VIOLENT DEATH
IN SOUTH SLAVIC CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE

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The aim of this article is to point at some lacunae evident in contemporary South Slavic folklore research. We have in mind the whole line of children's rhymes that are deliberately completely avoided in both folklore anthologies and textbooks. The main reason for this neglecting is probably the fact that contemporary reader, and even scientific researcher, find these texts morbid.

Our starting point was the distinction between natural and violent death in Slavic perception of the world, considering the violent one a not-one's-own death. The idea
was to check how it is reflected in South Slavic folklore texts, paying special attention to the usage of these texts for and by the children. We will focus only on children's point of view of incidental situation, as it is performed by the adults for children in the early childhood, and how it is performed by children themselves, some years later.

Due to the specific type of material certain terms used in this article need additional explanation. The violent death is frequently displayed in children's folklore through the incidental situation. Incidental situation can remain not enacted, i.e., remain on mere threat or curse, or some similar verbal expression. This situation is created by actors, that in children's folklore could be directly mentioned in the text itself (directly mentioned actor is the explicitly quoted actor that is unchangeable and not depending on the context), and indirect participants of the incidental situation, so-called contextual actors. Contextual actors take part in the text from the context, from performer's or narrator's standpoint. This actor is changeable, and in each situation of the text performing it is related to the concrete child or children. This child is mentioned by its proper name, or its presence is evident from the use of personal pronoun in first or third person singular. First person is used by child itself or by the narrator instead of the child.

Actions of incidental situation can assume two different positions: the positions of agent or patients, frequently related by conjuncts in instrumental case (cf. Toperos 1998). Anthropomorphyc code agents can be, e.g., Aunt, Turk, Queen, or Me. The Wolf or Bear belongs to the zoomorphic code agents, in ridicule agents could even be Hen. The agent in children's curses sometimes is not specified, but it is obvious - the concept of the death in curse being proposed, violent one, e.g., tomorrow you will die. The usage of the distinction oneself and not oneself death related to the patients in children's folklore can provoke interesting consequences. The violent death (slaughter, where the agent is a man) has completely different status (status of the self death) and it is considered a natural act, even funny, e.g., When they killed the goose, all the children cried, when they ate the goose, all were happy. On the other hand, persisting of the wild animal (disregarding the agent) has a status of not oneself death. Natural death of the human being (one's own death) opposed to the violent one, is rarely found in South Slavic children's folklore.

Specific material of the death oriented children's folklore for the purpose of this article is limited to texts only, children's games being considered solely if their texts are also independently attested, not vice versa. Existence of the same text both within ritual and independently (without context) is always good indication in searching for the text origin, and further the origin of the motif itself. This treatment will be illustrated mainly with such transformed texts, starting from the children's games, or adults' ritual folklore, children magic texts and other texts of not marked usage.

The inverse process was also possible, i.e., some neutral children's text gradually could substitute original incantation texts.

1. Anthropomorphic patients

1.1. Contextual actor (Child) agens (Aunt, Uncle, She-bear)

Involved contextual act - child participates in the game as potential victim, as it is said in the text itself. Children's game comprises closed circle, one child in the middle is to be Aunt (tetka), with its hands she imitates the process of making cookies. At the end of the rhyme, Aunt becomes angry and drives children away, catches them and strangles them, because of the teasing words of children's singing: Tetka kolesirje pipa-

bu na badora filca, list se povrudi, tetka se ponami, pa se duh popiše, "Aunt is mak-
ing cookies, on the beech leaf, the leaf broke, aunt went mad, and killed all the chil-
dren", Vlaserica in Bosnia). This children's game text is well-known all over Serbo-

Croat language territory, which is not the case with the game itself. The same text is a song sung to a child while swinging or as a lullaby. According to the agents type all the known variants are divided in three region groups, while the patient is contextual actor - the child to whom this rhyme is sung. In the East agents is She-bear: Vani vam neka, kar Morave braška, Taj mi sebi tetka, te mi fjijjel Petko, Vani, vami, Petko, ete, gie uve mnocha da vedeti Petco. ("Petar tree beside Morava. There sits my aunt, swinging Petko. Sleep, sleep, Petko, here it comes she-bear to choke you"). Niz, Serbia); in central area agents is Uncle: Ljepa ljepa ljije, na Morave brashe, Kole je moja tetka Kolesirje pipa-

