

SLOVENIAN FOLK LULLABIES: ANALYSIS OF THE LULLABY TEXTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

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Behind the laconic language of [folk songs] are complex mental states that would be better substantiated by Freud than by the evident logic of life.
(Terseglav 1987: 124)

Abstract: The evening ritual of putting a child to sleep, as we know it in Slovenia today, originates from the period of bourgeois family formation. An important part of this ritual is the lullaby. The archaic form of calming with rhythm (rocking) and droning is much older than the middle-class family. When falling asleep, the child is in a liminal state, and by singing a lullaby the singer is also in a liminal state. The analysis of texts of selected Slovene folk lullabies showed that lullabies are constructed in an oneiric manner and are therefore liminal. The analysis relied primarily on Freudian psychoanalytic thought.

Keywords: folk lullaby, liminal, psychoanalysis, Slovenia

INTRODUCTION¹

The idea to write about the evening ritual was born while writing an article about the education of the little residents of Ljubljana between the two world wars. Reflection on the evening ritual of calming the child to sleep associated me with the liminal state of humankind. The article connects the ritual of falling asleep with liminality in time (from time to timelessness) and space (every departure is an arrival) and analyses the texts of Slovenian folk lullabies within the psychoanalytic thesaurus to understand the content of adult attitudes towards children, which singers² (in the liminal state) passed on to children in the evenings.

Psychoanalysis is a corpus of knowledge about the unconscious and a method of treatment that brings this knowledge. Psychoanalysis analyses the individual, society, and culture. It is subversive but uneconomical, wasteful in the age of neoliberal consumer culture because of its precise analysis and accurate reasoning. Society is dominated by cognitive-behavioral models of understanding and "discoveries" of neuroscience, most of which have been part of psychoanalytic knowledge for over a hundred years. Biological, i.e., Darwinist interpretations of culture are always dangerous for social well-being. Thus, the behaviorist repressive training of children coupled with the eugenic concern for a healthy offspring offered a hand to the fascism and Nazism of the Second World War (Cunnigham 1996).

I see my modest article as an answer to the call of the great Slovenian folklorist Marko Terseglav and as part of the noble tradition of Alan Dundes.

The analysis of lullaby texts is synchronous, covering not all lullabies from Slovenia but rather a selection of them. Contemporary lullabies that were collected and recorded in CD format, entitled *Al' že spiš? ali Kako uspavamo v Sloveniji* (Are you already sleeping? or How we fall asleep in Slovenia) (Juvančič & Šetinec 2006), are not included. This collection includes a selection of lullabies that are sung in Slovenia today; so in addition to folk lullabies, there are also artificial ones and those from other cultural environments.

The selection I made for this article consists of folk lullabies that were written in the twentieth century, mainly before and after World War II. The origin of lullabies, however, is undoubtedly much older. They were created in a rural environment but transferred by nannies to the pre-war bourgeois environment, where within the construction of a new childhood the evening ritual of putting a child to sleep was born.

In the first section I will introduce the liminality of the evening rite, mainly relying on Victor Turner's concept of liminal state and my field records of experiences of going to bed of pre-war Ljubljana children from the lower bourgeois stratum. At that time a kind of evening rite was established. In the second section the theme of lulling and liminality will be elaborated. The question in the third section is simply "What's going on when singing a lullaby?" So, the aforementioned selection of lullaby texts will be (psycho)analysed, mostly through Sigmund Freud's concept of the unconscious and drive theory and infantile theories of sexuality, which will be explained on a case-by-case basis. The analysis is followed by a conclusion.

1. LIMINALITY OF THE EVENING RITE

As we already know, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Dutch folklorist Arnold van Gennep recognised that rites of passage (*rites de passage*) are tripartite. The first phase is marked by separation, the second phase is a borderline period, and the characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous. In the third phase, the transition is completed: the ritual subject has new clearly defined rights as well as obligations to others. The most typical example of a rite of passage is the initiation of young people into adulthood (Gennep 2019 [1909]). In the late 1960s, British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner summed up Gennep's three-part rite and reshaped it to some extent: 1. separation from the everyday flow of activities, which involves crossing the border or *limen* into a ritual world, in which known time and space no longer apply; 2. mimetic performance of the scale of the crisis that led to the separation, in which the structures of everyday life are problematised; and 3. re-entry into the everyday world – reintegration (Turner 2008 [1969]: 94–97).

Today we find analyses of the liminal experience of the subject (threshold person) not only in the classical contributions of folkloristics and cultural anthropology, but also in the articles on tourism, new spirituality, psychiatric treatment, social overthrow, artistic practice, etc. If the liminal state is characterised by a decline in the general coherence of the world as people imagine it, then there is almost no human experience that does not carry the character of liminality, from the point of view of what was and is becoming. For example, the sense of self changes during the process of transition from child to adult. The rejection of support in positions of authority is followed by disorientation, which concludes with a view of the world that differs from the initial one, exactly because it consists of the experience of the transition itself. In general, “liminality is not a weird exception to the normal state of being; it *is* being,” argues literary theorist Peter Schwenger (2012: xii). We could say that the liminal state of the subject is not the opposite of the “normal” state, but an everyday and integral part of it. For example, the experiences of insecurity and anxiety which we face to excess in contemporary society are liminal.

An evening ceremony with a dimension of passage seems universal. Psychotherapeutic material reveals a plethora of ways by which a person may go to sleep and fall asleep at night, but the repetition is universal. Sleep preparation and calming are the first two parts of a three-part construction. Sleep is usually the last act of the daily evening ritual.

*Sleep is a 'departure' by the individual into the unknown on a daily basis.
On a path where many things can happen, sometimes even unpleasantness.*

It is therefore necessary to prepare the child for this departure before going to bed. The child needs to be calmed down, invited to sleep, provided with security and, above all, a safe return. Coming to a new day, to a new reality the next day. (Cvetko 2005: 67)

Going to sleep represents the child's separation from the waking world and emotionally important people. From the point of view of the child's mentality, it is important how the parents do this. If they want a young child to fall asleep peacefully and rest, they need to calm them down and perhaps comfort them. If the process of going to sleep takes place in a known sequence, it provides the child with a predictably safe environment. The evening ritual varies from family to family, but the scheme, as Gennep and Turner learned, is dictated by the cultural code and social order of the time and space. For example, in 1926 Fran Govekar in his *Bon ton* advised a mother to "put the child to bed and – the child falls asleep" (Govekar 1926: 89). Similarly, the writer emphasised that the mother should "accustom ... the child to obedience and order from the first year", and should "accustom them to go to sleep at a certain time", to insist and "not give up for any price" (Govekar 1926: 89–90). The ritual as parents know it in Slovenia today (feeding, washing, sleeping) was rooted in the middle-class bourgeois family at the time Govekar wrote his *Bon ton*, when the child was placed in a special place in the construction of a bourgeois family. The bourgeois imaginary of childhood defined the child as an innocent being to be cared for, guided and directed. Unlike the present, the evening ritual in the upper bourgeoisie was provided by nurses who probably sang folk lullabies.³ In the first half of the twentieth century, the children of the lower classes of the urban and suburban population, who did not grow up with maids, also began to become acquainted with the components of the evening ritual. These are covered by my field records.

Mr T. recalled that his "mother covered me and kissed me, my father never did. She also sang a lullaby "Sleep now, sleepy", but also "some Swabian [German] lullabies were in between". Mrs K. described the evening farewell in this way: "We prayed together in the evening, but then we girls had to go to bed. Mother made a cross over my face." The evening ceremony was similarly described by Mrs F.: "Before going to bed, my mother sometimes told me the fairy tale about Hansel and Gretel or Sleeping Beauty ... and she made the sign of the cross over my brother and me." Whereas Mrs D. recounted:

Father was a commander: 'Now kneel down and pray!', despite the fact that he was a socialist. It was a hard upbringing! Then we had to go to bed. They crossed us in the crib before sleep and gave us a kiss. My mother

always sang a lot... and I asked her to sing for me when she put me to bed... I knocked on the wall: 'Mommy, sing!', and she sang to me from the kitchen, the folk song "Pojdem na Štajersko" [I'm going to Styria], "Na planinah..." [In the mountains...], so that I could hear her voice and fall asleep easier. I still have an extraordinary auditory memory! When my father was away, my mother slept with us in the double bed.

