

Ethnological analysis of lexeme 'otrok' (child) in the Collection of Slovenian paremiological units on Clarin.si

Etnološka analiza leksema 'otrok' v Zbirki slovenskih paremioloških enot na Clarin.si

This paper presents an ethnological analysis of the word 'otrok' (child) in Slovenian proverbs in order to research the socialisation of children in Slovenia over the past centuries. The analysis is based on the collection of proverbs available at the research repository Clarin.si, which brings together records from every Slovenian region, starting from the 16th century. For centuries, the majority population in Slovenia consisted of peasantry with a thoroughly different approach to childhood. Independence and ability of family members to work were highly valued. Young children were dependent and unable to work, which put them in a socially inferior position. They only gained value through physical strength and experience once they were able to earn their keep. Because of the historically high mortality rate among young children, they represented a risky but worthwhile investment for parents, as they could contribute to their care later in their life.

• **Keywords:** children, proverbs, Slovenia, Clarin.si

V prispevku je predstavljena etnološka analiza leksema 'otrok' v slovenskih pregovorih z namenom raziskovanja socializacije otrok na Slovenskem v preteklih stoletjih. Analiza temelji na zbirki pregovorov, dostopni v raziskovalnem repozitoriju Clarin.si, ki združuje zapise iz vseh slovenskih pokrajin, začenši s 16. stoletjem. Večino prebivalstva na Slovenskem je stoletja sestavljalo kmečko prebivalstvo s povsem drugačnim odnosom do otroštva. Visoko sta bili cenjeni samostojnost in delovna sposobnost družinskih članov. Majhni otroci so bili odvisni in nesposobni za delo, kar jih je postavljalo v družbeno podrejen položaj. S fizično močjo in izkušnjami so pridobili vrednost šele, ko so bili sposobni zaslužiti za svoje preživetje. Zaradi zgodovinsko visoke umrljivosti majhnih otrok so bili za starše tvegana, vendar koristna naložba, saj so lahko pozneje v življenju prispevali k njihovi oskrbi.

• **Ključne besede:** otroci, pregovori, Slovenija, Clarin.si

1 Introduction

Studying folklore literature, folklore forms, including proverbs,¹ equals studying language. Both linguists and folklorists agree that language acts as an inventory of cultural phenomena. Folklorist Saša Babič notes that 'language is culture's material, while at the same time it also functions as its metalanguage' (Babič 2021: 81). Linguist Erika Kržišnik describes a similar dialectical relationship between language and culture: 'This relationship is by no means one-sided in the sense of being limited to culture leaving its trace in language signs, on the contrary, it works both ways:

¹ Use of 'proverb' in this paper signifies paremiological material (proverbs, sayings and a variety of other expressions of 'internal truths' found in the repository at Clarin.si).

language signs also help support collective notions through their reproductive power of intergenerational transitioning' (Kržišnik 2005: 74). Gradual changes in culture and language is the result of the conservative aspect of the human mind. This proverbial slow pace of change (*Pregovori so modrost stoletij / Proverbs are wisdom of centuries*)² leads to proverbs 'carrying information' (Babič 2021: 81) of a past culture or 'cultural connotation' (Kržišnik 2005: 67) of past practices. Several centuries old proverbs remain in use today,³ e.g. *Otroci in golobi (ptice) (p, o)serjejo, ((u)mažejo, ogrdiijo, onesnažijo) hišo / Children and pigeons (birds) shit (over), tarnish, mar, soil a house*. In her monograph *Beseda ni konj*, Babič lists a series of definitions and functions of proverbs, spanning seven pages (!), as their heterogeneity makes it difficult to separate them from other 'sententious statements'. Her conclusion defines a proverb as a 'rounded text' appearing in a broader text 'in daily communication' (Babič 2015: 11). It's characterized by 'stability as a result of rhythm, repetition, rhyme, briefness' (ibid.). The relative continuity ensures the conventionality of a culture's 'linguistic realisation' (Kržišnik 2005). This makes a proverb a stereotype 'carrying figurative or generalised meaning' (Grzybek 2012: 137), and has transferred from generation to generation. The transfer 'is a testament to their extended chronological (historical) presence in a linguistic community' (Kržišnik 2005: 69). Most cultures need proverbs as statements recommending, advising, warning, commanding, prohibiting, etc. (Babič 2018: 82), to maintain every consecutive social and cultural order, as it should be (ideal lifeworld), and express commonplace life experience (realistic lifeworld). It's up to proverbs to transfer cultural practices to the next generation,⁴ thus creating a culture through repetition and gentle alterations, which is apparent from their many existing versions. A change or a difference in transfer is the result of changed subjective or objective circumstances. Babič split proverbs in two groups, namely true proverbs expressing stereotypical principles, e.g. *Brez muje se še čevelj ne obuže / Even a shoe doesn't get put on without an effort*, maxims and instructions, e.g. *Brez dela ni jela / There is no food without work* and *Bolje zlepa kot zgrda / The nice way is better than the hard way*. They are all ready-made, refined through censorship. (Babič 2015: 58–59, 75).

Ethnological analysis in this article focuses on socialisation and regards proverbs as fragments of multigenerational tradition, in the same way as e.g. lullabies (cf. Huzjan 2002). Literary particles from the past have the power to reveal previous habitual

² All proverbs in this paper are written in cursive.

³ Nowadays, proverbs are used for humorous rather than teaching purposes. 2014 research of their use in regions of Styrian, Pannonian and Carinthian dialect groups showed that proverbs mostly represent a passive part of Slovenian language speakers' vocabulary, that they are more frequently used in spoken and less frequently in written language, and that there is a connection between the use of proverbs and the speakers' level of education and age (Lipavc Oštir, Vasiljevič in Koletnik 2014).

⁴ The child is at the centre of intergenerational cultural transfer, and in this regard proverbs are »metaphors teaching children« abstract thinking, cultural norms and integration of social (and religious) rituals with the help of language use (Penfield in Duru 1988: 119). Language is a primary tool of socialisation.

living patterns, as the language of proverbs 'reflects common language' (Babič 2015: 49) and the accompanying common reality, despite being metaphorical in nature. My interest lay in their textual level, in reading 'verbatim', specifically in the analysis of the category 'otrok' (child) ('zibel' (cradle), 'hči' (daughter), 'sin' (son)) in the sense of a human being at the start of life and not in the metaphorical sense of e.g. product (e.g. *Iz šale se rode norci / A joke gives birth to fools; Nevoščljivec je umrl, a je zapustil mnogo otrok / An envious person died and left behind many children*) or consequence (e.g. *Napuh je otrok nevednosti in oče neolikanosti / Vanity is the child of ignorance and the father of impoliteness*). The leading question is: why did 'otrok' appear in a specific proverb and what was its function at the communicative level or, as Kržišnik puts it, what was the 'motivational background [...] of its internal form' or 'picture of the world' or 'perceptive base' (Kržišnik 2005: 67, 69, 77) of the proverb. The choice of lexeme is an important part of drafting a proverb; any proverb could take on a different form or employ any other lexeme. If that had happened, a different culture would have been 'inscribed' in the proverb.

Nevertheless, deliberation on the ethnological analysis of the lexeme 'otrok' runs into a research-wise unsolvable conundrum, the issue of how valid or contradictory proverbs actually are. As folklorist Arvo Krikmann pointed out, the meaning of a proverb can only manifest itself in 'concrete actualisations' (Krikmann 1985), hence in actual use, 'which is why proverbs in collections are nothing but listings, useless for analysis' (Mieder 1993). And he was right: analysing proverbs without the speaker is akin to interpreting dreams without the dreamer's associations. If a proverb only makes sense when expressed in (proverbially diverse) use, it's characterised by, as established by Wolfgang Mieder, by hetero-situativity, poly-functionality and poly-semanticity (Mieder 2004: 132). In addition, proverbs are valid, as pointed out by expert on Slavic languages Peter Grzybek, when they relate to a real-life situation (Grzybek 2008: 30). This leads me to conclude that the validity of proverbs is defined by their use, therefore their contradictory aspect could stem from a change in the speaker's stance. As folklorist Roger D. Abrahams wrote (1975), proverbs were created to express different ideas and positions. They serve as a pragmatic tool for argumentation, while their various roles, stances and meanings simultaneously express contradictions in social and cultural daily life. On one hand, every child is welcome: *Otrok in kozarcev ni nikoli preveč v hiši; otroci pomrjo, kozarci pa se razbijejo / There can never be too many children or glasses in a house; children die, glasses get smashed*, while on the other hand every child is a nuisance: *Siromaku kuj tako otrok ne vmerje, če bi ga čez streho vergel, pa dva nazaj prideta / A poor man's child doesn't die easily, if he were to throw it over the roof, two of them would come back*. Considering this, searching for consistency in proverbs outside of their context seems absurd; the same life situation can produce a host of different experiences, which are articulated in proverbs as 'correct' or 'appropriate' messages. As Babič writes: 'There are as many proverbs as

there are life situations' (Babič 2015: 55). Or, in the words of a proverb: *Pregovori so otroci vsakdanjih izkušenj / Proverbs are children of daily experience*. If regulating a community (Vilfan 1961) through transmitting a system of values (Babič 2015) used to be the essential role of proverbs, the regulation would have been pragmatic.

