

# Swearing: Dissolution into Nothingness

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In this study we will comparatively analyse swearing material from Slovenian and Estonian language in order to show the lexical and structural similarities/differences between swearing and incantations present in the material as to argue that swearing is not only a manner to give voice to taboos, but is similar with incantations. The basic premise underlying the analysis is the existence of the “go to X” formula found both in the material and in the two genres analysed. Place X is the place of origin, non-existence or chaos, where the unwanted is sent to. There are more than 50 different variants of “go to X” we can detect in both Estonian and Slovenian language; besides we consider the phrases which carry the idea to negate someone to somewhere but they are in different formulation.

KEYWORDS: swearing, incantation, folklore, linguistic anthropology

Swearwords are expressions, which are labelled as a bad language with taboo lexis, though swearwords do not have literal meaning when used in the swearing expression. What we consider of special importance is that swearing is a highly emotive language that has been present all through the history, remained in our mental dictionary, therefore it can be classified also as part of folklore. Although swearing has been highly ubiquitous among humans, this genre was rather neglected as a research topic until recently. In this research, we aim to focus on swearing forms, where the speaker sends the listener to some place. Analytical material mostly comes from Slovenian language as representative of the south Slavic group of languages, and Estonian language, a representative from Finno-Ugric group of languages. The linguistic and cultural differences notwithstanding, the comparison is we believe possible due to the similar social censorship on swearing that these languages and cultures demonstrate: in Slovenian and Estonian languages and cultures social censorship on swearing is quite high, documented by the fact that it is not desirable to use taboo lexis even in relaxed everyday speech. The comparison between two different languages from Indo-European language groups from southern and northern part of Europe shows us differentials on different levels: from lexis to the background concept of swearing topologies. Looking into the lexis of swearing reveals the concept of exorcising person or situation on similar level as incantations try to exorcise evil or illness. At the same time, similar concepts to incantations are the ones of order and chaos,

origin and emptiness, which are revealed in some forms of swearing. These categories show that swearing is not only a manner to give voice to taboos, but is similar with incantations, which implies that commonness and magic, lower and higher, profanity and sacred are all in a constant dialogue in its substrata of swearing when we talk about it.

Swearing was neglected part of research for long time, not only that it wasn't researched on contemporary levels (in different periods), there even hasn't been made an archive with swearing expressions. Only from 1980s swearing became more visible and researchers tried to show different forms and motivations of swearing. For this article we are taking in consideration mostly discussions and databases with general view on the topic, and specific for Slovenian and Estonian language.

Looking on the international levels, most important and comprehensive works are from sociologist Geoffrey Hughes on history of foul language (1998), which is mostly discussing English language, later he has written also encyclopaedia of swearing (2006), and Magnus Ljung (2011) with cross-cultural linguistic study at different levels of swearing: from lexis to context of use.

The first Slovenian monograph on the topic was from sociologist Bernard Nežmah's (1997) published PhD, the next monograph considering the topic of swearing among other short forms of folklore was published in 2015 by folklorist Saša Babič (2015); though lots of material (partly with short discussions on swearing) can be also found in other phraseology discussions (Jakop (2005), dialectological dictionaries (Ivančič Kutin 2007), slang dictionaries (Loog 1991), collections of swearing (Pšajd 2005) or internet open dictionaries, where users can contribute the headwords with explanations (<http://razvezanijezik.org/>).

There are some recently done researches on swearwords in Estonia in master degree level, e.g. on the use of swear words in Estonian Drama (Sutter 2017), and on the perceiving and translating swear words in audio-visual media (Treiel 2016), otherwise no scientific monograph has been published yet on swearing in Estonian language.

## SWEARING IN LANGUAGE

Swearing is quite wide area of expressions bearing variety of functions, from cursing someone, or simply filling in a slot in speech or writing, amplifying the speaker's expression or expressing his surprise.

By Ljung's (2011: 4) definition swearing is:

1. The use of utterances containing taboo words.
2. The taboo words are used with non-literal meaning.
3. Most swearing qualifies as formulaic language.
4. Swearing is emotive language. Its main function is to reflect or seem to reflect the speaker's feelings and attitudes.