Mrs D. recalled: "I pounded on the wall, 'Mommy, sing!', and she sang folk songs to me from the kitchen", which testified to the mental connection that is important at the time of physical separation (Bowlby 1998 [1973]) before children fall asleep (Winnicott 1991 [1971]). The process of falling asleep represents a drowsy intermediate, transient, liminal mental space between wakefulness and sleep, between the known and the unknown, between a world where there is an illusion of control, and a dreamy conscious world. It is about saying goodbye to the reality that is inhabited by important people and going to a dream where anything can happen. For a peaceful sleep, a sense of security is necessary, which in the absence of an important adult is provided to the child by a transitional object or a transient phenomenon that calms and comforts (Winnicott 1991 [1971]). Narratives from the Ljubljana area do not reveal transitional objects (pacifier, bottle, diaper, pillow, blanket, plush animal, etc.)⁴ for children from suburban areas and lower middle class, so I think that the children of that time used transient phenomena, such as indistinct singing, vocalisations, as well as repetitive caressing, stroking the hair or earlobes, thumb or fist sucking, etc. (Winnicott 1991 [1971]). Examples of field narratives reveal that the evening rituals of the lower classes of the bourgeoisie and suburban workers in the first half of the twentieth century included calming ingredients: prayer, reading a fairy tale or singing a lullaby, and protective phenomena such as crossing and/or kissing. A kiss is an extension of parental protection that a child carries with them to sleep. Crossing, however, allows the superfluous being to enter the parent-child relationship, which will protect the child even when the parents are asleep.⁵

I shall return to the protective role of prayers below. At this point, it is important for me to learn that before World War II, the "important other" in the child's intermediate, liminal state was not physically present. The cultural norm changed with the gradual democratisation of the child after World War II. Only in the late 1930s educators, also due to the flourishing of psychoanalytic knowledge about the psychosexual development of the child, associated behavioural repressive training with fascism and began, unfortunately too late, to advocate democratic child rearing. It also meant putting the child to sleep in a more sympathetic way, at least on a conscious level.

2. LIMINALITY OF SLEEP

In Slovenia, folk songs were composed in rural areas, as at the end of the nineteenth century the majority of the Slovenian population were peasants. “The basic group of bearers [in addition to farmers] consisted of shepherds, soldiers, craftsmen, plebeian inhabitants of cities ..., various, but ... lower social classes” (Terseglav 1987: 22). With industrialisation and urbanisation, it became part of the urban environment, as the bourgeoisie, which mostly came from the countryside and later went there on visits and trips, recognised it as “natural” and “uncontaminated”, worthy of national identity, which was an important topic of public discourse at the time.

Most of the ethnological contributions dealing with the way of life of the majority of the population in Slovenia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries do not report engagement with young children. This is not surprising, as children on the farm had more economic than emotional value. Until they grew up enough to become part of the workforce and take care of their own food, they were not really important. In bourgeois families, on the other hand, the child was supposed to have emotional value, which served to consolidate the social status. The children of the upper bourgeoisie were cared for by more or less numerous maids. The child was a social representation and contribution to the “body of the nation”. In noble families, children were separated from their parents even more. The children of working-class families were at the mercy of the care of “neighbours” and later at the mercy of “streets” most of the time. 70 years ago, the majority of adults in Slovenia commanded, threatened, intimidated, and physically punished their children more than they cherished and caressed them (Puhar 1982; Huzjan 2020, 2021). In this regard, it would be necessary to investigate who sang lullabies to the children,⁶ some of which we can still hear today. Was it the mother, the toothless grandmother, an older sister, an aunt, a peasant girl, a wet nurse, or a babysitter?

The survey material revealed to Katarina Ščepanovič, a student of ethnology and cultural anthropology, that “singing lullabies has been present to approximately the same extent since 1915 (when the oldest respondent was born) until today [i.e., in 2006, V.H.]; this is expected to put about a quarter of children to sleep” (Ščepanovič 2006: 28). Her findings show that in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the most common technique for putting children to sleep was praying together, saying or singing prayers. Prayer to the guardian angel was widely used and “can also be found in school readers from the end of the 19th century until World War II” (Juvančič 2009: 282). Singing lullabies was never part of the prevailing culture in Slovenia, but the lullaby remained alive “almost as a ritual tradition” (Cvetko 2005: 66). It is a “universal

human act” (Juvančič 2009: 277), but the form and performance of the lullaby depend on the culture in which the singer lives.

The lullaby is a form of song that transcends time and social strata, as well as space through migrations. Researchers of the Slovene folk music tradition define it as an “improvised musical practice” with stable patterns of folklore form (“aja tutaja” or “nina nana”) with a repetitive melody and simple rhythm (Juvančič 2009: 279). It is a musically simple song of uniform rhythm and small intervals. In its simplicity, it preserves the features of ancient singing and archaic melodies (Cvetko 2005: 64–65). It seems that its essential attribute is that it is defined only by its use. Therefore, a lullaby is any song that is used to put a child to sleep (Lomax Hawes 1974; Cvetko 2005; Pisanec 2006; Juvančič 2009). What is it in a lullaby that puts a child to sleep?

An attribute of every ritual is predictability, which brings certainty and therefore security to the ritual subject. A physical proximity of the other, the predictability of the rhythm and of the melody which comfort the child to sleep are important to the central aspect of the evening ritual – falling asleep. A monotonous rhythm is calming due to the proximity of autonomic processes such as breathing or heartbeat, and especially due to sucking. Sucking is a “rhythmic repetition of sucking touches with the mouth (lips)”, which culminates in satiety and a feeling of pleasure. Over time, this separates and becomes independent from the original function of sucking. “Sucking out of pleasure is associated with full concentration of attention, and leads either to sleep or even to the motor reaction of a kind of orgasm” (Freud 1995 [1905]: 59; cf. Winnicott 1991 [1971]).⁷ Other sleep-inducing techniques are also associated with rhythmic sexual pleasure, namely rocking, cuddling while walking, riding in a pram, even in a car or train, etc. When reading or telling a story, physical proximity and a familiar voice calm the child, which is also important when singing. Physical closeness, rhythm and voice are supposed to contribute to a pleasant and safe feeling when going to sleep, while not ignoring the fact that a child’s experience of closeness can also be bad.

In the preface to the book *Aja, tutaja*, puppeteer Jelena Sitar wrote:

Just how is [the child] supposed to separate from the exciting surroundings, light and contacts and move into the darkness and loneliness of sleep? ... A close adult with their presence, touch and voice in a slow repetitive rhythm helps the child to overcome the time of transition from wakefulness to sleep. When children close their eyes, they can still hear their mother’s or father’s voice, which becomes quieter and more distant... Until a new meeting, when children open their eyes again... (Sitar 2005: 3)

The lullaby “draws a line” (Cvetko 2005: 67); it is a threshold that must be crossed to enter the world of sleep, although falling asleep can also be dangerous. The following lullaby suggests that it is not always certain a person will wake up:

*Whoever is sleepy, let him go to sleep, let him go to sleep.
I'm not sleepy, and I'm not going to sleep.
One has slept three nights, three nights,
and his eyes have sunk into his neck.*
(Pisanec 2006: 49)⁸

According to “some beliefs, a person [should] die symbolically in a dream (leaving the soul)” (Paternoster & Lamut & Valič 2006: 53). The comparison between sleep (during which a person is absent, although physically present) and death does not surprise us, as we also say that someone who has died has fallen asleep forever. A daily evening farewell (e.g., a kiss or goodnight greeting) from loved ones has a similar apotropaic character; it is an expression of connectedness or attachment (Bowlby 1998 [1973]) in case the person does not wake up. Each sleep is a metaphorical death. People “drown” in sleep; they are left breathless.

The aforementioned song is about a singer who is putting a child who is afraid of sleeping to sleep. (Re)creating a simple rhythm and melody can induce a tired singer to sleep. Schwenger compares reading or creating texts with hypnagogy, sleepiness, napping or slipping into sleep when the images that a person “observes” with their eyes closed are far away. This state is not yet sleep, nor is it the dream world. It is the liminal state between being awake and sleeping, in which a person is no longer fully conscious (Schwenger 2012: 1–49). The singer also crosses the threshold during the musical improvisation. So during the singing of a lullaby the liminal state is dual; it is the state of the child and of the singer.

Sleeping is a mental exercise of the process of separation; not only the separation of the child from an adult, but also the separation of the adult from a child. In this regard, American folk musician and folklorist Bess Lomax Hawes wondered if it was not the case that in a lullaby, “the mother is actually talking to herself about separation” (Lomax Hawes 1974: 147–148). There will be more discussion of the singer’s experience of the liminal state further in this article. I conclude the section by stating that with the daily practice of falling asleep, the child internalises an important calming function, and over time develops a calming habit through the use of their own sleep ritual, which also allows a grown-up to fall asleep.