bu. I meni bi delu ali vo tetka osama na veliki petek. ("Petar trees are on Morava. Where is my aunt? She is petting cookies. She would give them to me, but the uncle would not allow, let his tall fall off on Good Friday"). Calak Serbian: in western regions text model the agent is Aunt: Hladno mi na mome, na zeleno jaruje, gdojega moja tetka kolesirje pleska na badora filcju ljije se poveri, tehtja se ponami. ("Let us go at the seaside, on green maps, where my aunt is petting cookies on beech leaves, leaf overtorned, my aunt became furious"). Herzegovina). Starting from the supposition that even in this case peripheral regions are more conservative than central ones, we can suppose that the Uncle is secondary in text variants, together with his action (he would not allow cookies to the child). In that case, the Aunt and She-bear are both in the incident they prove is fatal.

The actions performed by the mentioned actor (Aunt), which is not always agent, are: petting cookies, crushing nuts and nibbling hazel-nuts. Searching for explanation of this actor's function, the folk tale about the origin of beans, lice, nuts and hazel-nuts, can be helpful. An old woman was bored, and she prayed the God: Daj mi božji niznica, pa hajcaja, jo osutska, jo lepička - da se zahija, ("Lord, give me bone, or flea, or nut, or hazel-nut, to amuse myself"). Its function in text could be made clear with South Slavic ethnographic data about existing correlation between the children, from one side, and nuts and hazel-nuts from the other. In Samobor, Croatia, people believe that during the year abundant with nuts and hazel-nuts, lots of children will be born, also. For the same purpose (to have many of children) during Montenegrin wedding, people throw nuts and hazel-nuts Catholic in Karlova put hazelnut branch in front of the bride; in Homolje (Northern Serbia) the bride herself puts acorns, hazel-nuts and nuts under her dress in order to give birth to boys only.
Text variants collected in a zone of Balkan language league together with Aunt and Uncle, contain Shebeara as a text actor. This bear kills (strangles or takes) the child called Petko. The examples are from Western Bulgaria (Dimitrovgrad, Kjantemir) or from Southeastern Serbia (Boljave, Niš, Leskovac, Bujanovac). In this region sometimes the Aunt makes a plea to the Shebeara not to scare children, but she bears them into the hunt. The Aunt (telka) in this region is one of emblems for the bear. This is the case at Boljave, at the Saint Andrew–Bear’s Day (this festival is known only to the South Slavs, cf. Gura 1997:172). SD s.s. Andrej when the parents shell corn and show it to the children explaining that the aunt was here and ate dinner. In the vicinity of Pird the same day is called Aunt’s Day (Telčan d’u), and the bear is called telka. Also, in some villages near Niš Shebeara is called teta, telka. Early in the morning on Bear’s Day, the adults show to the children bit corn saying: Children, the bear was here, or: Look, what the aunt ate. In the village of Hot they make bear traces in snow. On that day working is prohibited, because the bear can strap the person disobeying that rule, tear his clothes, or make some other damage.

Completely different is the situation as the entrance to the Balkan language league territory, where the unique text actor is Aunt (telka). Location of this actor (telka) is pear tree, or beech alongside the Morava river, or brook, middle of the field, heaven, seaside, green maple, or the Aunt is sitting on beech/pear leaf (connected with following incident: this leaf broke or overturned). Demonic role of the Aunt is evident only through her relationship with the contextual actor (me, my child), telka se puniru, strašava tele, se pomeca, strašava tele (the aunt infuriated and killed all the children but me). This action is frequently expressed through incidental folklore formula provali/pomuni (broke/infuriated).

There is a similar situation in children’s game Sje baša alkira (‘The old woman doing floor’, attested in Bosnia). Children in wheel dancing sing to the Old woman that imitates sowing with sieve: Sje baša alkira na svećen krepri, nu mete ga posipati vet go stolju projapati (‘The old woman is sowing flour with a torn sieve, she can’t do it, so she begins to spill it’). Then, the children blow in flour, old woman gets infuriated and runs after them. The same text is used while swinging child’s head in hands: Sje baša alkira na svećen krepri (‘The old woman is sowing flour with a torn sieve’). The same text is attested without ritual context, only as a song and contains the same incidental formula provadi/pomuni (broke/infuriated). Sij baša alkira, na svećen krepri, svećen se provadi, baša se pomuni. (Sow, old woman, flower with a torn sieve, the sieve broke, the old woman got infuriated’), or: Sje baša brušeno na deštan krepri, krepri se provadi, baša se pomuni pa su svu deku podriri. (‘The old woman is sowing flour on the old man’s lap. The lap broke, the old woman got infuriated, and strangled all the children.’ These all examples come from Bosnia).