Linguist Juraj Dolnik strived to understand the origin of antinomies in proverbs. In his view this was how human thinking developed, 'from contrary, polar opposites in a multipart class, to becoming aware of the complementary' (Dolnik 2007: 99, in Meterc 2013: 361). Naturally, contradictions disrupt logical thinking, disturb conscience, while the subconscious, which is subject to primary processes, allows for coexistence of contradictions (Freud 1987: 147–148); testing reality is therefore not effective. Traditional folk literature can be analysed as dreams without the dreamer (Freud 1977: 351; 2000: 328); they are both inhabited by perceptive complexes and desires, which comprise an ideology as a collection of values and beliefs. In this way, proverbs can be seen as censored, rounded forms, with content sourced from the subconscious ideological store room, which is expressed through proverbs. Linguists Alja Lipavac Oštir, Anja Vasiljevič and Mihaela Koletnik skilfully described the way ideology technically operates in proverbs: 'Sociolinguistics sees proverbs as a type of anomaly (cf. Abrahams 1975: 64), as they were originally used primarily as a stylised communication tool, used to transfer the discourse from personal to impersonal level, from the present to the past, from an informal code to a formal and rhetorical one, etc.' (Lipavac Oštir, Vasiljevič, Koletnik 2014: 49). Kržišnik speculates that 'expressions in language serve as a type of "corpus delicti"' (Kržišnik 2005: 68) of thought processes in a specific language / cultural group, thus exposing more about members of this group than they themselves would like to reveal. From this point of view, an ethnological analysis of the lexeme 'otrok' in Slovenian proverbs, despite their lack of consistency and questionable reality, as their use was not part of my research, proves to be a challenging scientific endeavour. Therefore, I will take the risk of entertaining fragments of past authorities (on what is correct and what is the appropriate course of action), that had been 'embedded' in proverbs.

Most proverbs in the discussed collection at the Clarin.si research repository were entered between 16th and 21st century through manuscripts, grammars (e.g. Gutsman 1777), dictionaries, practice and calendars, as well as other periodicals, fiction (e.g. Slomšek 1855), literary collections of proverbs (e.g. Kocbek 1887; Kocbek, Šašelj 1934; Prek 1972; Bojc 1974⁵), expert surveys (e.g. Makarovič 1975⁶), etc. They were

⁵ Etbin Bojc, a Slovenian language professor, included Bishop Anton Martin Slomšek's proverbs in his collection of several thousand proverbs. Slomšek was a 19th century preacher and patriot. Some of his proverbs were common in his time, others were the result of his teaching tendencies (Babič 2015: 78; Meterc 2021: 48).

⁶ Ethnologist Marija Makarovič was interested in more than just recording proverbs and included information on their use, as well, which makes her collection the most relevant to date (Meterc 2021: 59), despite the fact that proverbs and sayings have long lost their former standing, as far as their traditional scheme and function (Terseglav 2002: 56).

recorded by linguists, patriots, 'with the writer's pragmatic and moralistic attitude often playing an important part' (Meterc 2013: 374), as well as folklorists, ethnologists, etc. The collection brings together proverbs used by the local majority population, i.e. Slovenian proverbs, as well as proverbs loaned from other cultural or linguistic regions (German, Latin).

In centuries past, recording proverbs served a pedagogical and distributive purpose. As language used in proverbs is often authoritarian and moralising,⁷ they were a convenient linguistic tool for sermons, i.e. they served as instructions and accessories for spreading the ruling ideology. Collecting and recording proverbs in the 19th century also had an affirmative function in the scope of socio-political tendencies of the time; much like any other form of literary tradition, it was considered 'nation's commodity', practically evidence of the existence of the Slovenian language and consequently the Slovenian nation. In the foreground of this was the category of a nation, which was to be healthy, strong and cultural. E.g. the number of children was a societal norm, primarily expressed as divine affection (*Kolikor otrok, toliko blagoslova / The number of children equals the number of blessings*), and secondly as a political project (*Veliko otrok imej, da ostali bomo večno gospodarji teh planin in sten / Have plenty of children, so we can forever remain lords of these mountains and slopes*). 'Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, collectors chiefly copied Slovenian paremiological expressions from one collection to another, without any information about the source, and enriched copied material with material they discovered during fieldwork, but seldom clearly divided the two types of material' (Gryzbek 2008: 43). The collection of Slovenian proverbs at Clarin.si is a conglomerate of different time periods, social contexts and cultural surroundings of both recorders and speakers. This led paremiologist Matej Meters to question whether we could read their meaning 'with a fairly high degree of accuracy [...], due to the ostensible nature of their transparency in meaning' (Meterc 2021: 46). The question is indeed an important one; to offer a slightly humorous response, I would argue that experimenting with thoughts is central to all research, as long as this is done within the framework of responsibility to both public and science.

To conclude: the analytical question of this article focuses on the concept of childhood as an elementary thinking tool for personnel, responsible for socialisation. I'm interested in the answer to the question of what people who recorded proverbs or those who used them and passed them on through oral transmission (family, teachers, priests) thought of the signified, i.e. 'otrok'. The question is, what metaphorical language of proverbs conveys about socialisation, what kind of image of a child is (was) this socialisation based on. Socialisation demands the subject to submit to the existing normative order. Ways in which socialisation is realised depends on adults'

⁷ This is illustrated by Heda Jason's (1987) classification of proverbs: summary of life's experiences; advice based on experience; advice to the listener on their conduct; advice on desired conduct; warning about undesired conduct; criticism of a person's behaviour (Babič 2015: 56).

attitude towards children. This attitude is defined by cultural norms, which depend on social-economic conditions prevalent in specific periods and related family survival strategies, which govern intergenerational relations within a family (s.v. Turk Niskač 2021; Huzjan 2023). Analysis of approximately 600 proverbs resulted in the following semantic groups, which define the category 'otrok', care and socialisation of children within patriarchal discourse.

2 *Otrok je neumen in nedolžen, odrašeni [odrasli] je pameten ali poln greha, kateri je bolj srečen? (A child is stupid and innocent, an adult is smart and filled with sin, which one is happier?)*

The answer to the question in the title isn't complicated. The one characteristic of children the adults are often envious of, is carelessness: (*Otrok in pijanec imata srečo / A child and a drunkard are lucky; Pijanci in otroci imajo posebnega angelja varuha / Drunkards and children have a special guardian angel*), therefore *Del ko je človek lahko otrok, del mu je lepo / The longer a man can be a child, the longer he has a good time*. And who is a child? Children as a subject are endowed with characteristic attributes: *Tudi kraljevi otroci so otroci / Even the king's children are children*, yet at the same time there are differences among them: *Otroci so kakor prsti na roki: vsi so tvoji, pa dva nista enaka. / Children are like fingers of a hand: they are all yours, but not two of them are the same*. The first noticeable characteristic is their physical weakness: *Težko junaku, ki ga branijo otroci / Woe to a hero who is defended by children* and *Kdor vrže pijanca ali otroka, naj se preveč ne baha / Whoever overpowers a drunkard or a child should not brag too much*, followed by them being uncultured: *Kdor se ukvarja z otroki, si umaže srajco / Those who deal with children get their shirt dirty* and *Otroci in golobi umažejo hišo / Children and pigeons soil the house*. Which characteristics of children upset the world of adults?

Firstly, it's a child's crying: *Otrok raste z jokom / A child grows with crying*, which is also close to the elderly: *Otroci in stari ljudje kmalo (brž) jok s(iz)tresejo / Children and old people quickly shake out crying*. It sometimes happens that *Dete plače, mati ne čuje / A child cries, mother doesn't hear*. This is better from the point of view of upbringing, as *Smerkov otrok, prevzetan cvet / A snotty [crying] child, a conceited flower* and modesty was considered a virtue, practically *lepa čednost / best policy*. Other forms of (defensive) rationalisation of a child's crying are revealed by a comparison between children and parents: *Bolje, da joka otrok, nego oče / It is better for a child than a father to cry; Boli je da se derejo otroci kak pa starši / It is better for children than for parents to scream [cry]*. Adults supposedly have more serious reasons for crying and are harder to console, as *Otrok ima jok in smeh v jednem (enim) meh(u) / A child has crying and laughter in one bellows*.

Next on the list of irritating qualities when it comes to children, are the noise and racket that comes with them: *Otročaji so kričaji / Children are screamers; Otok je slavček⁸ v hiši / A child is a nightingale in the house; Vrane⁹ čivkajo na strehi, otroci pa v hiši / Crows chirp on the roof, children chirp in the house*. This is understandable as *Ni zdrav otrok, ki se ne igra in ki ne odpira ust / A child that doesn't play or open their mouth is not healthy*, therefore *Mati molčecemu detetu nič ne veruje / A mother has no trust in a silent baby*. Because *Mlada kri mirno ne stoji / Young blood does not stand still*, it is *Slabo znamenje, če so otroci mirni / A bad omen, when children are calm* and *Če so otroci tiho, so nekaj ušpičili / When children are silent they have been up to mischief*.