3. THE LIMINAL STATE OF THE SINGER AND THE LIMINALITY OF THE FOLK LULLABY⁹

Sleep is a socialising practice with the internalisation of conceptual cultural codes. It is a transfer of cultural norms and ideological meanings. On the basis of a comparative analysis of putting Japanese and American children to sleep, Lomax Hawes noted that the way in which children are lulled to sleep has a significant impact on early childhood development. Therefore, with regard to the manner adults put children to sleep, “they get what they obviously want” (Lomax Hawes 1974: 144). In view of the findings, it is important to know that lullabies are perhaps the first musical work one encounters at the beginning of life. The analysis of their texts thus opens up the possibility for us to get to know the first elements of culture that the child receives (Del Giudice 1988: 271), and the reality lived by the singer. At the same time, one should bear in mind that the relationship between the singer and the child is culturally and socially conditioned.

Folk lullabies, as well as the folk song tradition, include general notions of the cultural space where they lived or still live. Culture in the broadest sense of the word is a construction built on fantasy with real effects on the community. Sigmund Freud stressed the close connection between so-called “proto-fantasies” and folklore traditions. In the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, he wrote that in proto-fantasies the individual reaches “beyond his own experience into the experience of previous times”, so that proto-fantasies are a phylogenetic possession (Freud 1977 [1916–1917]: 351). Thus, “scenes of parental sexual intercourse, seduction in childhood, and threats of castration are ... inherited property, phylogenetic heritage, and they can also be acquired through personal experiences”¹⁰ (Freud 1989a [1909]: 215). Unlike Carl Gustav Jung, Freud considered it “methodologically incorrect to reach for explanations of phylogeny before we have exhausted the possibilities of ontogenesis”, although in the latter it is “organically showing anew what was once produced in ancient times and what was inherited as a disposition for re-acquisition” (ibid.: 215–216). Given that it is not the singer but the lullaby that is in psychoanalytic “treatment” in this text, we can ignore Freud’s methodological restraints and descend into the analysis of the texts of Slovenian folk lullabies with the help of some psychoanalytic concepts. If a singer were in psychoanalysis, then her associations and dreams would serve as analytic material. However, since the texts of the lullabies are analysed, we would ignore the singer’s personal story and focus on the culture of Slovenian community. The most important psychoanalytic concept is the unconscious. The unconscious cannot be observed directly; it can be inferred from gaps in conscious production (and from symptoms). Psychoanalysis

shows that what manifests itself as a product of consciousness is actually formed in the unconscious (Freud 2000 [1899]).¹¹ Analysis of the text of lullabies will therefore reveal unconscious contents of Slovenian culture that become accessible precisely with texts of lullabies – as far as my aim is concerned.

So far, the Slovenian academic community has not undertaken a thorough analysis of the texts of lullabies. A selection of Slovenian folk lullabies that is analysed in the article has been identified as such by collectors who included lullabies in their collections of folk songs (e.g., Štrekelj, Dravec, Cvetko, etc.). Most of them were provided by Igor Cvetko in his booklet *Aja, tutaja* (2005), and were collected from the archives of the Institute of Ethnomusicology of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), from printed professional sources (Merkù 1976; Dravec 1981; Kumer 1998; Marty & Šivic 2004) and his field notes. With his song corpus Cvetko tried to cover the Slovenian ethnic territory, though lullabies from Upper Carniola, Carinthia, and Prekmurje region are less represented. I supplemented the original selection with some “rocking songs” by Slovenian most prominent collector of folk songs, Karel Štrekelj (1911), and with a few extra lullabies from ZRC SAZU Institute of Ethnomusicology, which I came across in the diploma thesis of Anuša Pisanec (2006). Not all available lullabies are included in the analysis, as I do not categorise them in terms of genre, topography, etc., which would require knowledge of folklore. Texts that were “frozen” at the time of recording, i.e., in the twentieth century, are analysed as “dead” records, namely without context: without lullaby’s musical, i.e., rhythmic and melodic aspect and without performance in its sensual appearance. Ethnomusicological knowledge is required for such an analysis. Also, the results of the analysis would be more relevant if I were to interview the singer. Without interpretation of the field subject, we enter the analysis with a certain degree of deviation from reality. Observing singing while falling asleep would provide a sensory and emotional experience, though interfering with the intimate space of another is ethically questionable. Nevertheless, the classic ethnographic question about a distortion of reality due to the presence of an observer remains unresolved.

The Slovenian ethnomusicologist Igor Cvetko pointed out that the texts of lullabies are not so important, because they “do not actually have ... a real text ... The ‘story’ remains at the level of imaginary ‘pictures’, maybe a verbal entanglement, but no more” (Cvetko 2005: 67), and Croatian ethnomusicologist Tanja Perić-Polonijo agrees with him in principle (2000). Italian-born American folklorist Luisa Del Giudice found that some Italian lullabies actually “defy semantisation”, while others shed some light on their “internal organisational principles” and therefore meaning (Del Giudice 1988: 270). The texts of lullabies seem to put researchers in an awkward position, as they are supposed to be gen-

tle and child-friendly, but this is often not the case. Young Slovenian researcher Anuša Pisanec found that the text of a lullaby could often be “thought not to be intended for children” (Pisanec 2006: 32), and English-born Canadian folk song collector and singer Barbara Cass-Beggs wrote that in some lullabies we find “outlines of fear and unhappiness” (B. Cass-Beggs & M. Cass-Beggs 1969: 5). However, a researcher from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sanela Popović, in her analysis of the motifs of Livno’s folk lullabies, found the exact opposite, stating that from birth the child is portrayed as a desired, beloved being to whom the whole community, Christian and mythological beings, plants and animals wish all the best now and in the future (Popović 2013). Let me give an example of one of the first lullabies that Popović analysed:

*Cuna, nana is outside.
The wolf could slaughter your nano.
Wolf, don't nana!
Nana is dear to me.
She gave me a breast.
And she will give me the other,
when I go to sleep.*
(Popović 2013: 401)¹²

Popović found that the lullaby has an intimidating-pedagogical character, but this did not shake her belief that the singer sings about love for a child. When researchers encounter such ambiguities, they solve them by neutralising or mitigating them, saying that they do not mean what is being said, or by disavowing them: they know what the lullaby is about, but claim it had a good intention nonetheless. Or, as Perić-Polonija writes, “the melody and the sleeping rhythm belong to the child, but the verse to the mother” (Perić-Polonijo 2000: 5). Even if it is true that what is sung in a lullaby is not important, so that the verses belong to the mother, we cannot claim that the child does not hear them. That is why it is all the more exciting to remove the smokescreen that obscures them.

3.1 I shall begin with a seemingly benign description of a sleeping situation:

*Aja, tutaja, the cradle is rocking,
in the cradle the little boy [or cat] is lying.*
(Cvetko 2005: 10, 11)

or

*Nina, nana, nana,
our boy is sleeping.*
(Cvetko 2005: 28)¹³

“Aja, tutaja” and “nina, nana” are two of the smallest recognisable units of literary folklore. “Aja, tutaja” and “nina, nana” replace begging, muttering. Lomax Hawes would define them as buzzing (Lomax Hawes 1974: 143), Del Giudice, on the other hand, wrote that the ‘n’ embracing vowels “provides soft and soothing sounds, which lead to sleep with repetition” (Del Giudice 1988: 285). At the same time, these are the child’s first syllables – a-ja, na-na, ni-ni, ni-na, ta-ta, tu-ta, etc. – which, because they are childish, seem to be suitable for use in a lullaby. However, Del Giudice pointed out that behind the seemingly meaningless words “nina, nana” (or “aja, tutaja”) an ancient, magical meaning is hidden (Del Giudice 1988: 271–272). The lullaby is said to be close to a spell, magic, ritual, and fairy tale. Magic forms are supposed to protect the child from abduction by supernatural beings during sleep, i.e., during the period of separation. The incantation is said to have an apotropaic function and the singer is said to be a witch or a shaman (Ikegami 1986 in Govednik 2006: 9–10; Del Giudice 1988: 271). “Aja, tutaja” and “nina, nana” are therefore remnants of ancient magical spells with a protective function.¹⁴

In this sense, lullabies can be understood as the practice of communicating with (ancestor) spirits and supernatural beings, and intercessions for the well-being of a child. In the past (and still today) in Slovenia, the role of guardians of the passage was taken over by Christian characters (God, Jesus, Mary, the Holy Trinity, angels or saints), and among them we also find pre-Christian and present-day (sleepy-sleeping) beings. (Juvančič 2009: 282)