Taboos<sup>1</sup> are to be found wherever swearing exists, suppression of offensive words or euphemistic variations are perennial features (Hughes 2006: xx). According to Hughes (2006: 462–463) the term now denotes “any social indiscretion that ought to be avoided” and has acquired the modern meaning of ‘offensive’ or ‘grossly impolite’ rather than ‘strictly forbidden’. Nowadays taboo generally describes the one which is unmentionable because, on a hierarchical scale, it is either ineffably sacred, like the name of God, or unspeakably vile, like cannibalism or incest. People treat unpleasant word as taboo to the extent that everybody else treats it as taboo (Pinker 2007: 357). The use of taboo words for matters like excrement, the sex organs or the act of having sex is no doubt offensive to many whatever the mood of the speaker, although most swearwords are now usually “demystified” into mere forms of words (Hughes 2006: xxiii).

Within European speech communities, swearing and obscenity are not constant in their modes, styles and referents; taboo words change with time. Some models of swearing appear to be universal, while others are more specific to a culture and period of time; one kind of swearing might be present in one culture though absent in another, or be used more frequently in different cultures (Nezakat-Alhossaini, Esslami-Rasekh 2013: 518). Within speech communities, variants emerge over time on the basis of nationality, class, and gender (Hughes 2006: xxi). For most of swearing is characteristic either blasphemy (intentional contemptuous use of religious symbols or names) or profanity, which Hughes (2006: 31) categorizes most of (probably contemporary) swearing and are also considered as part of taboo concepts.

### SWEARING AS SPEECH ACT

Sapir (1929) emphasized that language and culture are related and it is not possible to understand one without understanding the other. In direct relation to this association Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) introduced speech act theory by which they claimed that people do not only utter words in terms of grammatical structures and words, but they can carry out actions through these utterances. By Austin’s (1962) terminology these utterances are performative verbs, which are divided into verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives. Behabitives are related to social behavior and include apologizing, congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing, and challenging. Therefore, swearwords are speech act, which is categorized as behabitive, especially the kinds which send people to other places (*go to hell*). Although swearing may have the form of performative (for example, forms “go to X”) it does not intend to perform as action but express feelings. This is due to the fact that cursing utterances are not uttered only to insult the addressee, but also to relieve the speakers of anger, in other words, the

<sup>1</sup> The word ‘taboo’ was brought by explorer Captain James Cook in his *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (1777) from the Melanesian languages: it referred to the complex social and anthropological meaning: to physical locales that were sacred, set apart for gods, kings, priests, or chiefs, and therefore prohibited for general use; in general it signified that a thing is forbidden (Hughes 2006: 462).

perlocutionary act is not always for the person to whom the curse is directed but for the performer. That is why swear words might be understood also as therapeutic act, which is obvious especially in traffic (Podjed, Babič 2015).

Swearing is particular type of linguistic behaviour, emotive speech. By Roman Jakobson (1960) swearing is part of emotive language: it consists of so-called “emotive or expressive function, focused on the addresser, who aims direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about”. The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. Also Lyons (1981) classifies swearwords as ‘emotionals’, since they do not have any truth value, and when uttered it is not clear whether the punishment called is happening or not. These utterances only express emotions, such as anger, surprise, fear, sadness, complaint. Cursing and swearing utterances are often directed only towards the speaker not the hearer or the addressee (Nezakat-Alhossaini, Esslami-Rasekh 2013: 518) and are not meant to be insulting, though in argues their only function seems to be insulting and therefore general public understands them as insulting utterances.

Speakers give additional emphasis to their speech while swearing, often in combination with other emphasizing techniques like stress, intonation and tone of voice, not to mention non-linguistic phenomena like gestures and facial expressions. The contribution of swearing in such situations is the added strength supplied by the taboo words necessary for swearing to take place (Ljung 2011: 5). Referring to the context of use: the actual choice between anger, surprise and joy can be only made in the individual speech situation and sometimes not even then. Addressee makes their own interpretations on the basis of linguistic and non-linguistic information as is available to them (Ljung 2011: 23). In many languages there seems to be general agreement among the speakers that the most typical exponents of swearing are exclamations of irritation, pain or surprise containing expletives, and as stressing-the-point.

In this paper we are focusing on the formulaic form of swears and incantations using the imperative form of the verb “go to X”, which undeniably indicates focus on the addressee.

This kind of swearwords can be paralleled to one-partite incantations (exorcising form without *histriola*): they include only exorcising of the unwanted person. We can hear this kind of swearing most often as a consequence of anger, when we are trying to express our emotion obviously with sending a person to exact place. The form is understood insulting, though is quite often in use. With focus on “X” i.e. locations, we can link this swearing form with incantations: swearing sends the unwanted force/evil/person/part of person similarly as incantations exorcises curse or disease.