Even the connection Aunt : cake is a folklore formula, cf. following proverb: Hrada mu lam i telka bez kolica (‘Thank him like aunt without a cake’), Bog je svetov bezica iz tenova kolija (‘God saved you from Christmas south wind and aunt’s cake’); Don’t look forward to Christmas south wind or to aunt’s cake); also, when the child chokes up, others tell him: Dam Sneće ti telka kolica (‘The aunt will bring you cakes’), Kosnua.

1.2. Contextual actor (Child’s patients (my Mother), agens (Wolf))

In children’s folklore mother’s death is frequently isofunctional with the death of the actor itself, i.e. child. The illustration for this thesis is the case of involving the child in folklore text already mentioning mother (it implicitly includes a particular child). On the other hand, in the same example polyfunctionality of the same text can be followed, so at Pumat, on the island of Kuk, there is a saddle shaped stone ‘horse’ used by children for riding that ‘horse’. On this occasion, while riding stone or branch, children say following rhyme: Isis, na konja, no je Marko pod konja, na šešira šešira, moja mamoza tuve, čiru su je dada, i poču je mrtva, buda oduvjet. (‘Jump on the horse, Marko fell under the horse, on the white wheat, he called his dear mother, she gave him sweet and will give it to him again before he goes to sleep’). There is a belief that on the same stone initiation occurs when future magician comes to age, what makes possible supposition that this game, as well as the text, is a refelction of some initiation ritual (cf. Bonifaci-Rožin 1976:150-151).

The same rhyme, with slightly modified incident, is spread across Serbo-Croatian language territory: Cuvam curvi na kogu, mamo muku zaboru, u pliniu u polju. Negove je zabezba, mamo ku je draguna, vise mu je davala. Opet ci mi davali kud sinjena spoto (‘Ride on horse, wolves slaughter the mother, in wheat field. For God’s sake, don’t do that, she is dear, she gave me her breast. She will give me again before sleep’). The actors provoking incident are almost always wolves (sometimes a Turk can stand in the place of wolf, or the evil is not named). Only once the victim is described as an old woman. Location is regularly the same: wheat field (rarely: deep brook, broad stone). Further development of the death incident is possible this way: du je na zgora osnez crne, da je crane jagoda (‘To take her behind the hill, for cross to eat bee’). Still, this fatal incident remain in text only in a form of threat. Contextual actor - child is begging the wolf not to accomplish his threat, sometimes even offering him some recompensation: mamoja u jugodi (‘I’ll pick up strawberies for you’), transferred without adaptation from the folklore offer to a bear. Some examples of this rhyme have at the end continuation in a form of a children’s prayer before sleep.

In folklore children’s curses mother’s death is used in strictly determined situations. The following one is connected with playing speeches: ko ne recu ap, umrla mu mati i majdanac broj. (‘Who wouldn’t say ap, may his mother and the youngest brother die’, Sazonija). This curse is also used in a situation when some child would not share his food with the other children: Ko jede sam da mu amu majka. (‘Who is eating alone, may his mother die’, Kosnua). Or, Maja ruka prosi eda uruci dati umreć iz mati siren a še su (‘My hand is begging, if you don’t give anything your mother will die tomorrow at six o’clock’), Belgrade. In the same context isofunctionally appears death threat to the child itself: Pudiket kroz raci mu su to neve arki ruci pred dugim dumje dje kapaika. (Give to the twisted hand, black wolves will not kill you in front of the mosque where Turks are praying’, Karaburma). In South Slavic children folklore wolf kills domestic animals, tooc Pitu ruku, teore, k poporci, su tinu tić, Sroki su, Theg, a popori tiću, (‘Wolf ate calves and priest’s puppies. The priest is sorry for pups, not for calves. The calves belong to the village, pups to the priest’).
Vidran Death in South Slavic Children’s Folklore

