are devoted to Cieślowski who as a pioneer of research on the culture of the child and childhood and literature for children in Poland was a researcher and a provocateur.

Professor Jerzy Cieślowski has become the pride of Polish literary studies. He is known mainly as a scholar of children's folklore and literature. The subject matter of this part of introduction is a reflection on Cieślowski's academic career, especially an attempt to answer the question why the world of children's literature and subculture became the focus of his interests. When in the late 1950s Cieślowski published his first academic article on that matter, he entered a field that in Poland had been dominated by women, who were traditionally more interested in such texts. In our country it was women who had been the most thorough critics, who had pioneered research studies in that field, run the first departments at universities, and written first textbooks for university students. Men, professors and scholars, appeared in that field later, for instance as part of teaching staff at universities of education, but remained a minority. At that time, literature for children and youth were treated as a proverbial Cinderella when compared to national or international classics, still waiting for proper academic recognition. Cieślowski's achievement is the fact that children's literature became a legitimate object of literary studies not only due to its didactic functions, but also because of its aesthetic and ludic values – such a change of perspective must have taken a novel approach to the source material. As a historian of Polish literature, Cieślowski could have contented himself with literature of the Positivist period, appointed to him by the department, and its praiseworthy representatives, including Henryk Sienkiewicz (winner of the literary Nobel prize) and Eliza Orzeszkowa (Nobel candidate). But what made Cieślowski the best suited person to study this period was his papers on Positivist writers for children: Walery Przyborski (master thesis) and Maria Konopnicka (PhD dissertation), which we will discuss in more detail later on. When Cieślowski was appointed an assistant professor and could lecture on the history of Polish literature of the second half of the 19th c., he continued his research adjusting the focus to folklore as a part of children's subculture and its influence on literary works both for children and adults. This approach was expressed in Cieślowski's postdoctoral book titled *Wielka zabawa* (trans. *Great Fun*, 1967), written when he was almost 50, and the book that brought him the

professorial degree – *Literatura i podkultura dziecięca* (trans. *Children's Literature and Subculture*, 1974), published three years before his death.

Jerzy Cieślukowski was born in 1916 during the First World War, in Minsk which later became the capital city of Belarus. We do not know how his family got there, what his upbringing looked like or what he read and how he played as a child. He spent his youth in central Poland – in Jędrzejów in the Kielce province, where he attended school and passed the final exams just one year before the Second World War broke out. His literary interests manifested themselves as early as in secondary school, as prove Cieślukowski's letters that he sent to Warsaw periodical *Kuźnia Młodych* (trans. *Forge of the Youth*) between 1934 and 1935. The letters were poems and feature letters “from the province”. However, Cieślukowski followed his parents' advice and started studying veterinary medicine at the University of Warsaw – after one year the Second World War interrupted his education. As a twenty-three-year-old man he joined the resistance and became an officer of the Polish Home Army in Jędrzejów district responsible first for propaganda, and later for air-drops. He was fortunate enough to avoid the hecatomb of the Warsaw Uprising and Stalinist repressions.

When the war ended, Cieślukowski joined the Polish Socialist Party and undertook studies at the Jagiellonian University, but soon he and a group of students were transferred to Wrocław, where he married and started a family. At that time Cieślukowski undertook Polish studies at the University of Wrocław, meaning to become a journalist. During the studies he was active in students' organizations and was a contributor of a number of periodicals. He still published mainly poems and feature articles, but his satirical skills already started to show. Before communist censorship closed down independent magazines, between 1946–1947 Cieślukowski published humorous cartoons in “Horyzont Kulturalny” (trans. The Cultural Horizon) – a Sunday supplement to *Naprzód Dolnośląski* (a local paper of the Polish Socialist party). His cartoons were a covert critique of the political regime. When the communists were forcing the Polish Socialist Party to join them, Cieślukowski drew a man hanging on a hook and a passerby asking “Do you still waver, sir?”. Cieślukowski's humour was sharp and mocked many different subjects, including social conventions. For other magazines, he wrote epigrams, fake letters from readers, book reviews and – increasingly more often – reviews of fine arts exhibitions.

Jerzy Cieślukowski's satirical works (signed with the acronym “jotce”, i.e. J.C.), similarly as his – printed out in fragments – occupation-themed novel *Różowe migdały* (trans. *Pink Almonds*), prove his passion for writing. These literary experiences undoubtedly influenced the style of his university lectures and academic publications. Obligated to work on literary history of Polish Positivism and modernism, he wrote essays consistent with his interests, for instance about the artistic circle in Henryk Sienkiewicz's short story “Ta trzecia” (trans. “The Third One”) or the presence of religious myths in the structure of

Eliza Orzeszkowa's novel *Nad Niemnem* (*On the Niemen*). This indisputable national epic depicts the extraordinary hardship of Polish gentry to survive under Russian rule after the defeat of the January Uprising (1863–64) and presents the story of a young gentry woman without a life purpose, who matures to marry a hard-working young man representing the impoverished gentry. The novel was included in the obligatory school reading lists during the communist period as the most prominent work of literary realism. It stood not so much for eastern borderlands gentry's heroism, but was rather a glorification of hard work on the land and simple life of common people. Yet, Cieřlikowski was arguably the first Polish literary scholar who, using Eliade's research methods, found in the novel's structure similarities to religious myths or even folk fairy tales. In that sense, he became the precursor of archetypal criticism, long before Polish readers could familiarize themselves with the works of Carl Gustav Jung or Northrop Frye. Cieřlikowski's concept was so ground-breaking, or perhaps we can even say "roguish", that it was not properly received in academic literature or school education. Looking for sacrum in tendentious literature was not in high regard at that time.