Children are inquisitive (*Otroci so najboljši opazovalci / Children are the best observers; Majhni vrči imajo velika ušesa / Small jugs have big ears; Otroci imajo majhne oči, pa velika ušesa / Children have small eyes and big ears; Otroci imajo velika ušesa in dolg jezik / Children have big ears and long tongues*) and truthful (*Otroci ne povedo nič drugega kot to, kar so slišali / Children never say anything other than what they've heard; Resnica prihaja iz ust otrok / Truth comes out of the mouths of children; Če hočeš zvedeti resnico, vprašaj otroka / If you want to know the truth, ask a child; Vino in otroci govorijo resnico / Wine and children speak the truth; Otroci (norci; neumniki; pijanci; vino; stare klepetulje) govore (povedo) resnico / Children (fools; nitwits; drunkards; wine; old babblers) speak (tell) the truth; Otroci in starci ne znajo lagati / Children and old people can't lie; Otroci in norci ne lažejo / Children and fools don't lie; Resnice poiđi iskat k svetnikom, k otrokom, k pijancem in k drugim nespametnim ljudem, pri modrijanih je ne najdeš / Seek the truth with saints, children, drunkards and other foolish people, you are not going to find it with wise men, because *Otok se moti malokdaj, večkrat se motiš ti, starec / A child is seldom wrong, you, old man, are wrong more often. Človek se mora pri otrocih neumen narediti / A man must play dumb with children*, because a child's inquisitiveness and truthfulness provide adults with information about the community and thus a feeling of control: *V mlinu in od otrok se vse izve / One can find out everything in a mill and from children; Kjer so bedaki, otroci in vino, tam nič ne ostane dolgo skrito / Where there are nitwits, children and wine, nothing stays hidden for long*. There is one problem with this, namely that *Kar otroci slišijo doma, kmalu poleti v svet / What children learn at home soon flies out into the world*, one should therefore be careful about what they say.*

Preacher Anton Martin Slomšek realised that a stupid person is one beyond good and evil (Slomšek 1855: 67). Children are not capable of sound judgement and are therefore stupid: *Otokom vse moreš dat, somo pameti ne / You can give children everything*

⁸ A nightingale is a stereotypically small bird with a piercing voice.

⁹ Crows are stereotypically clever and merging, as well as loud and screeching.

but cleverness; Lahko daš otroku kruha (če je lačen), pameti pa (mu) ne (moreš dati) / You can give bread to a child (if they are hungry), but cleverness you can't (give) (them). They are at their most unreasonable when it comes to managing money and time, like 'fools': *Le otroci in norci mislijo, da sto goldinarjev in sto dni nikoli ne mine / Only children and fools think that a hundred guldens and a hundred days never come to an end; Le otroci in norci mislijo, da dvajset let in dvajset petic [srebrniki] večno terpi [traja] / Only children and fools think that twenty years and twenty silver coins last forever ; Deca in duraki [norci] mislijo, da dvajset orlažev in pa dvajset let bez konca so / Children and fools think that twenty coins and twenty years have no end; Če gredo otroci in norci na trg, kramarji služijo / If children and fools go to the market, pedlars get paid; Lahko trgovcu, kadar imajo otroci denarja / Lucky is a merchant when children have money; Gda majo norci no deca peneze, te Židje tržijo / When fools and children have money, Jews are trading; Kadar imajo otroci dosti denarja, imajo kramarji dober beret / When children have lots of money, pedlars have good business; Kadar (če) imajo otroci (in norci) denar (novac), imajo(takrat so) kramarji (štacunarji; krošnjarji; trgovci) semenj (veseli) / When (if) children (and fools) have money, (then) pedlars (shopkeepers; hawkers; merchants) have a (merry) fair; Ko bi imela deca denar, bi bili kramarji bogati / If children had money, pedlars would be rich.* As noted by Kržišnik (2005: 76), time and money are related to work,¹⁰ which is why children's irrational actions when it comes to time and money stem from the lack of their ability to work. Children need to be guided and taught due to their inexperience (*Kure in otroci ne znajo pota / Chicken and children don't know the way*)¹¹ A foolish person is one who deviates from cultural norm, who is not (yet) socialised.¹² If *Odrašene [odrasle] varuje pamet, otroke Bog / Grown-ups are guarded by cleverness, children by God, if Bog daje pametnim srečo, boben (igrač) otrokom / God gives happiness to the smart and the drum (toys) to children*, then *Neumnemu detetu niti mati ne more pomoči / Even the mother can't help a stupid child.*

Considering the aforementioned examples, the phrase 'stupid child' seems tautological. Yet the tone of a proverb reminds us that *Deset bistrih (umnih) otrok - enajst sreč (pri hiši) / Ten bright (smart) children - eleven counts of luck (in the house)*, and that *Pametni otroci so največja bogatija staršev / Smart children are the parents' greatest wealth*. This confirms the existence of 'stupid' and 'smart' children. What did being bright, smart mean? Surely such a child was more experienced and prudent, more cultured. They were raised 'right': to be industrious, obedient, docile, cooperative.

¹⁰ The industrial age brought a change in the way work was expressed. If it used to 'typically relate to time it required', it was now expressed in money – wage (Kržišnik 2005: 76).

¹¹ For more on this, see section *Kar ni za zrelega moža, ni za otroka / That which is unsuitable for a mature man, is unsuitable for a child.*

¹² In this regard, a fool or a stupid child do not personify a special needs child, as per Alicja Fidowicz's (2021) weak arguments. In folklore, foolishness is a wider concept, covering special needs children, as well.

Subordinate and at the same time restless, impatient, ill-tempered: *Brihten otrok je kakor brencelj (zolja)*¹³ / *A bright child is like a horse-fly, paradoxically – indomitable.* Saša Babič defined a smart person in 19th century proverbial tradition as one who is educated, like 'gentlefolk' (Babič 2018: 84), adding that cleverness was considered 'the most valuable trait a person can possess' (Babič 2018: 85). In the case of a child that would mean that they could get educated and become 'gentlefolk', thus acquiring a higher social status and a more comfortable life. Having a clever child gave parents hope for economic and social welfare, as the clergy provided education to smart children from poor families, thus securing their survival. Therefore: *Moder sin razveseljuje očeta, neumen sin je žalost svoje matere* / *A wise son is his father's joy, a stupid one his mother's sorrow.*

The categories 'inquisitiveness', 'truthfulness' and 'stupidity' all fall under the umbrella category of 'innocence'. *Kdor misli kot otrok, ne misli slabo* / *One who thinks like a child, doesn't think badly*; *V otroku moraš videti otroško srce in dušo* / *You must see a child's heart and soul in a child*; *Otroci so otroci - bavijo se z otročarijami* - *Children are children - they occupy themselves with childish things*; *Ko sem bil otrok, sem govoril kakor otrok, mislil kakor otrok, sklepal kakor otrok*¹⁴ / *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, thought as a child, reasoned as a child.* In their innocence, a child is stupid, truthful and inquisitive. The innocence is related to being god's: *Otroci so božja dediščina* / *Children are god's heritage*; *Otrok je božji dar* / *A child is a gift from god*; *Vonj otroka prihaja iz raja* / *The smell of a child comes from heaven*; *Otrok ne razume božjega imena, a ga Bog vseeno ljubi.* / *A child doesn't understand god's name, but god loves them just the same.* Children are god's property, they are only on Earth in foster care: *Bog da staršem otroke, ali mu jih bodo morali vrniti.*¹⁵ / *God gives children to parents, but they will have to give them back.* The fact that *Otroška molitev oblake predira* / *A child's prayer pierces the clouds*, means that *Bogu kos vsaki otrok, junak pa nobeden* / *Every child can equal god, but no hero can.* By their divine nature, children are able to protect a house: *Vrag ne vstopi v hišo, ki je polna otrok* / *The devil doesn't enter a house full of children* and *V hišo, ki je polna otrok, hudič nima vstopa* / *The devil has no access to a house full of children*, and they deserve the utmost respect: *Otroku gre največje spoštovanje* / *A child should get the utmost respect.*

The idea that children are without sin, innocent and authentic, i.e. god's messengers, is part of a romantic discourse about children. A romantic vision of a child, personifying the 'natural' and 'emotional' principle as opposed to the 'material world' of industrial production, emerged as an answer to a rising industrialisation of urban

¹³ A botfly is an insect 'katere ličinke se zajedajo / whose larvae burrow themselves' (Fran: <https://fran.si/iskanje?View=1&Query=zolja>) into cattle, horses, sheep, etc.

¹⁴ The text is taken from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (<https://www.biblija.net/biblija.cgi?m=1+Kor+13%2C8-13&compact=1&id13=1&pos=0&set=2&l=sl>).

¹⁵ This proverb provides solace in the case of a child's death.

areas (Burcar 2007; Kroflič 2011). In his texts instructing religious upbringing, bishop Slomšek paradoxically wasn't shy about enforcing the necessity of corporal punishment (Košir 2023), which common sense subsequently realised in disciplinary procedures aimed at taming the wild nature of children,¹⁶ because *Otroci vohko starše sprajijo na struap ali pa u gruab / Children can drive their parents up the wall or into a grave; Raje z možem v pekel, kakor z otroki v nebesa / Sooner to hell with a husband than to heaven with children*, and was closer to the upbringing ideal of the Enlightenment (cf. Cunningham 1996).

The romantic imaginery disappears in the moment one focuses on differences among children. They differ in material living conditions and gender. *Sitega očeta otroke (deco) je lahko spoznati / It's easy to identify children of a father who is full*, although this doesn't mean that children from noble families are also raised right: *Najboljši starši imajo često nevezgojene otroke / The most distinguished parents often have ill-mannered children* or *Pametnan mož ima po navadi naumne otroke / A clever man usually has stupid children*. The attitude of an adult toward a rich or a poor child differed, as fawning over a rich child could prove beneficial to a poor person: *Bogatim novemu otroku se vse mili, reveževega pa vsaki peha od sebe / Everyone is sweet to a rich man's child, while everyone pushes a poor man's child away*. Grammatically, the word 'dete' (baby/child) is neutral in gender, meaning that such a being is non-differentiated in terms of gender, has no societal role and is supposedly outside the cultural norm (cf. Babič 2021: 82). The moment a cultural environment ascribes gender to a child is the start of gender segregation, as well as comprehending and dealing with a child according to their gender. Or the other way around: 'son' and 'daughter' appear in order to allow the speaker to utter the gender difference with accompanying gender role, as well as the intergenerational relationship: *Sin je tvoj, hči pa ne / A son is yours, a daughter isn't*. A son will carry the family name and inherit property (patrilineality), a daughter leaves the house (patrilocality). If *Sin lahko postane knez, hči mati / A son can become a prince, a daughter a mother*, that means that a son's future is less certain, but he also has more possibilities to actualise his life. This points to inferiority of the female gender: *Ko je hčerka rojena, je še mravlja razžaljena / When a daughter is born, even the ant gets offended*. From the moment she is born, a daughter secures the family's emotional economy (offence), and this will remain her mission: *Kdor nima hčeric, nima (tudi) solzice / The one who hasn't a daughter, also hasn't a tear*, i.e. doesn't emote. There is another way to read this proverb: 'The one who has a son has no regrets.' In patriarchy, the name, property and power over family members are automatically passed down from father to son.