2. Anthropomorphic patients (Others)

2.1. Text actors: ridicles

Children’s ridicles texts mention particular victim by name. They are connected with context and with the active presence of the patients. The victims in the text containing death threat are mentioned as group members, generically, with pointing out their ethnic origin. Certain types of mocking of the alien contain specific incidental formula: death threat (expressed by the verb “krepati”) followed by troublesome funeral (the same text can refer e.g., to the Serb - Vlach, Dalmatian, or Croat - Doksaj: Oju Više reperi, sutra je treba krepati! Kukus gorka koja će u vratni i krepati koja će te krepati ("Hey, you Vlach/Croat with a tail, you will die tomorrow!"). Verbs krepati ("perish miserably") does not reflect one’s own death, the act being even temporally planned ("tomor- row when"). The same text is used for the citizens of the town of Sabac: Sabućimi reperi, sutra je treba krepati! Teško onog raja koja će te vratni, teško onog lopati koja će te krepati ("Hey, you Vlach/Croat with a tail, you will die tomorrow!").)

Other incidental formula, typical of Serbian, describes pest (čumno) that kills all except one, insulting at the same time their mother. It may again be aimed at members of certain ethnicity, e.g. Gypsies: Ciganuha Baka kuca kraj moj, mogo deveda, dok la čumno te pobla. Sam ostao Iačun Jurević ("Gypsy banker, her mother is a whore, she gave birth to many children, then pest came and killed them, Jan’s Jurević just re- mained"). or residents of different villages, e.g. village Ljubić: viso mađa jurevićka, mogo deveda porodica, dokla čumno te pobla, sa ostao trebaš ("Your mother is devilish, then pest came and killed them, just trebaš remained").

2.2. Text actors: old woman and old man

Completely different is the incidental situation describing violence between an old couple. The old woman (badija) and old man (deda) in the following examples are common, patients is not personalised. From the synchronical point of view this incident operates as a humorous one because of the inverse picture of usual gender behaviour. The examples are from Bosnia, Sika, Istria: Sjećam se badija baba lohoda, poda deda na rudo, nema deček - leti baba podsudak, mogo dečko pod plomine: tihku goj je pritilu pa mu deša istoša ("The old woman is sowing/cooking orch; she sends her old man to bring the water, there is no old man: old woman runs and jumps, she finds the old man under the..."
3. Zoomorphic patiens

3.1. Death threat: snail

In children’s incantation text directed to the snail with a command to stretch his horns, pattern is present during the text performance, again being contextual actor, that is the child pronouncing the rhyme. This structure is typical of children’s incanta-
tion texts, although death threat does not come regularly (cf. completely different attitude toward the ladybird). Death threat to a snail exists with other Slavic peoples, e.g. with the Kabeula. South Slavic variants are explicit: ako je neviš pasući, mi ćemo te ubiti (“you don’t want to stretch them, we will kill you”), je ta tebe ubiti, na zelenjov treti, sikitam po glavu (“I will kill you, on the green grass, with an axe on your head”, both examples from Serbia). Unfunctio
dual to death threat is the threat of destroying the snail’s house: ako je neviš pasući hči se ti prodi (“if you don’t want to stretch it, I will sell your house”), da ti kač na prodiran starom desetiholci ze odum (“I will sell your house and buy tobacco for the old man/woman”); caru i carci za krepacani (“to the king and queen for creation”, Bosnian, Croatia), če ne ti bedem hči podr (or: dragat ti hči podr (“if not I will break your house; otherwise I will tear your house”. Slovenian). It is likely that following examples of the threat of breaking the dishes could refer to the snails house, ja ću tebe ubiti i sadrce nastradi, poljubis ti snahem (“I will kill you and break dishes I will smash your dishes”, Northern Serbia). Even in this text appears as dysfunctional the threat of mother’s death: da ti moli ne umre, da ti izgri ne plju, da ti kruha ne iska, da ti vode ne jpi (“that your mother not die, that your children not cry, not for a bread, not drink water”, Bosnia). Ethnographic evidence about the children’s attitude toward snail show that this threat in fact is later frequently executed.

3.2. Effectuated death: swallows

Zoomorphic victims of the incident always are mentioned in the text. Basic difference in the folklore status of zoomorphic victim consists in the fact that for domestic animals violent death (caused by man) is one ‘woman’s death, what is not the case with wild animals, especially not with inedible ones.