3.2 Making the sign of the cross over the child or saying prayers before going to bed (e.g., “Holy Angel”, “I Love Thee”, “My Creator”), which I mentioned in the section on the liminal in the evening ritual, also have an apotropaic function. Even today, there is a living common prayer said together with parents, after which the children undoubtedly fall asleep more peacefully, as the parents are reassured. Prayers allow for a state of rapture, but they also have a hypnotic effect. Some of them are therefore, so to speak, “naturally” assimilated into lullabies:

*Tutaj, ninaj, young child,
you would like to fall asleep!*

*May the eternal God protect you,
God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!
I will rock you,
Mary will cross you.
Let the holy guardian angel guard you,
Holy Trinity guard you!*
(Štrekelj 1911: 478)¹⁵

The above lyric is not only a prayer, a request to supernatural beings to provide protection to the child, but also expresses the desire for the child to fall asleep. It is similar to the shorter one:

*Aja, tutu,
sleep sweetly,
the angel of God will rock you.*
(Marty & Šivic 2004: 27)¹⁶

3.3 The lyrics below, however, are not only a request for safe sleep, but also for an appropriate future life for the child. The desire for children to grow up as soon as possible was not only a desire to have labour force and a possibility of their own survival (social moment), but also a desire to neutralise the singer's burden of care and anxiety in relation to a helpless child (psychological moment):

*Tutaj, ninaj,
Tutaj, ninaj,
young child!
To be big soon,
To serve God,
The Virgin Mary and Joseph!
Tutaj, ninaj, nač.
Tutaj, ninaj, nač!*
(Štrekelj 1911: 478)¹⁷

3.4 In addition to prayers, folk tales, (family) ballads, church hymns, recruitment songs, drinking songs, animal's and shepherd's teasers, etc., are also assimilated into lullabies or are, as originals, used to help children fall asleep. In the nineteenth century, Slovenian ballads about infanticide were used as lullabies, for example, "The noble lady slaughters son of her servant", "The bride is doomed, the child is glorified", and "The illegitimate mother murders her child"¹⁸ (Štrekelj 1895: 191–196; 1986: 238–247, 247–252). The act of murdering one's

own child has been repeatedly subjected to various psychological, sociological, and philosophical (ethical) research. In most explanations one finds a moralistic undertone. For example, Del Giudice assumed that choosing a ballad about a child killer for a lullaby is a moral lesson, “a dilemma [which] serves only as a negative example for reflection and can actually strengthen [mother’s] bond with the child” (Del Giudice 1988: 278). However, there are also interpretations that reveal infanticide as a way out of the captivity of social bonds.¹⁹ The social connotation of infanticide is obvious: forced marriages, required virginity when entering into marriage,²⁰ rape, the criminalisation of abortion and contraception, the pregnancy of maids and other single women, etc. The birth of an illegitimate child testified to the presupposed female pleasure, which was controversial for male domination. That is why the illegitimate mother was an outcast of the society. But why use a ballad of infanticide for a lullaby? The closeness between the two genres, the ballad of the child killer and the lullaby, seems indisputable – both thematise death, real or metaphorical; the child goes to another world, dies or falls asleep. The use of a ballad of infanticide to enable falling asleep indicates the ambivalent attitude of the singer towards the child. It is an anchor of the murderous fantasies of the singer to the child as well as to her father, or more broadly – the society and culture to which she belongs. This ambivalent attitude – the ubiquitous fear of death²¹ and the desire to die – is revealed in many folk lullabies.

3.5 As we move forward, the two-part lullaby is interesting:

*Mother sways, sings beautifully,
the child smiles sweetly.
He does not know about his sorrows,
nor about the sorrows of the world.
Mother dies, golden mother,
the sweet little girl cries.
Milica looks around the wide, wide field.*
(Emeršič 2006: 67)²²

The first and second parts are fundamentally opposed: in the first stanza the child knows nothing about suffering, then it strikes with all its force. We do not know whether the singer is singing about the past or scaring the child with the future. The ubiquity of the metaphorical and real death of the time is illustrated also by the following lullaby:

Quiet, quiet, little Tonček, just don’t cry so.

*Your mother was buried, it's terribly bad.
Rock him, rock him so he won't cry,
he will grow up, he will graze chickens.*
(Pisanec 2006: 78)²³

The child's mother has died, perhaps only metaphorically, but mourning is not desirable, it is necessary to grow up and start working. The song also expresses a fear of the child's death, as he skips mourning in his mind and is already grazing chickens. The defence mechanism of disavowal is in progress (Freud 1987 [1927]).

3.6 In the next lyrics, we witness a lullaby that mentions breaking wind:

*The little one was lying in the cradle,
the cradle was swaying, and he fell asleep.
The little one was lying in the cradle,
three times he farted and fell asleep.*
(Cvetko 2005: 50)²⁴

Feeding is followed by falling asleep, and babies ("little ones") still have an immature digestive tract. But why does the singer mention a fart in the lullaby? At the beginning of life, children are beyond good and evil; they are not ashamed of anything, they are not disgusted by anything, they are immoral, so to speak "driven", according to Freud, "polymorphically perverted" (Freud 1995 [1905]: 70). As they grow, they are like a fart: halfway between cleanliness and dirt.

3.7 Although a drive is "the psychic representation ... of an intrasomatic stimulus source" (Freud 1995 [1905]: 48),²⁵ people still equate it with instinct, that is, the instinctive activity of animals. They equate the child with an animal as in the following poem:

*Aja, aja, aja [or nina, nana],
pussy [or little girl] is asleep.*
(Cvetko 2005: 8, 26)

or

*Ninaj, nanaj,
little child, dream,
ninaj, nanaj,*

little child, dream!
(Dravec 1981: 466)²⁶

The phrases and words “go to sleep”, “you are sleepy”, “dream”, etc., are suggestive and express the singer’s desire to say goodbye. This is perhaps the most important function of a lullaby. As an expression of separation it is common all over the world.

3.8 The next lullaby demands reciprocity between unequal partners:

*You’re not hungry, nor thirsty,
I gave you milk.
I’ll sing a little,
and you’ll fall asleep.
Tutikaj, oj, ninaj ninikaj.*
(Cvetko 2005: 30)

or

*Fall asleep, fall asleep, my son, my son.
Silence your cry. I will rock you,
I will sing to you beautifully.*
(Cvetko 2005: 52)²⁷

The singer comforts – “everything is fine” – and expects reciprocity: “I give milk and song, you fall asleep”, “I give song and rocking, you stop crying and fall asleep” in an asymmetric relationship of socially and culturally unequal partners.

3.9 A singer asks for cooperation on the basis of a promise in the following lullaby:

*Ajaj, ajaj [sleep, sleep], my darling,
child you are tired tonight,
Ajaj, ajaj [sleep, sleep], my child,
mother is rocking, singing.
Come, come dove,
you will rock my child,
the child will sleep softly
and will not cry.
There is a lamb outside,
the lamb is beautiful and white,*

*the lamb will jump along with me
sway my child.*

*Beautiful flowers bloom,
white and colourful.*

*We will get up early in the morning,
we will pick beautiful flowers.*

(Pisanec 2006: 77)²⁸

“Do not cry,” the singer sings, “because I promise you that we will be together again tomorrow (picking flowers).” In this gentle lullaby the singer invites animals (turtle dove and lamb) to lull and promises to the child a day worth waking up to. Lullabies with a promise or bribe are a common and widespread motif (cf. Lomax Hawes 1974: 145), such as the frequent and widespread frustration of an adult when putting a child to sleep.

3.10 What if the child is “annoying” and does not want to cooperate?

Aja, tutaja, the boy is annoying, ...

He’s sleeping sweetly now.