¹⁶ For more on educational guidelines, see section *Kar ni za zrelega moža, ni za otroka / That which is unsuitable for a mature man, is unsuitable for a child*.

Children are emotional, inexperienced, reckless and unreliable (cf. Babič 2018), as well as weak, and therefore unsuitable for work (cf. section *Otroci so večni jarem / Children are an eternal yoke*). As they don't understand categories of the living environment, which are essential to adults – time and money, i.e. work –, they remain carefree and are possibly envied by adults, which often manifests in expressions of inferiority. Women are ascribed similar qualities (*Kadar se otroci valjajo in ženske kregajo, bo dež / When children roll on the ground and women squabble, rain is coming; Če imaš cibe, otroke in babo, imaš vse pogoje za se kregati / If you have chicken, children and a broad, you're in condition to argue ; Žena in otroci – to so računi / Women and children – they are expenses*), as are fools (*Tri pote sem norel: ko sem bil otrok, ko sem se oženil in ko sem zasajal murbe! / I was crazy three times: when I was a child, when I got married and when I was planting mulberry trees*), drunkards (*Otroci in pijanci resnico govorijo / Children and drunkards speak the truth*), old people (*Otroci in stari ljudje so za vkup / Children and old people belong together; Star dvakrat otrok / Once old, twice a child; Kmet mora biti dvakrat pastir: kot otrok in na stara leta / A peasant has to be a shepherd twice: as a child and in old age; Vsak mora biti le enkrat otrok, če ne mlad, pa star / Everyone must be a child at one time, if not when young, than in old age; Kratek čas delajo leta: otroka kratkočasijo igrače, fanta dekleta, moža gospodarstvo, starca peč in otroci / Diversion comes with age: a child is diverted by toys, a boy by girls, a man by economy, an old man by a furnace and children*), even sailors (*Nebesa varujejo otroke, mornarje in pijance / Heaven protects children, sailors and drunkards*), pigs (*Detetu in prasetu ni mogoče nič dopovedati / There's nothing one can get across to a child or a pig; Kdor se meša med otroke, ga svinje pojedjo / The one who mingles with children gets eaten by pigs*), as *Otroku je za kratek čas svinjka, starcu pa še naga dekle ne / A child is entertained by a pig, an old man not even by a naked girl*), poultry (*Zaradi otrok in kur se ne prepiraj / Don't argue over children and poultry*) and dogs (*Z otrokom in psom se ni za bost / It's not worth quarrelling with a child and a dog*).

The abovementioned subjects (women, old people, fools, drunkards and animals) are on the margins of a patriarchal family. Children used to be the last link of hierarchical social stratification: *Kjer so otroci, ni ne sorodstva ne prijateljev / Where there are children, there is neither family nor friends*, so it doesn't come as a surprise that: *Če trka beda na vrata, se to po deci najbolj pozna / If misery comes knocking, the children feel it the most* and *Dedeji sredico mudlajo, otroci skorjo grudijo / Old men eat the soft centre, children eat the crust*.

3 Otroci so večni jarem (children are an eternal yoke)

Taking care of a child, i.e. feeding and clothing them as well as taking care of hygiene fell to women: *Matere še ne naredi rojstvo otroka / A birth of a child does not make a mother*; which means that *Otroka ni težko (je lahko) roditi, temveč (a težko) vzgojiti / It's not hard (it's easy) to give birth to a child, it's hard to raise them*. Women used to work in the house, barn and fields. They either brought their children along or left them home, where they were cared after by a grandmother, a female farmhand or an older sister (Žagar 1997; Knežević Hočevar 2013: 108). They were a handful (*Dokler so otroci, dela ne zmanjka / As long as there are children, one never runs out of work*; *Majhni otroci in majhni dolgovi dajo veliko opraviti / Small children and small debts provide ample labour*) and a source of considerable worry (*Ko se otrok rodi, nastanejo skrbi / When a child is born, worries come*; *Otrok je skrb, naj bo poreden ali dober, bolan ali zdrav / A child means worry, whether naughty or good, sick or healthy*; *Kjer so otroci, tam so skrbi / Where there are children, there are worries*; *Ki nima otrok, ne pozna nadlog / The one who has no children, knows no bother*; *Vsak otrok velja (mater) en zob / Each child costs (the mother) one tooth*; *Kolikor otrok, toliko očenašev / The number of children is the number of the Lord's Prayers*), because they had to be kept alive – *Otroci in cvetje imajo radi nego / Children and flowers like care* – and socialise: *En otrok, en vrag / One child, one devil*.

Children were seen as an economic investment: *Otroci še nikogar niso naredili bogataša / Never have children made anyone rich*. They had to be fed: *Otrok ne joka od veselja, ampak od glada / A child doesn't cry with joy, they cry with hunger*; *Vsak otrok prinese s seboj žlico na svet / Every child brings a spoon along into the world*; *Bog je ustvaril otroka in z njim na svet poslal tudi žlico / God created a child and sent a spoon along into the world*, thus 'eating into' (sucking, pecking, eating) the family economy: *Otroci sesajo mater, ko so majhni, očeta pa, ko odrastejo / Children suck on the mother when they are little, and on the father when they grow up*; *Otroci in piščanci morajo nenehno kljuvati / Children and chicken must peck constantly*; *Malo dete če jesti z devetimi kosci / A small child wants to eat with nine harvesters*; therefore *Če imaš otroke, niso vsi grizljaji tvoji / If you have children, not every bite is yours*. Children presented a cost: *Ena napačnost potrebuje več stroškov, kakor dva otroka / One wrongness requires more costs than two children*, and the more there were, the greater the burden on family economy: *Prvi otrok je zlato, drugi srebro, tretji pa blato / The first child is gold, the second silver, the third mud*,¹⁷ *Veliko otrok, veliko dolgov / Many children, many debts*, because *Odkod je kaša, otrok ne vpraša / A child doesn't ask where porridge has come from*; *Otroci ne vprašajo, po čem je kruh / Children*

¹⁷ This is contradicted by the following proverb: *Prvi otrok je igračka, drugi je čačka, tretji je šele otrok / The first child is a toy, the second is a doodle, only the third one is a child, thus using the category of 'child' to illustrate the proverb V tretje gre rado / Third time's a charm*.

don't ask about the price of bread. Hence the instruction: *Od koruzne setve pravijo: Kdor ima veliko otrok, naj seje gosto; kdor jih pa ima malo, naj seje redko!* / *This is said of sowing maize: Those who have many children, should sow densely; those who have few, should sow sparsely!*

For the majority of rural population, children presented a risky investment due to their high mortality: *Krsta je sestra zibeli* / *A coffin is a cradle's sister*. When parents were referencing dying of children, it was said that: *Kdor ima veliko otrok, naj seje proso redko, kdor ima pa veliko živine, naj ga seje gosto* / *Those who have many children should sow their millet sparsely, those who have a lot of livestock should sow it densely; Če seješ za otroke, sej žito redko, če seješ za žival, na gosto* / *If you sow for children, sow sparsely, if you sow for livestock, sow densely*. Raising livestock reimbursed the costs, while children can be unprofitable. Child mortality was caused by hunger, poor housing conditions, disease, injuries, epidemics, wars, and also a lack of loving closeness in the first months of life, because *Otrok potrebuje več kot le zibelko* / *A child needs more than just a cradle*.

Veliko otrok sive lasi dela / *Many children [due to the aforementioned reasons] cause grey hair*, until the time they start working: *Otrokove roke in svinjsko korito morajo biti zmeraj polni* / *A child's hands and a pig trough should always be full*, because *Vsak otrok prinese s seboj roke za delo, žlico za jelo* / *Every child brings along hands for working and a spoon for eating*, so they can feed themselves, i.e. *Vsak otrok svoj kos kruha na svet prinese* / *Every child brings their own piece of bread into the world*. An agricultural holding thus included every member of the household and diligence was highly valued. On account of being weak and unreliable, young children helped around the kitchen, stable or pasture, because *Gorje mu, ki s teleti orje in z otroci kmetuje* / *Woe betide him who ploughs with calves and farms with children* and *Kdor s teleti orje in z otroki dela, ga rada glava boli* / *Those who plough with calves and work with children often have headaches*, while older children were performing increasingly more responsible chores. When it came to children, becoming independent and able to work as fast as possible was appreciated, while older members of the family were expected to retain these abilities for as long as possible (Turk Niskač 2021: 63–67; Knežević Hočevar 2013: 109).