## METHODOLOGY

The analysis for this research was made on the database of Estonian sayings and phraseologisms (EKFA) which is including also swearing expressions (unfortunately most of them are without illustrating context), and archive of Institute of Slovenian Ethnology for Slovenian material (created in 2010 with material, collected mostly from live communication

and media by Saša Babič). Firstly, were selected units with the form “go to X” and then the forms which indirectly send addressee to other places (in passive form, as to be taken there). Material was categorised into three major groups for easier interpretation, which follows.

### INCANTATIONS VS. SWEARWORDS

Already Hughes (1991: 4) linked swearing with spell, incantation and the curse as: “/.../ forms seeking to invoke higher power to change the world or support the truthfulness of a claim”. The same as incantation<sup>2</sup> is communicative form between conjurer and impure forces, with which the conjurer sends messages, is demanding or sending demon forces or evil to go away (Radenković 1982: 8; Krojež 2009: 145), swearing is doing similarly with the person with whom speaker does not agree. Forms “go to X” chase or send people to the places where they came from or where nothing exists, like in an example of Slovenian incantation against curse:

*Pojdite vsi vsi hudi uraki / V te visoke gore, strme pečine, / Kjer nobeden človek ne prebiva, / Nobena človeška noga ne hodi, / Tam naj bo vase pribežališče*  
[*Go, all all bad spells/Into these high mountains/steep cliffs/where no human lives/No man's foot walks/There should be your home* (literal translation)]  
(Dolenc 1999: 102).

We can see a similar tendency in the Estonian material in the form of different incantations where Devil is sent to X (e.g. to physical places, nature):

*Kurat mingu koplesse, üle aia uppa. / Taha tare tatesse, saadan saba metsa, pagan mingu pajusse. [Devil should go to the pasture, over the fence into the beans, behind the house into the buckwheat, devil should go into the willows]<sup>3</sup>*

There are also texts about cursing diseases, for example erysipelas was cured by the healer by stroking it gently and saying:

*Ühest kurjast oled tulnud, aga üheksakümne üheksa kurja sisse mine tagasi. / Üle üheksa jõe, üle üheksa mere ja sealt iialgi tagasi ära tule! [You have come from one evil, but you go back to ninety nine evils / Over nine rivers, over nine seas and don't ever come back from there!]* (Kõiva 2011: 235)

<sup>2</sup> Incantations are words and rituals with healing function or to expel the evil (spell, curse, disease) away. It forms ritual with words, magic objects and fixed moves, fixed time, and often also a place of ritual. The exorcist demands an illness or the spell to go away. The ritual is supposed to have magical power which effect on a person and his/her surroundings (nature); its practical realization is usually individual. The words of incantations most often stay secret.

<sup>3</sup> Witchcraft words come from Jakob Hurt's collection from 1895, H III 25, 302 (13).

Similarly, as headache or stomach-ache is result of curse and needs to be expelled with incantation, it can be interpreted for swearing with the form “go to X”: as it is also seen from phraseology (*ta paneb mu pea valutama* (Est.) / *glava me boli od njega* (Slo.) [he makes me headaches]; *teeb mu südame pahaks/ajab oksele* (Est.) / *želodec se mi obrača ob njem* (Slo.) [makes me sick/to vomit]), a person can “make somebody a headache” or “somebody makes one’s stomach twist/the thought of somebody makes one sick”, similarly as when curse is put over somebody. People with curse over them had headache or they felt sick; these were problems which were often healed with incantations. Swearing<sup>4</sup> with the structure “go to X” expels that person as the evil that comes along. Function in swearing is close to incantation – the person is expelled as a demon: we are so sick of our interlocutor, that we wish he/she wouldn’t exist (Nežmah 1997: 131), and that the listener would vanish. That is why the person is to be exorcised. And speaking the wish out is at the same time insult for the listener and catharsis for speaker; therefore, it is positioned on the border of acceptance.

#### PLACES OF DISSOLUTION

The adverbial slot in the phrase ‘go to X’ may be filled in by variety of expressions, all having different connotations through time, though they are connected with chaos, where nothing living exists or the place of origin to return the evil back from where it came (the spells are also expelled with counting back, but it does not emerge in swearwords).