(Cvetko 2005: 13)

or

*Aja, tuta, naja,
the boy is annoying now,
the cat will come,
and it will piss on him.*

(Cvetko 2005: 15)

or

*Aja tutaja, Franček is annoying,
the bav bav bav will come and put him in a bag.*

(Paternoster & Lamut & Valič 2006: 53)

or in the extended version:

*Aja tutaja, Franček is annoying,
he doesn’t want to sleep, he always cries,
the bav bav bav will come and put him in a bag.*

(Paternoster & Lamut & Valič 2006: 53)

or

*Aja, tutaja,
Marija is annoying,
Marija is crying,
she doesn't want to sleep yet.*
(Cvetko 2005: 12)

or

*Aa, tutu,
just sleep sweetly.
Mary rocked and sang nicely:
"If you don't fall asleep quickly, you'll get it on your ass."*
(Cvetko 2005: 20)

or

*Aja, tutu ... if you don't sleep,
you'll get it on your ass.*
(Cvetko 2005: 23)²⁹

The child cannot fall asleep – “annoys”, often “cries” – and hinders the satisfaction of the singer’s desire, who therefore threatens that the cat will “piss” on him, “bav bav bav” will put him in a bag or the singer herself will spank him. When a child cannot fall asleep, the singer feels great discomfort. Lullabies testify that the singer unconsciously clings to the projections in her frustration: the child refuses to fall asleep and is bothering me, so I will threaten him. The child cannot fall asleep because he feels physical (hunger) or mental discomfort (restlessness). I will write more about hunger below; here I will elaborate on the previously mentioned ways of intimidation: the cat will “piss” on him, “bav bav bav” will stuff him in a bag and he would be beaten. Freud associates urination with pollution in several places (Freud 1995 [1905]: 69; 2000 [1899]: 214, 372–373), which would suit a male cat. The word “piss” also has a derogatory character, because when a person “pisses” at someone, they do not respect them and thus dominate. Putting someone in a bag means to place them back in the womb,³⁰ more precisely: to remove them. “Getting it on the ass” is a spanking act, “even if it does not hurt much, it means humiliation and the rejection of love” (Freud 1989b [1919]: 331).³¹ The consequences of spanking were not only described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Izpovedi* (Confessions) (1956 [1782]),

but also by Freud, who found that the sadistic behaviour of adults leaves, in addition to the educational message, indelible sexual traces on children. These are the fantasy consequences of experiencing active (sadistic) and passive (masochistic) gratification, with masochism taking precedence in the sexual context (Freud 1989b [1919]). The rhythmic tapping on the bottom to calm the baby, which Cvetko (2005: 20) refers to in the lullaby, also has a sexual character;³² as Freud wrote: “Already here something that is true of all life is visible, that sexual gratification is the best sleeping pill” (Freud 1995 [1905]: 59).

3.11 Less than a hundred years ago, many children in Slovenia were hungry before going to bed, which makes it very difficult to fall asleep:

*Flour is hissing, hissing
our little girl is crying.
Give her food, give her drinks,
and she will be, and she will be full.*
(Cvetko 2005: 51)

or

*Ovbe, father Čamer,
there is a big moaning in the house:
the children have died,
they over-consumed boiling porridge.
A fern grows behind the stove,
hunger jumps around the house!
Father Čamer!
There is a big moaning in the house!*
(Štrekelj 1911: 478)³³

Čamer is a bull, “ruler among the beef family”,³⁴ so someone who can take care of the well-being of the family to which the singer belongs. But sometimes even the *pater familias* fails to support the family:

*Tajnonina, tajnona,
my husband is not at home.
Where did he go? In Ižola,
for the sour pinca!*
(Štrekelj 1911: 479)³⁵

Pinca is sweet festive Easter bread known in the Primorska (coastal) region. If a man went for sour *pinca*, then he would bring nothing. Hunger remains, vividly described by the phrase “behind the stove grows a fern” – the stove has not been lit for a very long time. The singer’s concern that the child will go hungry is projected into the image of death (“the children died”) and accidents (“they ate boiling porridge”), which could be realistic. The hunger is so severe that it is impossible to wait: the children over-consumed hot porridge. The word “gluttony” [žretje], on the other hand, adds a sadistic overtone to the concern for satiety: children are said to have died horrible deaths from burns while feeding.³⁶ Once again, we are witnessing the basic ambivalence of the singer towards the child, namely the fear of death and the desire for death, with which the problems would disappear. Hunger and general deprivation are constant companions of Slovenian history (Šorn 2018).³⁷ There is also a lullaby that thematises a hungry mother:

Tana, nina, nena,
the cow doesn't want hay.
The cow will die of great hunger.
The cow wants greens.
There aren't any greens,
we'll go look for them.
(Cvetko 2005: 34)³⁸

The cow is a metaphor for the mother who can die of hunger. In addition, she does not have enough milk to breastfeed.³⁹ Satisfaction of hunger and thirst is one of the basic human needs and the basic concern of an adult at the beginning of a child’s life is that the baby is fed. As we have noticed, a common theme of lullabies is the opposite of satiety – hunger (cf. Del Giudice 1988: 277).

3.12 In some cases, the deprivation of food turns into a fantasy of abundance, the antithesis of the fear of hunger, and therefore the fantasy fulfilment of the singer’s desire, which partly comforts her:

Tona, nina, tonana,
in one pocket an apple,
in the other hazelnuts,
and in the other little pears.
(Cvetko 2005: 37)⁴⁰

Fantasies of abundance are joined in lullabies by fantasies about the well-being of a child in the face of a general lacking:

*Aja, tutaja, golden wheels,
silver cradle, son is sleeping in it.*
(Cvetko 2005: 14)

or

*Huha, huhoka, a cradle in the field,
red are the bells, silver wheels.*

or

*Aja, tutu ... cradle is of gold,
young child in it.*
(Cvetko 2005: 22)⁴¹

Gold and silver, which symbolise money (Freud 2000 [1899]: 373), stand out in lullabies.

3.13 Freud (2006a: 17–23; 2006c: 97–104) found that there is a conditional identification between the aforementioned money (gift) and excrement on the one hand and between excrement, the penis, and a child on the other, adding “that these elements in the unconscious are often treated as equivalent to each other and could easily replace each other” (Freud 2006c: 99), therefore: money – excrement – penis – child. In this respect, the next lullaby, which Cvetko calls a “gentle teaser” (2005: 27), is not surprising, if we ignore an evident patriarchal segregation between sexes all over the world:

*Nina, nana, the girl is shitty,
the boy is beautiful [clean].*
(Cvetko 2005: 27)⁴²

3.14 In the lullaby “Tajna, nina, nena, / yellow flower. / The bird flew, / it rocked the twig. / The apple fell, / the girl picked it up” (Cvetko 2005: 36)⁴³ it is not certain whether it is an image of abundance with oral gratification, when food just “falls from the sky”, or an explanation of conception and birth: the “flower” symbolises female genitalia, upon which lands a “bird” or “cock” (penis),⁴⁴ which rocks the “twig” (in the form of the male genitalia) and in nine months a baby girl is born (“the apple fell, / the girl picked it up”). Lullabies with chickens and eggs are similarly ambiguous:

*Ajčka, tutajčka, the hen lays eggs,
four for me, five for you,
that is exactly nine.
(Cvetko 2005: 16)*

or

*Ujsa drajsa, ujsa drajsa,
the hen lays eggs.
I have five, you have five,
and there are ten.
Anica, just fall asleep sweetly,
just look, the sleeper has been flying.
And Mommy will rock you,
Anica, sleep sweetly now.
(Marty & Šivic 2004: 26)⁴⁵*

It is not clear whether there is a phantasy of abundance of food for all (“four (or five) for me, and five for you”) or an infantile explanation of conception and birth, which Freud calls the “cloacal theory”, i.e., fertilisation through the mouth and birth through the anus. Infantile theories of sexuality synthesise a child’s notions of sexuality with their sexual experiences. In addition to the cloacal theory, infantile sexual theories include attributing the penis to both sexes, coitus as a sadistic act, giving birth by “caesarean section”, also through the navel, etc. (Freud 2006b: 25–40). At the same time, we cannot ignore the fear of the death of children, as indicated by the over-compensatory numbers 9 and 10 (children).

3.15 Even more ambiguous are the following lullabies, in which pigs and steers perform:

*Ujsa, ujsa, ujsa,
two fat pigs.
We slaughtered one,
and sold the other.
(Cvetko 2005: 44)*

or

*Hujsa, drgunca,
two fat little steers:*

*we slaughtered one,
and bundled the other.
Hujsa, drgunci,
three fat little steers:
we slaughtered one,
sold one,
and still have one,
but we won't give it away.*
(Cvetko 2005: 45)⁴⁶

It is strange that slaughter is mentioned while lulling, although until recently slaughter was a village holiday event with the promise of abundance. The lullaby is crudely direct: a “pig” (dirty child) or a “little steer”, a young castrate (allegedly not sexually active yet), will be slaughtered or sold or “put in a bundle” (returned to the womb), so got rid of it in a more or less cruel manner. I speculate that the child, with cathartic relief, identifies with the one that is still on the farm and not given away.

There is another terrifying lullaby:

*Bilen, bolen,
let's take a little girl to the mill.
Where did we leave her?
We sold her to my uncle.*
(Cvetko 2005: 48)

or

*Diren, diren, dalen
let's take a little girl to the mill,
didelon, cockroach.*
(Cvetko 2005: 49)⁴⁷

By describing the terrible fate, the singer is supposed to force the child to fall asleep faster, so she should escape from the horror to dreams. Bullying with the prospect of separation would have no effect if separation anxiety were not somehow necessary for the child's survival. Sell the girl to a miller? Is child grinding or child slavery suggested? A girl is a cockroach, an unwanted child (Freud 2000 [1899]: 333).