Otroci zanesljive skrbi negotove ugodnosti / *Children [were] certain worries [and] uncertain benefits*. What, apart from the aforementioned child labour, are the benefits in question? Since children presented a cost, they were living in debt until their parents grew old: *Otrok šele takrat plača materi, kadar ji glavo umije* / *A child only repays their mother when they wash her head* and *Otroci staršem ne dajejo, ampak vračajo* / *Children don't give parents, they give them back*.¹⁸ Their debt is relative to the initial

¹⁸ The fourth commandment – Honour your father and mother – ascribes a child's debt to parental sacrifice, which is revealed as an expense in the microeconomy of a rural home.

investment: *Od otrok pričakuj le toliko, kolikor si jim dal / Only expect as much from your children as you have given them.* The children only became aware of their debt when they became parents themselves: *Koliko si dolžan svojim staršem, se zaveš šele takrat, ko imaš sam otroke / You only realise how much you owe your parents, when you have children yourself.* Investing in a child therefore meant investing in one's old age, as children were expected to take care of their incapacitated parents. I am going to revisit this motif in the segment *Kar ni za zrelega moža, ni za otroka / That which is unsuitable for a mature man, is unsuitable for a child*, suffice it to say that there was great concern about debt being annulled, reflected in the instruction: *Ljubi svojega otroka, dokler je majhen, da te ne bo sovražil, ko odraste / Love your child while they are young, so they don't hate you when they grow up.* Fear of being abandoned in old age: *Podpore otrok se nadejati je naravno, a goljufivo / It is natural, yet misleading to hope for one's children's support*, meant worries actually began with young adults: *Prave porodne bolečine pridejo šele, ko otroci zrastejo / True labour pains come when the children are grown, although Poročen otrok je le še pol otroka / A married child is only half a child.* At that time parents no longer wield direct control over their child's actions (*Sin (je) moj, (pa) um (ima) svoj / A son (is) mine, (but has) mind of his own*), which worsened their worries regarding their own future. The difference between caring for a small child and worrying about a young adult is depicted in a comparative between 'small' and 'big': *Mali (majhni) otroci/k (dete), male/a skrb(i), velik(i) otroci/k, velike/a skrb(i) / Small child (children, baby), small worry/ies, big child (children), big worry/ies; Dokler so otroci majhni, so z njimi majhne skrbi, ko so pa veliki, pa velike / As long as children are small, they present small worries, and big ones when they are big; Majhen otrok - majhna skrb, velik otrok sive lase dela / A small child – a small worry, a big child makes grey hair; Majhni otroci stopajo materi na krilo, veliki (pa) na srce / Small children step on their mother's skirt, (but) big ones on her heart; Majhni otroci te cukajo za krilo, veliki pa za srce / Small children tug at your skirt, big ones at your heart; Mihni otroci lulajo na krivo, vejki otroci pa na srce / Small children pee sideways, big children on the heart; Majhni otroci jedo juho, veliki pa srce svojih staršev / Small children eat soup, big ones their parents' heart; Majhni otroci jedo kašo, veliki požirajo srce / Small children eat porridge, big ones devour the heart; Zaradi majhnih otrok boli glava, zaradi velikih srce / Small children bring on a headache, big ones a heartache; Otroček stopa roditeljem na prste, odrasel na srce / A small child steps on their parents' toes, a grown one on the heart; Majhne punčke raztrgajo materi predpasnik, velike pa srce / Small girls tear their mother's apron, big ones her heart; Majhni otroci ne dajo spati, veliki ne dajo dihati / Small children won't let you sleep, big ones won't let you breathe; Majhni otroci ne pustijo spati, veliki pa ne živeti / Small children won't let you sleep, big ones won't let you live; Najprej nosiš otroka na rokah, nato v naročji in slednjič na hrbtu / At first you carry a child in your hands, than in your lap and in the end on your back.* Small children need to be taken

care of: they need help and care: they step on a skirt, on toes, they tuck at a skirt, tear an apron, need to be held in arms, they pee sideways, eat soup, porridge, won't let you sleep. With older children, the parents' agony only intensifies: they step and urinate on the heart, eat, devour, tug, tear the heart, bend the back, suffocate and generally don't let live. This is about gradual loss of control over one's own future.

Hence *Otroci so veselje in žalost (so greh in smeh) / Children are joy and sadness (are sin and laughter)* and *Kjer ni otrok, ni muk ne radosti / Where there are no children, there is no anguish and no joy* or *Dom z otroki - bazar, dom brez otrok - grobnica / A home with children – a bazaar, a home without children – a tomb*. Due to high child mortality and obstinacy in older children, they represented a risky investment: *Polna hiša otrok je kot polna košara jajc / A house full of children is like a basket full of eggs*; they had a high (economic) value: *Kdor otroku roko da, seže staršem do srca / The one who gives a child their hand, touches the parents' heart*, yet their 'frailty'¹⁹ made them an unreliable pair of working hands and support for their parents once they reached old age. Proverbs focusing on caring for children in the context of an agricultural holding instructed the use of economic categories. The discourse on children was an economic one.

4 Kar ni za zrelega moža, ni za otroka (That which is unsuitable for a mature man, is unsuitable for a child)

As opposed to African tradition which stipulates that it takes a village to raise a child, socialisation in Slovenia was a family matter (*Kjer je veliko žensk (babic), tam je otrok kilav / Where there are many women (midwives), the child is crummy*)²⁰ and a matter of the church. Upbringing was left to women and men, but they occupied different roles: the woman took over essential care and corrected small offences, while the men represented fear and respect, a punitive authority feared by the women, as well. A child's upbringing began with their parents' upbringing: *Otroka lahko vzgoje le vzgojeni starši / A child can only be brought up by well-bred parents*; *Največja nesreča za otroke je, če imajo nezrele starše / Immature parents are the greatest misfortune that can befall children*, because *Kadar se kregajo starši, najbolj trpijo otroci / When parents argue, children suffer the most*. Therefore: *Kjer ni mirnih ljudi, tam ni božjih otrok / Where there are no calm people, there are no children of god*. Parental quality was of vital importance for growing children, as parental encouragement or reprimand held an

¹⁹ Eggs were seldom featured in a peasant diet and were reserved for holidays, important guests and the infirm, while most eggs were intended for sale.

²⁰ The proverb says that 'kjer sodeluje preveč ljudi, ni pravega uspeha / where too many people participate, there is no real success' (Keber 2015; https://fran.si/192/janez-keber-frazeoloski-slovar-slovenskega-jezika/4215434/T4MVC_System_Web_Mvc_ActionResult).

enormous (magic) power over them: *Materin (očetov) blagoslov otrokom hiše zida (utrjuje), očetova (materina) kletev jih pa (do temeljev) podira / A mother's (father's) blessing builds (fortifies) children's houses, but a father's (mother's) curse knocks them down (to the foundations) and Starišev blagoslov zida otrokom hiše / A parents' blessing builds houses for children!*

Children's upbringing started very early: *Upogibaj drevo, dokler je mlado / Bend the tree while it's young*, as they believed that children were more susceptible to teaching measures in their early years: *Kar se otrok naučiš, to boš (bodeš) v starosti imel(a); kar v mladosti zamudiš, tega starec (stara) ne boš žel(a) / What you learn as a child, you (will) have in old age; what you miss in your youth, you will not reap in old age; Kdor se kdaj - ali zdaj otrok uči, pomnil bo vse žive dni / Whatever a child learns at one time or another, they remember for the rest of their days. Kar (česar) se Janezek nauči (od svojih staršev), to (bo) Janez (Janže) zna(l) (celo življenje) / What Janezek learns (from his parents), Janez (Janže) (will) know (his whole life); Kar se ne uči Janezek, tudi Janez ne bo znal / That which Janezek doesn't learn, even Janez won't know; Kar se naučiš v mladosti, to obvladaš v starosti / What you learn in your youth, you master in old age. Upbringing, 'good' or 'bad' influenced a child's future. It defined the adult's character and actions: *Kakor se mlado drevesce nagne, tako bo raslo staro drevo / As a young tree slants, the old one will grow;*²¹ *Česar se mlado dete privadi, tega se starček odvadil ne bo / What a young child gets accustomed to, an old man will not break from; Kakor otroka navadiš, tak(i) ostane / As you get your child accustomed, such they will stay; Kdor že kot otrok izgubi dušo, jo bo v starosti težko našel / The one who loses their soul as a child, will have a hard time finding it in old age; Če se otrok dela nauči, bo odrasel imel manj skrbi / If a child learns to work, they will have less worries as an adult. Our ancestors believed that 'good' upbringing (resulting in work habits) will avert poverty in the future: *Dobra vzgoja brani ubožtvu pod streho / Good upbringing keeps poverty from under one's roof*, while a 'bad' one doesn't: *Kriva vzgoja otrok je slabih časov mati / Wrong upbringing of children is the mother of difficult times.***

The educational ideal pictured a descendant who would surpass their parent both economically and socially: *Človek želi, da je od vsakega boljši, a od sina, da je gorji / A man want to be better than everyone, but worse than his son*, to prevent the following sequence of events, among other things: *Starši nabirajo, otroci tratijo, vnuki (pa) stradajo? Parents gather, children spend, (and) grandchildren starve; Kar sezidajo skrbni roditelji, razden(ej)o slabi otroci / That which caring parents build, bad children pull apart*, and create a more fitting succession: *Oče polje skrči, sin ga orje, vnuk z*

²¹ Frequent comparisons of a child to a tree are hardly surprising from a psychoanalytic point of view; a tree is a phallic symbol and consequently symbolises a child in the equation 'feces-child-penis' in the scope of a child's sexual fantasies. Sigmund Freud realised 'that these elements are often dealt with in the subconscious mind as equivalent and could easily act as substitutes' (Freud 2006: 99).

njim bogati / The father clears a field, the son ploughs it, the grandson gets rid of it. Upbringing was seen as more distinguished and demanding than marriage (Imeti ženo je človeška zadeva, vzgajati otroke pa je božje delo / Having a wife is a human affair, bringing up children is god's work), as an adult must have the ability to learn from experience and plan: Starši v skrbi za otroke nazaj (v preteklost) gledajo, pa naprej (v bodočnost) vidijo / Worrying about their children, parents look back (into the past) and see forward (into the future). For instance, Mati kregaje hči nevesto svari / A mother scolding her daughter [in foresight] is warning the bride. The educational goal was embodied by a prudent and at the same time obedient and subordinate child: Mirnega otroka ima še mačeha rada / Even a stepmother loves a calm child;²² Čedne otroke Bog da, pridne morajo starši izrediti / Handsome children are given by God, good ones have to be reared by parents, therefore Najhujša staršem bolečina, če mora sram jih biti sina / Parents' worst pain is having to be ashamed of their son.