In swearing we can divide three major groups of mentioned places to which one expels another person:

- I. places linked with religion and supernatural;
- II. sexual and reproductive organs as place of extinction;
- III. places signified by non-taboo expressions that connote taboo words.

#### I.

First group of swearing with using religion and supernatural concepts are used from “celestial swearing”, which is linked to the notion of the incorrect use of God’s name: For example: *Bog te nima rad* (Slov.) [God doesn’t love you]; *bog daj, da bi crkno gnes* [God give, that you’d die today]; *jumal kuradi sind* (Est.) [God damn you] etc.; in Christian cultures there is also taboo against infernal swearing, probably in all likelihood as instance of ‘word magic’ (Ljung 2011: 6), for example: *naj te vrage* (Slo.) [let the devil take you].

Places mentioned from religion and supernatural concepts in “go to X” swearing are either from pagan religion (mostly in dialects (Pšajd 2005: 57) or Christian religion.

<sup>4</sup> Slovenian *preklinjati* ‘to swear’ (and similarly in other South Slavic languages) originates from old church Slavic language *kleti* which is supposed to come from Indo-European root *\*kleh1-* with the meaning ‘yell, shout, sound, resound’.

Estonian *vanduma* ‘to swear’ is based on Baltic-Finnic word stem. Rough equivalents in various contexts are also *tootama, lubama; kiruma, siunama, kirumissõnu lausuma*.

But no matter which religion is taken, the place mentioned is always place where (supposed to) no human soul lives, which is conceptually linked to the place of chaos, like *hell* or *devil* as metonymy of hell: *pojdi k hudiču* (Slo.), *mene helvetiin* (Fin.), *mine pörgusse / mine Ellvetsi* (Est.), *minge kuradile* (Est.) [Go to the devil/hell]. Persons in these utterances are expected to be active as we send them to go there by themselves. The other way to express the same is just making person passive and devil or negative supernatural being takes the person or gives her/him fatal strikes, like: *Da bi te hudič!* (Slo.) [Let the devil hit you!]; *Perün<sup>5</sup> aj te vdari* (Slo.) [Let Perun strike you]; *Svarun<sup>6</sup> te fčesni* (Slo.) [let Svarun strike you]; *gron<sup>7</sup> v tebe fčesni, gron v tebej vstreli* (Slo.) [let the thunder hit you], *kurat vōtaks* (Est.) [devil may take you]. These forms do not have the structure “go to X”, never-the-less conceptual background of it is the same. This swearing makes the person passive, but receiving the same punishment of expulsion. When the negative supernatural being harms the person, it also takes one’s soul to the land of chaos. Therefore, also this kind of swearing metaphorically takes unwanted person to the land of chaos.

Places, mentioned in swearing, which remained from pagan religion, are places where curses were exorcised, like woods in: *mine metsa* (Est.) [go to the forest], *mene metsään* (Fin.) [go to the forest] or even the emptiness *mine tühja kätte* [go into emptiness] (Est.) or *kas vōi tühi vōtaks* (Est.) [Emptiness may take you], *mene tyhjäksi* (Fin.) [go into emptiness], *mine soo peale / mine lauki* (go to the swamp), *mine seenele* [go to pick mushrooms]. What is obvious is that Estonian language managed to keep pagan concept of places where nothing living with soul exists in swearing, while south Slavic languages kept only some pagan gods in dialect swearing and even there it is quite rare; though with naming pagan gods we can predict also some places.

As an expression of transformation and sending the person to outer world are also swearwords with mentioning the hardest diseases. These swearwords are nowadays extremely rare, most often found only in archives, like *Da bi te kuga! / Kuga te poberi!* (Slov.) [I wish the plague would kill you!]<sup>8</sup>; *katk sind vōtaks* (Est.) [Plaque would take you!] These utterances directly wish person a horrible death and transformation.

## II.

The group of swearing, where violated taboos are from non-religious world are different: non-religious taboo is restricted to words considered to be vulgar and/or embarrassing, typically vernacular words for excrement, sexual intercourse and various other sexual practices regarded as deviant and the sexual organs (Ljung 2011: 7). This swearing uses vulgar names for genital parts, which are by itself part of taboo topics. Words for places in these swearing gained vulgar connotations through time. For example, *pizda* which is

<sup>5</sup> Perun is pagan Slavic god of thunder, lightening and war; he was the main god in Slavic mythology (Kropej 2008: 46)

<sup>6</sup> Svarun is pagan Slavic god; father of Svarožič, presumably god of sun (Ovsec 1991: 123).

