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Ostapchenko A.A.**УДК 81'373.7+811.111'06****THE PROBLEM OF NURSERY RHYMES' ORIGIN AND THEIR GENRE PECULIARITIES****ПРОБЛЕМА ПРОИСХОЖДЕНИЯ ПОНЯТИЯ «NURSERY RHYMES» И ИХ ЖАНРОВЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ**

Целью данной статьи является определение сущности понятия «Nursery Rhymes» в соответствии с исследованиями отечественных и зарубежных ученых и изучение проблемы происхождения стихов nursery rhymes как жанра английской детской поэзии.

Ключевые слова: Nursery Rhymes, жанр.

The article is dedicated to the study of the origin of the children's English Nursery Rhymes poetry. The term 'Nursery Rhymes' is understood as short in volume texts of verses, tongue twisters, riddles and songs for children which present an integral part of the English language and culture.

There exist not many folklorists' researches on the Nursery Rhymes material (Halliwell 1847, Bolton 1888, Bett 1929, Opie 1951, Eckenstein 1968) who have studied Nursery Rhymes from the point of view of their origin [1], suggested various classifications of the children's poetry. Recently researches dedicated to numerous linguistic aspects have appeared: rhythmic structure [2], phraseology [3], allogical formations [4], culture-oriented linguistics [5], linguistic image of the world [6].

Before examining Nursery Rhymes as an object of the scientific study, it is necessary to define the term from the point of view of linguistics. «Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore» [7] gives us the following notion of Nursery Rhymes: «nursery rhyme – a simple traditional poem or song for children». The analogous interpretation is found in «Britannica» electronic dictionary, where Nursery Rhymes are defined as poetic forms customarily told or sung to small children by adults. Thus, the analysis of the afore-cited definitions enables to come to the conclusion that NR possess such integral characteristics as their traditionality.

The definition in the «Dictionary of the English Language» singles out such characteristic of NR as their short volume. The examined definitions single out a child (of an early age) as a principal recipient of NR texts. «Dictionary of World Folklore» [8] also rates NR as children's poetry and lays emphasis on extreme importance of these verses in the process of forming an individual's idea about their nation's culture. Therefore, special mention is made of the fact that NR texts under our examination possess national cultural specificity.

NR genre is dated back to the heathen past. The source of the rhymes' origin takes roots in ancient rituals and ceremonies, religious feasts, prayers, rulers' activities, catastrophes and epidemics, historical events (wars, rebellions), street shows and performances, daily labour process.

There exist facts which give grounds to suppose that some works of the genre had a prolonged period of oral existence (more than 1500 years) before the moment of their written fixation. They are unrhymed national songs having numerous European equivalents, counting-out songs based on onomatopoeia, texts accompanying children's plays ('*The King of the Castle*'), and a number of riddles.

Records of verses created in the medieval epoch are preserved till nowadays.

According to the research conducted by the British collectors, publishers, and archivists of children's folklore Iona and Peter Opie, the least of the children's poems was created at the end of the XVI c. – the beginning of the XVII c. and the greatest number of NR dates back to the end of the XVI c. – the beginning of the XVII c.

In the period of abundant verses creation the following events took place in the history of England: the reformation – the separation from the Roman papacy, establishment of the Anglican Church by Henry VIII. In connection with this the secularization of the church land was implemented. The land enclosing entailed the mass resettlement of rural inhabitants to urban area [9].

At the given period the industrial and agrarian revolutions took place. The Bible translated from the Latin language and available to all literate people got widespread extension. The repeated outbreak of the active verses creation (the beginning of the XVIII c.) is possibly connected with the development of the English language as the literary one and the beginning of the intensive NR written imprinting.

Rooting back to the heathen times the NR collection had been replenishing during the whole period of the nation's progress, but not all the types were addressed to children.

Many folklore works including NR verses present the reflection of 'adult' amusements. In the XVII – XVIII centuries children were treated as 'grown-ups in miniature' and there was no special sphere of literature for children.

Only rhymed ABC books, lullabies, verse-games can be considered as works created specially for children before the XIX c. The verses that belong to the NR genre became called 'children's' only in the first third of the XIX c. when publishers and pedagogues endeavored to comprehend the creations of national fantasy, classify and edit them from the point of view of what could be addressed to as the children's poetry indeed.

In Great Britain teachers deeply inspired with frame of puritan mind considered that 'Mother Goose Rhymes' belonged to the part of mass culture, absolutely inappropriate for children's ears. They aimed at religious education and NR songs to their minds were not conductive to the goal.

There are definite facts incomparable to the 'children's' verses destination. The analysis of a hundred NR songs conducted by English teachers revealed: «8 mentions of murders; 2 choked; 1 devoured alive; 1 cut in two; 1 beheaded; 1 died from starvation; 1 fell into boiling water; 1 drowned; 4 killings of domestic animals; 1 dead body kidnapping; 21 deaths (unclassified); 7 limbs severances; 1 who wishes to have his limbs cut off; 2 mutilations; 1 case of cannibalism; 5 death threats; 1 kidnapping; 12 cases of torture and savageness towards people and animals; 8 birch or whip beatings; 14 thefts and frauds; 2 grave mentions ...» and so forth [10].

Summing up all the aforesaid we can single out the following characteristics of the children's English Nursery Rhymes poetry: the verses have the long period of their existence (the most of them had already existed in the written form from the end of the XVI c. – the beginning of the XVII c., some of the NR appeared about two thousands years ago and were existing in the oral form). The most ancient works of the genre under consideration are folk songs, counting-out rhymes, texts accompanying various children's plays and riddles.

The rhymes are the result of collective creative work, belong to the precedent-related texts and they are universal as the analogues of the given verses exist in other languages.

Traditionally according to their destination the nursery rhymes verses did not belong to the works for children. From the first third of the XIX century they are scrutinized as the 'children's' poems.

In addition to their mythological pragmatic orientation the nursery rhymes acquire the functions of entertainment, instruction, education, preservation of the historical information, cultural tradition.

The nursery rhymes poems possess the definite characteristics peculiar to folklore: traditionality, syncretism, changeability based on improvisation.

The uniqueness of the genre under observation is reflected in the fact that it is replenished by new poems suddenly coming to the surface in different corners of the Earth even till nowadays.

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