There were few educational instructions regarding care for the physical needs of a child: *Kaša otročja paša, leča pa otroke meče / Porridge children's pasture, and lentils toss children; Vino je za otročnico ne pa za otroka / Wine is for the new mother, not for the child; Mladega otroka pa kruh moraš zmirom greti / A young child and bread must always be warmed; Kdor otroku zaklepa kruh, ga navaja h kraji / The one who locks bread away from a child is teaching them to steal. A peasant child would be relatively fed, clean and dressed. As summarised by Janja Žagar, a rural child was "surrounded" by family, never alone, yet no-one paid attention to them, at least not in the sense of holding, cuddling and playing' (Žagar 1997: 10), which led to frequent injuries (burns, cuts, snake bites, near-drownings, near-suffocations, etc.) It seems that the multi-generational tradition focuses heavily on parental supervision: *Dober nadzor je pol vzgoje / Good control is half of upbringing; Dober oče ima oči tudi na hrbtu / A good father also has eyes on his back; Na otroke in na denar je treba dobro paziti / Children and money should always be carefully guarded; Kadar je kal poln kač, ne puščaj dece blizu / When the pond is full of snakes, don't let the children near it; Vžigalic in škarij otroke varij! / Guard children from matches and scissors!; Na dve stvari (reči) posebno pazi: na otroka pa na ogenj / Take special care of two things: a child and fire; Otroci in norci (ogenj) so potrebni varuha / Children and fools (fire) need a guardian; Otroci in ogenj niso nikoli prevarovani / Children and fire are never guarded too much. Because: Ogenj se zatrosi po otrocih, po norcih in pa po nesreči / Fire is scattered on children, on fools and by accident. And once a child got burnt, the fear of fire became internalised (through experience): Opečen otrok ogenj upije / A burnt child cries fire.**

²² Therefore: an obedient child can be loved by people, even if they are not blood related, a highly valued condition in society of the time. In folklore, a stepmother is a wicked mother. For more on this, see: Huzjan 2008: 119–120.

Accidents happened more frequently when children were left without adult supervision: *Kadar staršev ni doma, imajo otroci semenj / When parents are away from home, children have a fair.* Warmer temperatures provided opportunities for unsupervised play: *Poletje je čas, ko otroci zapirajo vrata, ki so jih vso zimo puščali odprta na stežaj / Summer is a time when children close doors they left wide open all winter;* *Kakor hitro je kopno, je otrokom v hiši tesno / As soon as the land thaws, children feel cramped inside the house.* The metaphorical line separating inside from outside, was a fence: *Otroci imajo za plotom raj / There's paradise for children outside the fence.* Outside the 'fence' temporarily erased orders, cold looks and sticks; outside, experience was the teacher: *Otroci že dobijo za plotom rajdo / Children are sure to find company outside the fence;* *Otroci imajo za plotom rihtarja / Children have their arbiter outside the fence;* *Najboljši sodnik otrokov je za plotom / The best judge of a child is outside the fence;* *Otročji sodnik je za plotom / A children's judge is outside the fence;* *Deca (otroci) imajo za plotom sodnika / Children have a judge outside the fence.*

Educational instructions admonished poor care of children: *Ljudje z večjo skrbjo gojijo zeljnate glave kot pa svoje otroke / People take greater care when growing cabbage than they do rearing children* and criticised excessive care: *Preveč skrbi uniči otroka / Too much care ruins the child;* *Če se otroku vedno ugodi in ščenetu kar naprej streže, iz nobenega ne bo kaj prida / If a child is always complied with and a mongrel is always catered to, nothing much will become of either;* *Otroku na voljo, sebi v (žalost in) nevoljo / At a child's disposal, to one's own (sorrow and) annoyance.* On one hand they stressed a loving attitude towards children: *Otrok je kakor sekira, če (te) rani, jo vseeno daš na ramo / A child is like an axe, if it wounds (you), you still put it on your shoulder;* *Ljubi svoje otroke kakor Bog angele / Love your children like God loves angels;* *Otrok najbolj potrebuje ljubezen takrat, ko jo najmanj zasluži / A child needs love most when they deserve it least.* Parental love was expected to lead to prosocial behaviour, which in turn should earn the child popularity, pet names: *Otrok, ki je ljubljen, ima veliko imen / A child who is loved has many names.* On the other hand, the proverbial tradition criticised expressions of parental love: *Starši, ki preveč božajo otroke, jih ne vzgajajo h krepostim / Parents who caress their children excessively don't teach them virtues;* *Kdor otroka(e) preveč ljubi, (ta) ga (jih) pogubi / The one who loves a child (children) too much, ruins them;* *Kdor ima svoje otroke rad, (naj) jih (nikar) preveč ne hvali / The one who loves their children, (should never) praise them too much.*

As stated above, the educational goal embodied a subordinate child, one who would fear unquestionable adult authority: *Če starejši govori – otrok naj molči / If an elder is talking - a child should remain silent;* *Ko stari govore, otroci naj molče / When old people talk, children should remain silent,* because *Vsaka zjamrana beseda otroka, je udarec na glavo matere / Every whiny word from a child is a blow to the mother's head.* With the use of such instructions a child soon realised their place in the patriarchal structure of the world, where social power was distributed hierarchically and where

violence functioned as defence from losing one's own social position. This gave rise to centuries of authoritarian education, aimed at securing submission: *Dober otrok vboga na skok / A good child obeys instantly; Največja sila je moč vzgojene volje / The greatest force is the force of a well-brought up will*, and disciplinary educational interventions: commands, scaring, intimidating looks, isolation, kneeling, denying food and beatings (cf. Puhar 1982; Huzjan 2021). Folk tradition says: *Pogled očeta je zakon za otroke / A father's look is the law to children; Mrzel pogled otroka v hipu ohladi / A cold look instantly cools a child down; Očetovi opomini zaležejo več kakor materine batine / Reprimands from a father are more effective than beatings by a mother* (cf. Govekar 1926: 92; Kremenšek 1970: 33; Brumen 1995: 143; Dolničar 2014: 6; Huzjan 2021: 59); *Naj toraj šiba otroke modro strahuje, potem se mladenču palice bati treba ne bo in tudi moža ptuje vrata po petah tolkle ne bojo / So let a birch intimidate children wisely, so a young man won't have to fear a rod and a man won't have foreign doors beat him on the heels; Kder je pri otrokih šibe premalo, bo palice preveč / Where there is not enough birch with children, there will be too much rod; Človek, ki ga bol ne vzgaja, ostane vedno dete / A man not educated by pain will forever remain a child* (cf. Puhar 1982; Dolničar 2014: 9; Turk Niskač 2016: 152; Huzjan 2021: 59–60). A beating was an expression of kindness and love: *Kdor ne kaznuje svojih otrok, jim ne želi dobro / The one who doesn't punish their children doesn't wish them well; Kdor prizanaša šibi, sovraži svojega sina / The one who is easy on the birch hates their son; Komur se šibe škoda zdi, sovraži svojega sina, kdor ga pa ljubi, ta ga vedno strahuje / The one who uses the birch sparingly hates their son, but the one who loves him always intimidates him*. However, punishment should be doled out appropriately: *Šiba naj bo zdravilo, ne vsakdanje kosilo za otroke / For children, a birch should be medicine, not everyday lunch; Ljubi otroka s sarcam in vzgajaj z roko / Love a child with your heart and raise them with your hand; Če z eno roko tepeš otroka, ga z drugo roko stiskaj k srcu / If you beat a child with one hand, hold them close to your heart with the other*. Punishing a child was the exclusive right of the one who supported the child: *Pravico tepsti otroka ima samo tisti, ki mu kruh reže / Only the one slicing a child's bread has the right to beat them*.