<sup>7</sup> Grom

<sup>8</sup> In Polish it is still often to say *Cholera!* in the meaning of swearword [Damn you] nowadays. There cannot be found anything similar in contemporary South Slavic languages, and even the archival material brings only plaque.

present in all Slavic languages, is from old Slavic word for uterus, but it gained vulgar connotation (only in Russian where it kept some of primary meaning and function of naming); *kurac* is the old version of name for rooster in south Slavic languages; *jebati* originates from the naming of sexual intercourse, but the connotation previously wasn't marked so heavily etc. Similarly, in Estonian where, for example, word *munn* [penis] comes from Uralic root variant *muna* [egg]. Anyhow, besides that this lexis is part of taboo topics, it cannot be ignored that all of this lexis is direct origin of person's life.

Sexual organs are the very beginning of human physical existence, and if someone is sending the other into these same organs (with emphasizing of parents, especially 'mother': *pejt v pizdo materno* [go to mother's cunt]), *mine putsi / mine vittu* (Est.) [go to cunt], *pejt v kurac* (Slo.) [go into cock], *mine munn* (Est.) [go into cock] it is obvious that the concept behind the swearing is sending the unwanted (person, behaviour of person etc.) back to where it came from. This swearing came into use more often in 20<sup>th</sup> century, not before. It seems that with growth of atheism also physical origin became more relevant as taboo concept, used in free speech.

Connection with incantations can be found in mentioning number three, which is (especially in South Slavic swearing) also often used swearwords for the rising of expressivity. Number three is mythological number and has important value in different religions, beliefs, also in folklore material like fairy tales and incantations. Incantations often chase disease or curse with mentioning the number three: repeating the same words three times or even repeating the whole incantation three times (often in Slovenian incantations against curse). Utterances like *pojdi v tri pičke materine* (Slo.) [go into three mother's cunts] are obviously oxymoron, but it seems that the number gives them bigger value. Though, we can never hear any other number in these collocations, but three.

### III.

Group of euphemisms uses words which are not taboo. Used words are either from conceptually linked words with 'to sober someone' or 'to get someone smarter', or they are just replacing the original taboo word with similarly sounding word, irony of the original or some other choice.

Euphemisms that send person to make something which would make her/him to come to her/his sense, are in southern Slavic languages conceptually linked with salt: *pojdi se soli!*<sup>9</sup> (Slo.) [Go, salt yourself!]. The other way to sense someone is linked with bumping into head, which might sober one's mind: *Zaleti se nekam!* (Slo.) [Go and bump into something].

These units don't send the person to go to its origin or to chaos, just to perform (active) action that would clear one's mind. Therefore, cannot be conceptually linked with extorting in incantations; though even these euphemisms send addressees to make something.

<sup>9</sup> Salt is conceptually linked with wisdom in South Slavic languages, which is seen from phrasemes like: *ne imeti niti trohice soli v glavi* (Slov.) [not to have even a bit of salt in one's head]; *Ne soli mi pamet!* (Mkd.) [Don't salt my wisdom]

Other subgroup of euphemisms with keeping the formula “go to X” is keeping the same form of swearword; just the taboo word is replaced, like *pejt v tri krasne/tri pirovske* (Slo.) [go to three beautiful/three beer(-ish)], *pojdi v pisarno* (Slo.) [go to the office]<sup>10</sup>. Choice of replacing word is of different reason, some are just sounding similarly to the taboo word or have similar beginning or just the shortenage of taboo word is used (*pojdi v pičko : pojdi v piii\* : pojdi v pisarno* (Slo.) [go to mother’s cunt: go to cuuu\* : go to office]). Euphemisms are of most variant lexis which can contain also some kind of irony in background, like *pojdi v tri krasne* (Slo.) [Go into three beautifuls], *pojdi v tri pomučkane marjetice* (Slo.) [go into three squashed daisies]. Vulgar word for penis, ie. *kurac*, is often replaced with word *klinc* [small spike] or just shortened to *k\*\*\**. Often heard euphemism in Slovenian is also *pojdi nekam* [go somewhere], in which we are sending person to indefinite place or we cannot determine what the place of dissolution might be.