3.16 I will conclude the analysis with more explicitly sexual lullabies:

*Tana, nina, tanana,
our boy is not at home.
There in the white little house
he blows porridge in a little pot.
Oxen moo in the stable,
girls turn the little boy around.
(Cvetko 2005: 35)⁴⁸*

The lullaby is in two parts: in the first one we meet the expectation of oral gratification (the porridge is blown) in a dream (“the boy is not at home”), followed by a racy scene where (older) girls seduce a little boy. Oxen symbolise violence and domination, but they are castrated, so the girls are dominant. Slovenian publicist Milena Miklavčič (2013) with her collection of sexual testimonies revealed how women in the recent past were as a little boy in the lullaby, an “unprotected child” in the realm of male sexual power, so the text of the lullaby can also be understood as a reversal with a contrary purpose of fantasy fulfilment, i.e., revenge.

Another one runs as follows:

*Opsasa, saja, a pussy is merrymaking,
it knows it well, it knows it well in all three places.
Above along the little balcony in a rounded cardigan,
below along the little cave in a suitor’s jacket,
inside the house in a red cap.
(Cvetko 2005: 46)⁴⁹*

It is a description of sex: “pussy” (symbol of the female genitalia) dances; first stops on the balcony (symbol of women’s breasts), then a rounded cardigan, at the hole in the vassal’s “jacket”, and finally penetration: “red cap” (irritated head of the penis) in the “house” (symbol of the body) (Freud 2000 [1899]).

And here is the last one:

*The bunny is running, the bunny is running on the green grass.
Run women, run women
he will beat you with his paw,
for the young boy, for the young boy
he will buy a horse,
young ...
he will buy sugar,
young ...*

he will buy a hat... etc.

(Pisanec 2006: 50)⁵⁰

The bunny symbolises a drive. “Beating with a paw (penis)” means having coitus; children interpret a coitus through their pregenital sexual experiences, that is, as a sadistic act (Freud 2006b: 25–40). It will provide the “young boys” with power (“horse”), energy (“sugar”) and penis (“hat”), i.e., with potency (Freud 2000 [1899]).

Unfortunately, until now no research has been done to learn which of the listed songs are still alive in Slovenia. There are, however, field records of children’s experiences of listening to lullabies. During his fieldwork in 2006, Mitja Gorjup, a student of ethnology and cultural anthropology, came across an informant who remembered “her father, who took care of her while her mother was in hospital. In the evening before bed, her father sang about a tailless dog. It was a funny song, but she was already so shocked by her mother, and then because of the dog... She experienced the mentioned lullabies as painful” (Gorjup 2006: 59). It is evident that her father chose the lullaby for himself, he was like a castrated dog without a tail, helpless in relation to the child when his wife was in hospital. Lomax Hawes, in an analysis of folk lullabies from the archives of the University of California, Berkeley, found that more than half of them did not mention sleeping or admiring a child, but that the texts were intended for adults (Lomax Hawes 1974: 141, 146). I can conclude that the singer of lullabies releases her emotions (especially anxiety, fear, and anger), aggressive and sexual impulses in the intimacy of falling asleep, in a socially asymmetric situation, no matter how difficult the child experiences them.⁵¹ The mental and social distress of the singer frightens the child, and the partially controlled (monotonous rhythm, simple melody) emptying comforts and calms the singer.

An artificial lullaby “denied the existence of resentment or dissatisfaction in the mother’s attitude towards her child” (Pisanec 2006: 34) and “excluded poems with excessively cruel and realistic texts, which they [authors] assumed could have a harmful effect on the child’s image of the world” (Močnik 2006: 40). In contrast, in folk lullabies, the singer expresses her uncensored thoughts about “the complexity of love, from which tensions, fears and even depression cannot be ruled out. ... Women express strong emotions that are meant for themselves” (McDowell 1977: 205–206). The child is reduced to an object, a container for the singer’s frustrations, which they cannot contain (Bion 1987 [1967]) and cannot interpret (Laplanche 2008), so they are “painful” for them. They are confronted with taboo contents that the singer cannot otherwise utter, which is one of the functions of folk oral expression, namely, to enable an individual to say what

otherwise remains unspoken in society (Bascom 1954). The ban provided the unifying mechanisms of language and used metaphorical strategies that Del Giudice linked to the dreaming process (Del Giudice 1988: 271). In fact, the work of dreams consists of a displacement (of an affect) and a condensation (of a representation) (Freud 2000 [1899]: 265–464), metonymy, and metaphor. The story of the lullaby is built in an associative process, not in a strictly logical progression, which is again characteristic of a dreamy process.

Liminal is not just sleep, it is not just the path to sleep, it is not just a singer. The lullaby is itself a product of the liminal state of a singer. The lyrics of the lullaby are exactly what Cvetko wrote: “The ‘story’ remains at the level of imagination, ‘pictures’, maybe a verbal entanglement, but no more” (Cvetko 2005: 67), only that he missed the conclusion, namely: “[Lullabies] do not have a real text” (ibid.). On the contrary, the “real text” is already present all the time, only its meaning has to be found yet.

The folk lullaby is not part of children’s literary folklore (Sutton-Smith et al. 1999 [1995]; Kumer & Stanonik 2004), but it is connected with it by the “uncensoredness” of the texts.⁵² They are created or recreated and used by adults to put children to sleep. During lulling, the child is reduced to an object. The lullaby is intended for a child but becomes an “opportunity” for the singer. It is created in relation to the child, it is a reflection of the singer’s day, her social position, attitude towards the world, etc.; it is an emotional confession or meditation with the function of calming and comforting the singer. Only when the singer calms down, the small child can fall asleep. The singer’s restlessness keeps them awake. This, in turn, excites the singer and the discomfort is circular until the singer enters a state of daydreaming (*rêverie*), halfway to sleep, and mentally moves away from the child, and her mental content floats into her consciousness (cf. Del Giudice 1988: 274, 286). In this sense, I could only partially agree with Lomax Hawes, who defines a lullaby as a communicative act (Lomax Hawes 1974: 143), or Igor Cvetko, when he understands it as a manner of communication (Cvetko 2005: 66); putting a child into sleep is not a mutual act as communication is supposed to be. But I agree to his definition of it as a play that is in many ways closer to an (intimate) theatrical event (Cvetko 2005: 68). In accord with Moreno psychotherapeutic spouses (Moreno & Toeman Moreno 2000), it could also be called a psychodrama. The singer’s satisfaction with the final act of the monodrama is twofold: “the baby falls asleep, which frees her from direct pressures and responsibilities for a moment, and the singer vents stress and *angst* [anxiety]” (Del Giudice 1988: 286). The singer took a break from social and cultural norms for a while; according to Turner (1974), she had a liminoid experience.⁵³

The liminality of the evening ritual brings the insecurities of the singer's life to the surface. While singing, she calms her anxiety and soothes emotional pain, which she projects into the lyrics of the lullaby. When a man is angry, it is an expression of his helplessness; anger empowers him mentally. Slovenian ethnomusicologist Katarina Juvančič thinks similarly: "Singing lullabies in private and public environments can help to strengthen the position of women, especially in an environment where women's creative potential is socially or ethnically marginalised, neglected or even politically controversial" (Juvančič 2009: 283). An issue that remains unclear is whether the singer even wants to decipher the meaning of the song. Or is the singer at a certain level always aware of the hidden meaning that her lullabies carry?⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

The singing of lullabies socialises the child into a cultural richness of musical and conceptual codes and provides the singer with a way out for expressing otherwise forbidden emotions and desires. During the evening (re)creation, both are eventually in a liminal state: the child between waking and sleeping, the singer in (re)creative enthusiasm or meditation, which is enabled by the lullaby with its rhythm and melody.

The analysis of the texts of selected Slovenian folk lullabies has revealed that from the very birth the child participated in the singer's desire to protect their well-being and comfort, but also more or less hidden aggressive and sexual messages, feelings of fear, anger and hatred. These were the building blocks of lullaby lyrics, reflecting the wider social violence and sexual culture to which the singer belonged. Lullabies were only a part of the otherwise violent practice of socialisation in Slovenia in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries (Puhar 1982; Huzjan 2021).