5 Tako, kot ti s starši, tako otroci s tabo (As you do to parents, children do to you)

As mentioned before, children learn through experience, and, from birth, through observation, as well: *Otroci so ogledalo staršev / Children are a mirror of their parents*. Adults must have known this even before the first millennium. Folklorist Monika Krupej Telban namely discovered an articulation of a proverb dating back to the Enlightenment in a folk tale titled *Nehvaležni sin (The Ungrateful Son, ATU 980)*: 'Spoštuj starše, da tebi dobro pojde' ('Respect parents, so you will have it good'). This tale or versions

of it are known to be around prior to the first millennium (Kropej Telban 2022: 362). Hidden in the said proverb lies the most vital educational component, that of a role model: *Kakor ti spoštuješ svoje starše, tako bodo tebe spoštovali(a) tvoji otroci (deca tvoja) / As you respect your parents, so your children will respect you; Kakor ti s svojimi starši, tako bodo s teboj tvoji otroci / As you do with your parents, so your children will do with you; Če svojih staršev nisi enkrat ubogal, tebe tvoj sin ne bo desetkrat / If you disobeyed your parents once, your son will disobey you ten times.*

A child (subconsciously) identifies with the role model and repeats actions as an adult, which is why we say that patterns are passed on trans generationally: *Otroci morajo tkati s tem, kar so napredli starši / Children have to weave with what parents spun.* Behavioural patterns are repeated from generation to generation without analysis or deliberation: *Otrok dela, kar očeta delati vidi / A child does what they see their father doing; Dobri starši – dobri otroci / Good parents - good children; Če so starši dobri, so tudi otroci, če so starši slabi, so tudi otroci / If parents are good, the children are also, if parents are bad, the children are also; Kakor mati prede, tako hči tke / As the mother spins the daughter weaves; Napake otrok niso od kdovekod - imajo jih od svojih staršev / Children's flaws don't come from nowhere - they get them from their parents; Kar zleti staršem z jezika, prileti na jezik otroku / Whatever leaves the parents' tongues, lands on the tongue of the child; Žalost staršev zaradi otrok zmeraj na otroke pade / Parents' sorrow around children always falls on children; Kakoršna mati, taka hči (taki otroci), kakoršen oča, taki sin; / Like mother like daughter (like children), like father, like son; Kakšno deblo, takšen klin, kakšen oče, takšen sin; / Like tree trunk, like peg, like father, like son; Kakršna mati, takšen sin / Like mother, like son; Kakršna matka, taka Katka / Like mother, like Katka; Kakoršni stariši, takošni (takovi, taki tudi) otroci / Like parents, like (also) children; Kakršna njiva, takšen pridelek / Like field, like harvest; Poštena mati, poštena hči / Honest mother, honest daughter; Oče sedlar, sin sedlar / Father saddler, son saddler; Če je mati spaka, rada je hči tudi taka / If a mother is a scowl, her daughter tends to be the same; Če je oče ves ušiv, zakaj bi pa še sin ne biv / If the father is lice-ridden, why wouldn't the son be, as well; Če laže mati, bo lagala tudi hči / If the mother lies, the daughter will lie, as well; Če noseča žena kaj vzame, njen otrok krade / If a pregnant woman takes something, her child steals; Kakor poje mati, tako hči / The way the mother sings, the daughter does; Kjer je mati troša, so hčerke potrate / Where the mother spends, the daughters waste ; Glej mater in se poroči s hčerko / Look at the mother and marry the daughter; Oče in sin enacega škvarta / Father and son of the same character. *Otroci se radi po starih zvržejo / Children tend to take after their parents, so: Po otrocih se vse izve / Everything is found out through children.**

Behaviour patterns can become amplified in the next generation: *Če oče zahaja v gostilno, otroci zahajajo v beznico / If a father frequents a pub, the children frequent a shebeen; Ako (če) mož ženo zmerja, jo otroci tepejo (tolčejo) / If a husband insults his wife, the children beat her; Če je oče junak, bode sin gotovo vojščak (vojak) / If the*

father is a hero, the son is sure to become a warrior (soldier), although Čestokrat je očetova suknja sinu prevelika / The father's coat is often too big for the son. They can also oppose the role model; such as Vsaka stvar ima dve plati / Everything has two sides, yet it is the same 'thing' : Če pije rad vino otrok, ne bo maral zanj v starosti / If a child likes to drink wine, they won't care for it in old age; Hči skopuhova je dostikrat žena požeruhova / Daughter of a miser is often wife of a glutton; Lena mati, hitra hči / Lazy mother, quick daughter; Oče skopuh, sin goljuf (razsipnež) / Father miser, son swindler (wasteful); Oče zbira slamo kot zlato, sin razsipa zlato kot slamo / The father collects straw as if it was gold, the son wastes gold as if it was straw; Oče štedljivec, sin zapravljivec / Father a saver, son a squanderer; Kar je oče zbral z motiko, to sin razmetava z lopato / What the father gathered with a hoe, the son is squandering with a shovel.

The realisation of literary tradition is quite on point: *Grehi staršev se maščujejo nad otroci / Parents' sins take revenge on the children ; Grehe staršev plačujejo otroci / Parents' sins are paid for by children; Na otrocih se kaznujejo grehi očetov / Fathers' sins are punished on the children; Če starši greše, otroci trpe / If parents sin, children suffer; Prerado ternje otroke pika, ki so ga nepošteni stariši sadili / All too often children get pricked by thorns, which were planted by dishonest parents. Summed up in one proverb: Greh se prenaša na potomce / A sin is passed on to descendants, although Otroci niso dolžni poravnati grehov svojih staršev / Children are not obligated to settle their parents' sins. This very situation could give rise to the development which worried parents so much; namely the possibility of a child arbitrarily writing off the alleged debt (cf. section *Otroci so večni jarem / Children are an eternal yoke*). Let's revisit the saying 'Spoštuj starše, da tebi dobro pojde' ('Respect parents, so you will have it good'), which verbalises the folklore tale *Nehvaležni sin / The Ungrateful Son* (ATU 980). The missing text reads: *Respect your parents, since your children look up to you. This is why you will have it good, once you become old and helpless, because your children will respect you, as well, and God will reward them: Otroku, če stariše spoštuje, vse dobro Bog podaruje / God gifts all good things to a child who respects their parents.*²³ Caring for elderly family members at home was a sign of respect and a woman's job (*Če so otroci dobri, očeta k možu postavijo; če so pa hudobni, ga na beraško palico pripravijo / If children are good, they make the father a man; if they are wicked, they make him a pauper*), in times when there was no such thing as a network of care facilities.²⁴*

²³ The fourth commandment is about more than just the relationship between children and parents, it is about respect for any authority one is subordinate to.

²⁴ Ethnologist Duška Knežević Hočevar found that 'While either older family members helped care for children, or they were left to care for one another, a woman was expected to provide long-term care to family members in need of help, despite her full engagement at the farm' (Knežević Hočevar 2013: 110). The question of why care for the elderly primarily fell to women, warrants additional analysis.

The so-called writing off debt reveals the precise motif of the ungrateful child: *Oče je dal sinu vinograd, sin pa očetu niti grozda / The father gave his son a vineyard, the son didn't even give his father a grape; Oče je dal sinu grozd, sin očetu niti truge / The father gave his son a grape, the son didn't even give his father a coffin; Težko njemu (onemu otcu), ki se na deco opira / Woe betide him (the father), who relies on his children ; Za devet otrok je prostora na rokah očeta, a za očeta ni prostora v hišah devetih otrok / There's room for nine children on a father's arms, but there's no room for the father in nine children's houses; Ko otroci sklenejo, da bodo skrbeli za starše, teh že ni več med živimi / When children decide to take care of their parents, the parents are no longer among the living.*

It seems the fear of helplessness and abandonment in old age permeated the entire upbringing phase, as *Najstrožji sodniki so učitelju učenci, staršem otroci / The strictest judges for a teacher are students, for parents, children.* With age, parents were forfeiting social power and regressed down the ladder of patriarchal hierarchy. With no organised social services to take care of them, they were left at the mercy of their descendants, which were now in a place where they could realise their vindictive childhood fantasies: *Ne tepi matere svojih otrok, tvoj otrok nekoč te kaznuje, ne Bog / Don't beat the mother of your children, the child, not Got, will punish you one day; Hudobni otroci so žebliji v krsto svojih staršev / Wicked children are nails in their parents' coffin; Hudobija otrok se na starše vračuje / The children's wickedness comes back to the parents.* This is corroborated by Janez Trdina's observations: 'Even children don't willingly get beaten, a grown young man will often take revenge on the one, sometimes even on the parents (by refusing to help), if he was beaten as a boy. Vengeance can turn bloody, it is said: 'Just you wait, I will pay you back when I grow up' (Trdina 1987: 457). A proverb warning parents, in different dialectal and other versions, about their children's vindictive attitude once they grow old, attracts extra attention: *Če vlečeš (hočeš) očeta do praga, te bod(j)o tvoji otroci (otročā) čez prag sunili (sunilā) / If you drag (will) your father to the threshold, your children will push you over the threshold; Ti očeta do praga, sin (otroci) tebe čez prag / You your father to the threshold, the son (children) you over the threshold; Ti očo do praga, sin tebe prejk praga / You father to the threshold, son you over the threshold; Ti ačeta za praga, sin tebe č'z prag / You father to the threshold, son you over the threshold; Kdor očeta do praga privleče, nja bojo otroci čez prag sunili / The one who drags his father to the threshold, he will be pushed over the threshold by his children; Kdor svojega očeta ali mater do praga (potisne) privleče, njega bodo njegovi otroci čez prag sunili (vergli!, potisnili) / The one who (pushes) pulls their father or their mother to the threshold, they will be shoved (thrown!, pushed) over the threshold by their children; Ti starše do praga, otroci tebe čez prag / You your parents to the threshold, children you over the threshold; Kdor stariše svoje do praga pervleče, tiga bodo njegovi otroci čres prag izsuvali / The one who drags their parents to the threshold, they will be hurled over the threshold by*

*their children; Ti sina do praga, sin tebe čez prag / You your father to the threshold, the son you over the threshold.*²⁵

Considering the described cases, the main goal of upbringing from the parent's point of view was to 'create' a diligent person, fearful of authority (father – God), seemed quite sensible. Disciplining in the fear of helplessness in old age did yield results, but not on the long term, because the patriarchal machinery turned as the parents aged.²⁶ Warnings about more democratic relations between parents and children: *Mehkužnost rodi kilave otroke / Faint-heartedness gives birth to crummy children; Kdor otroka ne pouči, ga pogubi / The one who doesn't teach the child, ruins them; Kolikor bolj popuščamo, toliko bolj zahtevni bodo naši otroci / The more we ease off, the more difficult our children will be; Popustljivost staršev zagreni starost, otrokom pa nakoplje bridkost / Parental lenience makes old age bitter, and brings anguish to children*, which could threaten the patriarchal order *Otroka uči, ako ne, bo otrok tebe / Teach your child, if not, the child will teach you; Gorši [boljše] je, da sin očetu streže kakor oče sinu / It is better for the son to serve his father than for a father to serve his son*, have been preserved to this day, albeit in different educational forms, starting with: A child mustn't be indulged, because ...