Estonian replaces taboo words either with descriptions of the untold, like *Mine kassi saba alla* (Est.) [Go under the tail of cat] or with sending the person far out *Mine kuu peale* (Est.) [go to the moon], even with joking version *Mine kuu peale kurke soolama* (Est.) [go to the moon to salt cucumbers]<sup>11</sup> which is not connected to religious world neither to the origin. The euphemism that cannot be tracked in Slovenian is *mine pane ennast põlema* [Go burn yourself], which could be relict of the times of inquisition (in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century). Conceptually the euphemism sends addressee to hell, and the change of word might seemly soften the expression, but it still strongly carries the original meaning.

Link to incantations with number three is often also in euphemisms with replacing words that are phonetically somehow similar to original taboo words (*pojdi v tri pomučkane marjetice* (Slo.) [go into three squashed daisies]) or *Mine kus kolmat (kao kus kolmkümmend)* (Est.) [Go where is three / Disappear where is thirty]), where is obvious ellipsis.

## CONCLUSION

All languages have words for strongly expression of disagreement or for emphasizing the content. It is not surprising that these words are from taboo lexis, which violates communication rules: with using taboo lexis one gains attention, and at the same time these lexis has catharsis effect (Ljung 2011; Podjed, Babič 2015). This phenomenon is

<sup>10</sup> Some euphemisms, like the one, can be found only in some internet sources (like in open dictionaries: <http://razvezanijezik.org/>) and we cannot find them in other language corpuses. We predict very limited use of them and creative solutions how people substitute swearwords.

<sup>11</sup> There are plenty of funny protective formulas in Estonian material that seem to be quite new material: *mine perse kui peegel, tule välja kui neeger, oled sitaga koos kui mustikamoos* [go to ass as mirror and come out as negro, you are covered with shit as blueberry jam], *käi perse kui tuul, vahi välja kui ahv* [go to ass as wind and watch out as monkey].

There are also lots of creative constructions in Estonian with repartees or responds how to answer when somebody was sent by somebody to somewhere. Sometimes the answers can be very absurd and funny: *Mine perse! - Kas see on sul kummist?* [Go to ass – Is it made from gum?]; *Mine ära! - Ise oled mära* [Go away – You are the mare] etc.

most obvious in swearing. Swearing has in all time periods used words which were from taboo lexis. With using concepts and words in forbidden context, the content gained extra expressivity. Although swearing is violating communication manners rules and taboos against the use of holy names and referents (Hughes 2006: xvii), it remained in our languages. With researching the swearing material from different time periods and places, we can grasp deeper levels of society.

Analysis of Slovenian and Estonian swearing with form “go to X” showed not only that this material preserved some pagan gods and concepts of sacred places (Svarun, Perun, concept of forest, swamp mountains etc.), which are not living in religious context anymore, but also the concepts of places, where (wo)man does not live, and places of chaos and emptiness, which can also be linked with incantations. Looking at this forms of swearing makes clear that it is similar to incantations, i.e. words and rituals to expel the evil, also curse among it. Incantations send curse into emptiness or its origin. Similarly, swearwords with formula “go to X” send another person into his/her origin (inherent with physical conception), or into chaos, which is conceptually fitting hell or devil’s place.

At the same time, it reveals different concept of human origin and existence: when the religion and god were on pedestal and higher forces gave life to human being, the worst violation was mentioning god and devil in swearing. With sending someone to hell one was vanished into chaos and devastation. With acceptance that human being is originated in human body with sexual intercourse and accepting the world of intimacy as important part of human existence, swearing gained lexis from the field of reproductive and intimate organs and sexual intercourse. Sending the person back into mother’s uterus or even further, into penis (which would be pre-conception period, pre-existence), can show us only the concept of aiming to negate the existence of that person.

In both cases utterances with the form “go to X” deal with person’s origin, birth, existence, trying to negate it or to break it off, as if the “persecuted person” was the evil, curse which has overflowed one’s life and needs to be expelled: we are exorcising the person, trying to negate her/him. With his/her extinction, our headaches and sickness would vanish; our life would become nicer and calmer. In these swearwords person can be expelled either to the place where no (religious/Christian) soul exists, like hell, or into one’s conception origin with the thought that if he/she hadn’t even been born, if he/she returned back to cunt or dick, wherever he/she came from, life would gain colours again (Nežmah 1997: 131). Therefore, these places, either places of non-existence or places of origin, have the function of places of dissolution. Both concepts of these places are sending one into nothingness, non-existence: where nothing living exists, when a person was still nothing for our culture. What becomes obvious is the fact that in both concepts – religious of physical – places of dissolution are directly connected with the concept of our existence and socialisation. Swearwords with form “go to X” try to negate our existence either way.