One cannot justify the text of the lullaby by explaining its origin, saying that this song was once a ballad, a church hymn, love or recruitment song, a drinking or teasing song, etc. The question is why it was chosen as a lullaby among the set of folk songs. On the other hand, it seems that the song was not selected, but transmitted and internalised, then further interpreted by social inertia. It seems as if the singer did not choose the lullaby, but that the lullaby chose the singer, even though she could have decided otherwise.

What at the beginning of the research seemed to be a great revelation – that lullabies do not express love and enthusiasm for a child – turned out to be a "discovery of hot water". Many researchers (e.g., Bascom 1954; Lomax Hawes 1974; Pisanec 2006; Juvančič 2009) state that the singer was able to release her

feelings of anxiety, anger, and hostility while putting a child to sleep, but they argue that most of the singer's emotions were related to the difficult social conditions of the majority population: hunger, the omnipresence of death because of misery, illness, and disasters, patriarchal armour, etc. These findings are true but not complete (cf. Del Giudice 1988). The singer could choose to interpret any other song from the wide repertoire of folklore. Why singers choose lullabies for their complaints remains an open question. Is it the intimacy of the evening? Or because a small child is passive but still present?⁵⁵

The singers, with lullabies full of resentment, empowered themselves with the weakest social link – the child. In such a situation, it was not possible for complaints to be heard. Perhaps this was not the intention either, as any confrontation with the truth requires courage for pain. The child, reduced to a passively listening object, sooner or later fell asleep and took the lullaby with them to dream, to a new day, to their children, and they on to theirs, and so on. This is how folk lullabies reveal the foundations of contemporary family life in Slovenia.

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NOTES

¹ The text is dedicated to Dr Marko Terseglav.

² In the further text, I use the female gender to indicate the person who sings lullabies because putting children to sleep is mainly a female activity. I do not deal with the issue of gender in this text.

³ The maids were mostly peasant girls who went to the city for better and “cleaner” earnings (Žagar 1986). Through their visits, they brought cultural elements of the bourgeois population to the countryside, including artificial lullabies. Marko Terseglav

stated three conditions for the receptivity of artificial poetry among people: “A piece of elite poetry ... moved with the mediators among the people if the song was to their liking, if it could be sung, and if it suited the already established but unregulated poetics” (Terseglav 1987: 22).

- ⁴ The transitional object is important for the child because it represents an important calming and comforting adult, and at the same time the children themselves when they are in the role of an adult. The importance of the transitional object communicates the fact that people often store this toy when they no longer need it. (cf. Tomažič 1999; Križ 2002).
- ⁵ I wish to thank my colleague Dr Špela Ledinek Lozej, who added that with the rite of crossing the parent hands the child over to God’s protection and prosperity, thus freeing the child from parents and parents from the child.
- ⁶ Katarina Juvančič stated the reasons for the academic and public oversight of the phenomenon of sleep as an everyday cultural practice in detail (2009: 277–279). I wish to add that until recently, women’s housekeeping and nursing work was completely invisible, so male researchers could not notice them. I am glad that women won the right to enter a university in the past, but paradoxically, until the publication of *Al že spiš?* (Are you already sleeping?) (Juvančič & Šetinc 2006) only male names were found under selected folk lullabies.
- ⁷ It is generally known that adults in the Slovenian countryside after World War II occasionally gave children sugar or poppy seed milk wrapped in a linen pacifier before bedtime, or soaked it in brandy, etc. Bourgeois children became acquainted with the pacifier between the two world wars: “If we give a child a pacifier, which is sometimes really necessary for nervous children, it should not be punctured and it should be boiled two or three times a day in boiling water!” (Derč 1921 [1919]: 19) By “licking the pacifier” parents pass tuberculosis on to the child, and syphilis is transmitted by kissing; “every pacifier that is not sterilised is poisonous and deadly!” (ibid.: 20)
- ⁸ The original reads: Kirmu se drejmle, naj gre spat, naj gre spat. / Meni se ne drejmle, pa ne grem. / Aden je drejmov tri noči, tri noči, / pa so mu zlezle v vrat oči.
- ⁹ In this part of the article, every time I use the word “lullaby”, I have in mind a folk lullaby, unless stated otherwise.
- ¹⁰ Freud also writes about typical fantasies in one of his notes in *Tri razprave o teoriji seksualnosti* (Three essays on the theory of sexuality). Fantasies refer to eavesdropping on parents’ sexual intercourse, early seduction by loved ones, the threat of castration, the uterus (the content of these fantasies regards remaining in the womb and even experiences in it) and a so-called “family novel” in which a teenager reacts to the difference in his or her attitudes toward parents now and in childhood (Freud 1995 [1905]: 103).
- ¹¹ Unfortunately, Freudian psychoanalysis has become marginal in science within the neoliberal paradigm, in which it is uneconomical in time and content; it lasts too long and discovers the causes the consequences of which could be subversive.
- ¹² The original reads: Cuna, nana na polju. / Vuk ti nano zakolja. / Nemoj, vuče nane, / nana mi je draga, / sisu mi je dala. / I drugu će dat / kada pođem spat.
- ¹³ The originals read: Aja, tutaja, zibka se maja, / v zibki pa mali fantek [ali maček] leži; Nina, nana, nana, / naš fantek pa aja.
- ¹⁴ One of the reviewers reminded me that the apotropaic function of lullabies is also applied to texts created by other Slavic nations, e.g., Poles, Slovaks, Ukrainians,

etc. Well-known Russian folklorists Tatiana Agapkina and Andrei Toporkov (2020) analysed magic spells for children's insomnia, which seem to have existed already in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, and were widely spread in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the vast territory where Eastern, Southern, and Western Slavs lived. Given that Del Giudice (1988) also found remnants of magic spells in Italian lullabies and Ikegami (1986) in Japanese lullabies, I can conclude that the protective function of lullabies is probably universal.

- ¹⁵ The original reads: Tutaj, ninaj, dete mlado, / da bi rado zaspančkalo! / Da te bi varval večni Bog, / Bog Oče, Sin in Sveti duh! / Jest tebe bom zazibala, / Marija te bo prekrižala. / Sveti angel varuh naj varje te, / Sveta trojica vari te!
- ¹⁶ The original reads: Aja tutu, / spančkaj sladku, / angelček božji zazibal te bu.
- ¹⁷ The original reads: Tutaj ninaj, / Tutaj, ninaj / dejte mladu! / De bi skorej velku blu. / De bi služilo Bogu, / Devici Mariji in Jožefu! / Tutaj, ninaj, nač. / Tutaj, ninaj, nač!
- ¹⁸ The original headings are: "Žlahtna gospa zakolje majarici sinka", "Nevesta pogubljen, dete vzveličano", and "Nezakonska mati umori svoje dete".
- ¹⁹ Such is, for example, Žižek's interpretation of Seth's action from the novel *Ljubljena* (Beloved) by Toni Morrison (Žižek 1999: 29–30).
- ²⁰ Freud in his discussion of the taboo of virginity (2003 [1918]) problematises this demand.
- ²¹ The trend of high mortality of mothers, infants, and children due to hunger, general deprivation, poor hygiene, and inadequate health care began to reverse, especially in urban areas, between the two world wars (Huzjan 2020).
- ²² The original reads: Mati ziblje, lepo poje, / dete milo se smehlja. / Saj ne ve za tuge svoje, / ne za žalosti sveta. / Mati umrje, zlata mama, / milo joče deklica. / Po širokem, širnem polju / se ozira Milica.
- ²³ The original reads: Tiho, tiho Tonček mali, le ne jokaj se tako. / Mater so ti pokopali, to pač strašno je hudo. / Zibaj ga, zibaj ga, da ne bo jokau, / gore bo zrasu, piške bo pasu.
- ²⁴ The original reads: Mičkenu, malu, v zibki ležalu, / zibka se majala, pa je zaspalu. / Mičkenu, malu, v zibki ležalu, / trikrat je prdkalu pa je zaspalu.
- ²⁵ A role model of a concept of drive is sexual drive. The body is represented in the concept of drive, but the drive itself is represented by a representation that stems from the experience of satisfaction. The representation can hit the fates of the drive: repression, reversal into opposition, sublimation, and turning around upon the subject's own self. At the heart of Freud's drive theory is the conflict between sexual and self-preservative drives, which are ego instincts (Lešnik 2009: 57–59). They are the energy basis for defense mechanisms, e.g., a projection, a negation, a disavowal, an identification, an intellectualisation, etc. (A. Freud 1946 [1937]), of which some, along with the fates of drive, we also encounter in this article.
- ²⁶ The original reads: Aja, aja, aja [ali nina, nana], / muca [ali pupa] je zaspana; Ninaj, nanaj, / detece, zasanjaj, / ninaj, nanaj, / detece, zasanjaj!
- ²⁷ The originals read: Lačna nejsi, žejna ne, / mlečka sem ti dala. / Malo bom zapojčkala, / ti boš pa zaspala. / Tutikaj, oj, ninaj ninikaj; Zaspil, zaspil, sinek moj, sinek moj. / Vtišaj ti jok svoj. Jaz te bodem zibala, / lepo ti bodem spevala.
- ²⁸ The original reads: Ajaj, ajaj ljubček moj, / dete trudno si nocoj, / ajaj, ajaj dete moje, / ziblje mati, eno poje. / Pridi, pridi grlica, / boš mi dete zibala, / dete mehko spalo bo /

in ne bode se jokalo. / Zunaj je no jagnče, / jagnje lepo belo je, / jagnje bo mi priskakalo / moje dete pozibalo. / Lepe rožice cvete, / bele ino pisane / zjutraj boma zgodaj vstala, / boma lepe rože brala.