Fear of unsuitable transfer of cultural norms or ungratefulness (*Nehvaležnost je hčerka ošabnosti / Ungratefulness is the daughter of arrogance*) is revealed as a fear of abandonment, further emphasized by (self)persuasion on part of the adults: *Ni na svetu boljših prijateljev, nego so starši otrokom / There are no better friends in the whole world than parents are to children*, noting that *Starši bolj ljubijo svoje otroke kakor otroci starše, / Parents love their children more than the children love their parents*, as they have perfected the way they love and care for them: *Mati lahko zredi sedem otrok, sedem otrok ne more rediti mame / A mother can raise seven children, seven children can't feed the mother;*²⁷ *Ena mati lahko preživi deset (devet, dvanajst, dvajset) otrok, deset (devet, dvanajst, dvajset) otrok pa ne more ene matere / One mother can support ten (nine, twelve, twenty) children, but ten (nine, twelve, twenty) children can't support one mother; Prej mati preravna deset otrok kot deset otrok eno mater / Sooner a mother cares for ten children than ten children for one mother; Ena mati lahko mnogo otrok vzgoji, vsi otroci pa ene matere ne morejo / One mother can raise many children, but all the children can't raise one mother; Oče bolje skrbi za*

²⁵ The following sentence can also be found in ethnological research of Minot, a French village: 'In the same way parents abused their children, the children never missed a chance to abuse their aging parents' (Zonabend 1993: 138). Fear of revenge could be seen as a principle of agricultural economies in the past centuries.

²⁶ In other words: 'In a family environment, life's transitions of the younger generation are blended with life's transitions of the older generation. The timing of, for instance, a grown child's move away from home and marriage in early adulthood is associated with the timing of older generation's transition to retirement or a child coming into their inheritance. This exposes the interdependence between generations and their operating strategies in mutual interactions throughout life' (Knežević Hočevar 2013: 25).

²⁷ What the proverb in fact says is that a man cannot excell (be successful) at many fields: *Mojster enega poklica hrani ženo in sedmero otrok, mojster sedmih poklicev niti sebe ne more / A master of one profession feeds a wife and seven children, a master of seven professions can't even feed himself.*

deset otrok, kakor deset otrok za enega očeta / A father takes better care of ten children than ten children do of one father; Deset otrok ne more rediti očeta, oče pa vse / Ten children can't feed the father, but the father can feed all of them; Starši lahko preživijo deset otrok, deset otrok pa starše le težko zmore / Parents can support ten children, but ten children can hardly support their parents; Starši lahko vzgojijo ducat otrok, toda ducat otrok ne more dostojno spraviti pod rušo svojih staršev / Parents can raise a dozen children, but a dozen children can't bury their parents properly.

This is the very reason why, as a rule, an old farmer didn't trust his son – the young farmer. Elderly parents generally stayed on the farm which they handed over to their descendant: *Očetu luč, sinu ključ / [Heavenly] light for the father, a key for the son; Bogu di(u)šico, sinu možnjico (zemljico) / A soul to God, a purse (land) to the son*, and were entitled to maintenance. Legal historian Sergij Vilfan writes that 'maintenance often led to arguments between a former and new owner and was one of the most common subject-matter of civil lawsuits [...], but handing over the key was often unavoidable' (Vilfan 1961: 509), in order to ensure the continuation of management. Family farms followed patrilineal inheritance, and considering the then current patrilocality, elderly parents wished: *Boljše je umirati na sinovem pragu kakor na hčerini postelji / It is better to die on your son's threshold than on your daughter's bed*, meaning in one's own house. Complications with transfer of a farm could arise when there was something to inherit, hence the proverb: *Kadar ni dediščine, se otroci na grobu svojih staršev ljubijo, če je je pa kaj, se pa grdo gledajo / When there is no inheritance, children love each other on their parents' grave, when there is some, they glare at each other*, had a somewhat comforting effect.²⁸

6 Conclusion

There is no signifier on Clarin.si for the stage of life we now call 'otročstvo' (childhood). Neither is 'detinstvo' (babyhood), which first appeared in bourgeois culture. Signifiers 'dojenček' or 'dojenec' (baby), 'novorojenček' or 'novorojenec' (newborn), 'malček' (toddler), 'mladostnik' (adolescent) and 'najstnik' (teenager) are also not to be found. The latter is not surprising, as differentiation of childhood came about relatively recently, at the beginning of the 20th century in the scope of consumer clothing culture for children (Cook 2004). Truth be told, the word 'zibel' (cradle) in fact signifies a new-born,²⁹ but only appears three times in the entire collection of proverbs, and only once as relevant

²⁸ For more on agricultural economy prior to the second world war, see, i.a. Makarovič (1978), Knežević Hočevar, Černič Istenič (2010), Lazarevič (2022).

²⁹ This (crib) was actually a metonymy (for a newborn) – replacement of the content with the vessel. New-borns mostly lay swaddled in a crib, which oftentimes had a hole in the bottom to allow the runoff of urine (Šarf 1980: 14).

for this research: *Krsta je sestra zibeli / A coffin is a cradle's sister*. 'Najstnik' (teenager) makes a single appearance, as well: *Najstnik sicer ne sprašuje več, odkod je prišel, pa tudi ne pove, kam gre / While a teenager no longer asks where they have come from, they also don't say where they're going*. Both records are taken from a manuscript by Marjan Podlesnik, the year of the records is unknown. Based on countless findings I can't conclude that for centuries, the majority population in Slovenia wasn't aware of the stage of life directly preceding adulthood, but I can assert that this was a short stage, one that had to be overcome as soon as possible, due to the inability of children to work.

While peasant economy didn't know childhood as we do today, they had ideas about children inhabiting the not-yet-adult stage. A child was a subject to be cared for and raised, which was strenuous for the majority of agricultural holdings. The said subject was incapable of working as they were weak, inexperienced, irrational and at the same time restless and headstrong. Divine in their promise of a future and devilish because they called for sacrifices on part of adults. While their romantic image was innocent and respectable, the enlightenment side showed them as wild and in need of discipline. They had to be brought up as obedient and self-sufficient worker, who will simultaneously care for their parents as they approach old age. Authoritarian upbringing consisted of violent disciplinary measures.

As mentioned above, the weakness of small children in rural areas was their inability to work and contribute to family economy. They presented an expense for self-sacrificing parents, which forced them to a lower status. The longer they remained not working, the larger the incurred 'debt'. They only acquired worth with physical strength and experience, when they were able to produce (for) food on their own. From then on they started to pay back the debt, which was repaid in full through caring for their parents once they reached old age. 'Indebting' was more than just a survival strategy on part of the parents, it also regulated relations in patriarchal rural families. Like women, the elderly, poor, beggars, fools, drunkards and animals, children were marginal members of such patriarchal communities. With authoritarian upbringing, aimed at instilling obedience to the father (authority), a child soon realised their place in the patriarchal structure of the world. If a first-born son came into a wealthier farm, he could hope for more social power, but the patriarchal machinery flipped as he entered old age and became helpless. At that point, his survival depended on successful transfer of cultural norms. The ability to work and be independent were valued as they enabled survival in an unjust and persistent patriarchy.

Quite similarly, Özay Karadağ analysed 785 Turkish proverbs with childhood subject matter and found that the socialisation participants exhibited ambivalence toward the child. On one hand, the child was presented as a precious being, while on the other adults found their characteristics were disruptive (Karadağ 2013). A similar cultural image is painted by 42 (probably) Asante³⁰ proverbs collected by Robert S. Rattray in 1933.

³⁰ The Asante people live in the south of Ghana, in Togo and Ivory Coast.

The analysis of proverbs coming from the Igbo ethnic group from Nigeria, which might still serve as a socialisational metaphorical tool for today's children, reveals that their everyday use maintains social and cultural order in the community (Penfield and Duru 1988). Semantics of these proverbs point to similar socialisational tendencies to those found in the collection of Slovenian proverbs. However, no serious claims can of course be made without an in-depth comparative analysis.

But I can certainly conclude that proverbs regarding children from the Clarin.si collection use authoritarian and authoritative language in regard to different authorities: god, father, mother, parents, etc. They served as a socialisational 'manual' in order to maintain a social and cultural *status quo*, where taking care of a child equated with taking care of their own old age. Authoritativeness and authoritarianism of proverbs revealed parental fear of their children's disobedience, unsuccessful transfer of the system of values and, with that, of their children's arbitrary remission of 'debt' once they grow up. In this, the patriarchal upbringing revealed its soft spot – impotence.

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