Folklore text presents the death of a swallow as a violent one, not one’s own death. In the children’s text present in the whole Balkan Slavic region (Macedonia, Bulgaria, 

Southeast Serbia) determined by collectors as hullahy, counting-out rhyme, or simply children’s rhyme to a swallow (when children see that bird, at Macedonia and Bulgaria (there is an invitation for the swallow to prepare feathers for the winter), the swallow is answering: “I don’t feel like having dinner, because my fledgling is killed.” Some vari-
ants describe the incident: Carica ga je magazio i creen mu iznemira Carica ga nasutan-uda na zlo mesto na glavu (“The queen stepped on him, and squeezed his intestines; Queen stepped on his wrong place, on flank.”) Car mi ga je magazio (“The king stepped on him”), Eastern Serbia, Bulgaria; in the variant from Levac selvena ga rusinupla na zlo mesto na glavu (“The eagle dishevelled him on the wrong place, on back”). Beside it evident presence in the South Slavic children’s folklore, this text appears in some East Serbian collections as a family feast (devna) song.

3.3. Effectuated death: goose

Zoomorphic victim killing (slaying/slaughter) is in children folklore accepted as a reg-
ular event, the death of one domestic animal serving for food is one’s own death. This is clearly expressed in following nursery rhyme: Delouga, delouga, češte guke na lega (or: češte guke bele sekulj pokle), a kou sa sa zhokli sevo redom plakati. A kou smo ih pokle sevo bili rezati (“four geese on the nest/four white goose laid seven eggs, when they slaughtered them we all cried. But, when we ate them, we were all happy.”), Serbia, Slavonia, Bosnia), or: Mi ti guke zaklamo po na znoje plakati smo mi če guke, ko od guke pervike (“We slaughtered this goose and cried for her. I was not sorry for the goose, as for goose’s feather,” Slavonia), Jednu guku zaklamo, sevo neko dcko poklaki, cui, cui, dlok, lopiu ti ripel (“One goose was slaughtered, all right children cried, be silent, he silent, my dear, I will buy you shoes,” Radipovac, Serbia).
Slaughtering of a domestic animal folklore text can treat even as an award, e.g. in macabre to the crying child, due to the later processing of the animal into high quality food. Rich, rich, magure, preko bilo to beare, zabluzameno junacu, davemto az estra i njemino crivo, da ti nije krvivo. ("Roar, roar, donkey, across the mud toward pond, we will slaughter heifer, we will give you string and her bowl, may you not feel injured"). Črno plehko gozudu i babina junacu (...) Zelka babi janacu, donele Hri nosica. ("Cry-baby is keeping cattle and old woman's heifer. Old woman slaughtered the heifer and gave to the boy."). Zelka babi junacu, donele plehki gusija. ("Old woman slaughtered the heifer and gave ass to cry-baby").

On the other hand, natural death of a domestic animal (dying of a calf, or a cow, e.g.) in the folklore text is an unnatural fact, i.e., material damage: Kuku lele, kropu bata teze, tu ne babi spas ću i krunu. ("Woe, old woman's calf died, keep silent, old woman, the cow will die tomorrow"). Material damage, consequently from the folklore perspective is perishing of some domestic animal caused by wolf or bear, e.g., Russian curse to the houndly not willing to reward members of the ritual procession: Perevija bodo - bozdo; so divere, ravnaja bodo - korone sa divere, vaša skotađa zahidlinou! Folk solzri, mirtred obdren! ("First evil - to take the horse from the yard, second evil - to take the cow from the yard, your cattle to disappear! Let the wolf devour and bear scratch")

Possible global conclusions on synchronic basis derived from here presented South Slavic children's folklore should take into account its relative conservatism, and consequently, possibility of persistence of some archaic traces in it. Close connections between the texts containing the death motif and the adult texts or incantations is evident. This fact makes possible opposition that in past difference between the folklore of adults and that belonging to children was not evident, like it is today. Here analyzed South Slavic children's folklore texts can serve as a ground for diachronic ethnolinguistic research of the concept of Death in Old Slavic culture. From the other side, it is necessary to emphasize that violence and cruelty are inherent to the children's folklore in general.

LITERATURE
The following list contains only basic references and no ethnographic and folklore sources, due to the limited size of the article.