- ²⁹ The originals read: Aja, tutaja, fantek nagaja, ... zda' pa sladko spi; Aja, tuta, naja, / fantek nagaja, / došel bo maček, / pa ga bo poscal; Aja tutaja, Franček nagaja, / prišel bo bav bav bav in ga bo v vrečo dal; Aja tutaja, Franček nagaja, / spančkati noče, vedno se joče, / prišel bo bav bav bav in ga bo v vrečo dal; Aja, tutaja, / Marija nagaja, / Marija se joče, / spati še noče; A-a, tutu, / le spančkaj sladku. / Marija zibala pa pela lepu: "Če hitro ne zaspíš, po riti jih dobiš"; Aja, tutu ... če pančkal ne boš, / po ritki dobil boš.
- ³⁰ Connected with the well-known curse in former Yugoslavia region, namely that man should return to where he came from.
- ³¹ Barbara Turk Niskač found that Slovene ethnological works, which mostly concerned childhood in the countryside in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, show that any objection or disobedience in other forms was consistently punished with beatings (Turk Niskač 2021: 59). The noble children mostly met their father with a whip in his hand (Potočnik 1994: 60). As a rule, the children of wealthy citizens were not physically punished, but suburban children, regardless of age or gender, were beaten, kneeling, isolated and deprived of some of the material elements, most often food (Huzjan 2021). What does this mean for the foundations of the culture we live in today?
- ³² For the connection between rhythm and sexuality, see the section on the liminality of sleep.
- ³³ The originals read: Štuoka, štouka, mouka, [Sika, sika, moka], / naš dekliček jouka. Jest' mu dajte, pet [piti] mu dajte, / pa bo, pa bo set [sit]; Ovbe, oča Čamer, / v hiši je velik jamer: / otroci so pomrli, / so vrele kaše žrli. / Za pečjo raste praprota, / po hiši skače lakota! / Oča Čamer! / V hiši je velik jamer!
- ³⁴ See <https://fran.si/iskanje?View=1&Query=%C4%8Damer>, last accessed on 25 April 2022.
- ³⁵ The original reads: Tajnonina, tajnona, / mojga moža ni doma. / Kam je šo? V Izolo, / po no pinco kiselo!
- ³⁶ Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins.
- ³⁷ The analysis of depictions of dishes and eaters in Slovene literature showed that "depictions of happy eaters and richly lined tables are few, writers with food descriptions point to social differences in an unjust society" (Mihurko Poniž 2008: 31). Tomažek dies of hunger in Tavčar's *Tržačan* (A Man from Trieste), children are hungry in Kosovel's poem "The old woman behind the village", in a series of Cankar's short literary works, and undernourished in Miško Kranjec's works (Mihurko Poniž 2009).
- ³⁸ The original reads: Tana, nina, nena, / krava neče sena. / Krava če krepati od velike lakoti. / Krava če zelenobe [zelenje]. / Zelenobe ni, / jesk't nje b'mo šli.
- ³⁹ Compare with the narrative song "Mother sells a child to the devil" (Huzjan 2008: 10–11).
- ⁴⁰ The original reads: Tona, nina, tonana, / t-u sakete [žep] jabuka, / t-u te družu lješnike, / t-u te družu fruškice.
- ⁴¹ The originals read: Aja, tutaja, / zlata tečaja [kolesca], / srebrna zibka, / sinek v njej spi; Huha, huhoka, / na polju ziboka, / rdeči so zvončeki, / srebrni potačeki [leseno kolesce]; Aja, tutu ... je zibelka zlata, / v njej dete mladu.

- ⁴² The original reads: Nina, nana, / pupa je usrana, / fantič je ljep.
- ⁴³ The original reads: Tajna, nina, nena, / rožica rumena. / Priletela tičica, / vej'co je zazibala. / Jabuka je pala, / pupka je pobrala.
- ⁴⁴ In the Slovenian language "ptič" (a bird) is shorter called "tič", which colloquially means a penis.
- ⁴⁵ The originals read: Ajčka, tutajčka, / piška nese jajčka, / meni štiri, tebi pet, / to jih pride glih devet; Ujsa drajsa, ujsa drajsa, / čiba [kokoš] nese jajca. / Meni pet, tebi pet, / pa jih je deset. / Anica, le sladko zaspi, / le poglej, spanček že leti. / Mamica pa ujčkala te bo, / Anica, zaspančkaj zdaj sladko.
- ⁴⁶ The original reads: Ujsa, ujsa, ujsa, / dva debela pujsa. / En'ga smo zaklali, / druga pa prodali ali Hujsa, drgunca, / dva debela junca: / en'ga smo zaklali, / en'ga v punkelj djali. / Hujsa, drgunci, / trije debeli junci: / en'ga smo zaklali, / en'ga pa prodali, / en'ga pa še ,mamo, / tega pa ne damo.
- ⁴⁷ The originals read: Bilen, bolen, / ne'smo pupo v malen [mlin]. / Kam ,mo jo dali? / K stricu prodali; Diren, diren, dalen, / pupo nes'mo v malen, / didelon, bacolon [ščurek].
- ⁴⁸ The original reads: Tana, nina, tanana, / naš'ga fanta nej doma. / Tam na beli hišici / čuha [piha] kašo v piskrci. Volki [voli] v štalci mučejo, / dekleta fantka sučejo.
- ⁴⁹ The original reads: Opsasa, saja, mucika raja, / lepo zna, lepo zna, na vse tri kraja. / Gorta [zgoraj] po gankici [balkon] v rajdasti [zaobljen] jankici [jopica], / dovta [spodaj] po ropici [lama] v vešnjevi [vasovalčevi] jopici, / notri v hišici v rudečoj kapci.
- ⁵⁰ The original reads: Zajček teče, zajček teče po zeleni travi. / Bejzite ženske, bejzite ženske / vas bo s tacom tepel, / mladim fantkom, mladim fantkom / bo konjička kupil, / mladim... / bo pa cukra kupil, / mladim... / bo klobučka kupil... itd.
- ⁵¹ The experience is always traumatic in retrospect. It is twofold: the first experience is potentially traumatogenic, the second evokes the memory of the first and requires repression. A repressed memory becomes a trauma for the past (Freud 1977: 342).
- ⁵² It is not surprising that a cursory overview of the types of children's folklore (see Sutton-Smith et al. 1999 [1995]) reveals the themes of lullabies.
- ⁵³ In his article titled "Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, and Ritual", Turner said that ritual in secularised, industrial societies was not a necessary condition for social continuity. He thus distinguished between the liminal, which is necessary for ritual activity, and the liminoid experience, which is only a transitional moment in time, a break from usual social norms, a kind of playing or play. For Turner, the liminoid can be a transgressive alternative to the liminal, as it allows for lasting social changes (Turner 1974).
- ⁵⁴ Marjetka Golež Kaučič discusses these issues in the last section (Woman – the subject of singing) in the article "Odsev pravnega položaja in življenjskih razmer žensk v slovenskih ljudskih pesmih" (Reflection of the legal status and living conditions of women in Slovenian folk songs) (Golež Kaučič 2001).
- ⁵⁵ The situation is similar to a therapeutic one, except that the psychoanalyst actively listens to the client.

ORAL SOURCES (INTERVIEWS MADE BY THE AUTHOR)

- Mrs D., interview, Ljubljana, 22, 24 February, 2, 4 March 2015.
Mrs F., interview, Ljubljana, 22, 30 March 2015.
Mrs K., interview, Ljubljana, 5, 13, 20 April 2015.
Mr T., interview, Ljubljana, 24 March 2015.

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