Connection with incantations can be found also in mentioning number three, which is also often used swearwords and euphemisms for the rising of expressivity. Number three is mythological number and has important value in different religions, beliefs, also in folklore material like fairy tales and incantations. Incantations often chase disease or

curse with repeating the same words three times or even repeating the whole incantation three times. Utterances with mentioning number three are obviously oxymoron, but it seems that the number gives them bigger value.

Euphemisms are of two kinds: one group only replaces taboo words with phonetically somehow related words, which have often some different meanings. These swearwords show us that swearing is linguistic expression with special function of higher expression of intense emotions, but are usually not taken literally. The form “go to X” is so meaningful by itself that even other lexical elements cannot change the function of the utterances and the original taboo word can be traced back. That is why even the concept of this group stays unchanged: to negate person or to expel him/her.

Another group of euphemisms has changed the concept of negating the person into sending him/her to come to his/her sense either with metaphor of “salting”, i.e. making one smarter, or with sudden shock of the hit/punch (*zaleti se nekam* (Slo.) [hit yourself somewhere]). These utterances changed the concept from sending person into chaos to get the punishment or send the person to pre-existing forms and places into almost positive wish for someone to ‘become smarter’, which could be interpreted as transition into another state of mind.

Swearwords are taken as collocations, phrasemes and their function is on the first place, no matter the lexical filling. Even if taboo words were replaced by another, socially acceptable words, still all speakers could recognize their function and the utterances as swearing. As swearwords are mostly taken as socially judged utterances, even if they give more expressiveness to the content are not desired in communication. In official language swearwords are even forbidden in terms of collective agreement. But even though the usage of swearing remains high, many people use it as “ready-made expressive tool”, not even thinking about the concept behind it. The acceptance of swearing utterances in unofficial language bases mostly only on the (un)usage of taboo words, not on the concept behind it, which brings contradictory situations that it’s better to say *Pojdi v tri pomučkane marjetice* [go into three squashed daises], which just covers true concept of negating someone *Pojdi v tri pizde materine* [go to three mother’s cunts], than *pojdi se solit* [go, salt yourself], which sends someone to come to his/her sense.

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### PREKLINJANJE: IZNIČENJE V PRAZNINO

SAŠA BABIČ, PIRET VOOLAID



Kletvice kot ekspresivno sredstvo, zapolnjeno s tabujskim besediščem, v govoru velikokrat služijo kot poudarek, terapevtsko sredstvo ali pa kot žalitev – njihova funkcija je odvisna od konteksta in udeleženci komunikacije jo razberejo tako iz sobesedila kot tudi iz mimike in načina govora. V prispevku so primerjalno obravnavane slovenske in estonske kletvice z obliko “pojdi v X”, pri katerih ugotavljava podobnosti z zagovarjalnim obrazcem (predvsem za izganjanje uroka). Z vzporejanjem kletvic iz dveh jezikov (slovenskega in estonskega) iz dveh različnih jezikovnih skupin (južnoslovanske in baltkofinske) sva prikazali podobnosti konceptualnega ozadja te vrste kletvic: prostor X je prostor izvora (religioznega ali fizičnega) ali pa neobstoja oz. kaosa, kamor pošljemo neželjeno osebo in jo na ta način metaforično izničimo. Očitno se kaže razlika v razumevanju našega izvora in bivanja, saj je bilo v času, ko je imela religija večji vpliv na razumevanje našega obstoja, glavno tabujsko besedišče vezano na svet religije, v današnjem svetu, ko je kot naš glavni izvor dojetje spočetje v telesu, pa na genitalije. Obenem se pri tej vrsti kletvic pokaže pomen geografskega prostora v konceptualizaciji prostorov: v estonskem jeziku je prostor neobstoja lahko močvirje, gozd, praznina, medtem ko v slovenskih kletvicah ni izražen (razviden je le v slovenskih zagovorih: visoke planine, globoka morja). V obeh jezikih, tako slovenskem kot estonskem, je več kot 50 različnih variant kletvic (vključno z evfemizmi), ki negirajo obstoj sogovornika in ga podobno kot urok želijo izničiti.

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