Jerzy Cieřlikowski was also innovative in his attempt to interpret fable "About Janek who made shoes for dogs", a story included Juliusz Słowacki's Romantic drama *Kordian*, which itself is the first part of an intended trilogy to be titled *Spisek koronacyjny* (trans. *The Coronation Plot*). The story of a village boy who against the world's opinion becomes a royal minister, which sounds similar to English Dick Whittington, is for Cieřlikowski a key for understanding Kordian's nonconformist attitude, who wants to assassinate in Warsaw the despotic tsar to be crowned the king of Poland in 1825. Other scholars (M. Bizan and P. Hertz) interpreted Janek's story in a different way – as an abbreviated biography of pre-Romantic (that is before the November Uprising of 1830) heroes when "cunning, resourcefulness, compromise, loyalism and above all a well-learned and useful skill could provide a calm and prosperous life". In the real world of a Lithuanian parish living according to teachings of a local priest and a provincial teacher, Janek is a dunce, scamp, and outcast. In the fable world, he becomes a successful lord. This fable – within the drama told to Kordian by a tutor and veteran of the Napoleonic Wars – has become a separate reading for children. In the interwar education of Polish language and culture, when Cieřlikowski was still a schoolboy, the fable was only known as a fragment of *Kordian*, but since then has been published separately and illustrated. After the war, it had many editions with illustrations by Wiřniewski, Szancer, and others. "These iconic images co-exist with the memory of meanings and sounds" writes Cieřlikowski. As a dramatic and rhymed fable, in time it started to be "sung". Modern antipedagogy (mainly works by Schoenbeck and Blusz) – which emphasizes new, eclectic upbringing, paidocentrism, belief in inborn developmental dynamism – could surely perceive Janek's turbulent life as a role model for individuals who want to control their fate without the

irritating supervision of adults. However, if we were to accept such a perspective, which is consistent with characteristic changes in the post modern world, we should also change the canon of school readings.

Cieślukowski's unconventional approach to classics could be seen as early as in his Master thesis on Walery Przyborowski's historical novels for children. According to the thesis, Przyborowski, who was ten years younger than Mark Twain and was inspired by Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy*, modelled his stories not according to educational goals but rather ludic ones, especially in the case of a battle adventure of a young protagonist, which resembled playing with tin soldiers.

In his PhD dissertation on Maria Konopnicka's poems and fairy tales for children, Cieślukowski indicated issues related to the tradition of didactic poetry and children's folklore, such as adaptation of foreign texts or semiotics of illustrated books and original fairy tales. Research on Stanisław Jachowicz's rhymed tale, who initiated the development of children's poetry in Poland, supposedly led Cieślukowski to a bold argument that the works of this 19th century poet and educationalist belong not to the Romanticism but to a contemporary cultural trend – the Biedermeier period. It was meant to question the then accepted periodization of Polish literature for children, which was not consistent with the periodization of literature in general.

Another Cieślukowski's bold move was to include obscene folklore of rural children in his postdoctoral book *Great Fun*, which had so far been ignored in both Romantic and modernist folklore studies. The discovery of this phenomenon was possible only to Cieślukowski's personal preliminary research of written sources, usually of contributory character and without an opportunity to compare them with foreign publications – if there were any. Driven by the spirit of contrariness or perhaps academic diligence, Cieślukowski emphasized works that proved the separate identity of children's subculture. These included mostly shepherds' sayings and jokes, or rhymed name calling that worked as rites of initiation for a new playmate. However, Cieślukowski found also parodies of adult conversations (dialog of the deaf) or even sermons, which can be seen as anticipations of typically urban forms of entertainment, like for instance political or literary cabaret, clearly contesting social norms of the urban life. Cieślukowski noticed analogous forms of contestation in works of 20th century poets loved by Polish children: Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa. Cieślukowski saw the lyrical subjects in their poems as a kind of an "uncle", who uses topics and forms based not on didactic poetry saturated with paternalistic authority by rather inspired by cabaret and comedic works. Recognizing the poet as a primal man and mythical thinking as a source of metaphors, he considered children's imagination and folklore the key to understanding the avant-garde trends in poetry and painting of the 20th century. Thus, he researched paraphrases of classic texts for children, and grotesque presentations of historical figures and religious beliefs. He said "This free, in a sense even chummy, reshuffle of what is important in the world,

the liberation of concepts and images from their true or assumed solemnity is a crucial aspect of being a child, with the reservation that the child means it as a form of fun, not an attempt to revolutionize the world” (WZ, 394).

Taking it all into account, it is not surprising that in a circle of children’s literary scholars dominated in Poland by women, Jerzy Cieślowski was seen as an intruder at first, and later as enfant terrible who goes his own ways. Yet, slowly he convinced more and more scholars, especially from the younger generation. On top of typical monographs titled “Works of John/Jane Doe for children and youth”, there was an increasing number of detailed analytical studies of genological and interdisciplinary character which used the latest methodological trends. The area of research on children’s folklore, childhood anthropology and childhood experience is expanding and shows that the heritage of scientific research of Jerzy Cieślowski is still needed, relevant and up to date, and that it is the basis for further research on children’s studies.

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We hope that this extensive volume devoted to children’s folklore, play, expression, imagination and education, a collection in which many articles are rooted in the research of Jerzy Cieślowski and the heritage of his scientific discoveries, meet the expectations of the readers, set in the title of this volume and show the readers a few significant – new scientific paths of exploration of literature and culture of a child and childhood.

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