

The Language of Magic

Edited by Eleonora Cianci and Nicholas Wolf

IL SEGNO E LE LETTERE

*Collana del Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Moderne
dell'Università degli Studi 'G. d'Annunzio'*

DIREZIONE

Mariaconcetta Costantini

COMITATO SCIENTIFICO

Università 'G. d'Annunzio' di Chieti-Pescara

Mariaconcetta Costantini - Mariapia D'Angelo - Antonella Del Gatto
Elvira Diana - Emanuela Ettorre - Persida Lazarević - Maria Rita Leto
Lorella Martinelli - Carlo Martinez - Paola Partenza - Ugo Perolino
Marcial Rubio Árquez - Anita Trivelli

Atenei esteri

Antonio Azaustre (*Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*)
Claudia Capancioni (*Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln*)
Dominique Maingueneau (*Université Sorbonne*)
Snežana Milinković (*University of Belgrade*)

COMITATO EDITORIALE

Mariaconcetta Costantini - Barbara Delli Castelli
Eleonora Sasso - Luca Stirpe

I volumi pubblicati nella Collana sono stati sottoposti a doppio referaggio anonimo.

ISSN 2283-7140
ISBN 978-88-7916-996-7

Copyright © 2022

LED Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto

Via Cervignano 4 - 20137 Milano

www.lededizioni.com - www.ledonline.it - E-mail: led@lededizioni.com

I diritti di riproduzione, memorizzazione e archiviazione elettronica, pubblicazione con qualsiasi mezzo analogico o digitale (comprese le copie fotostatiche, i supporti digitali e l'inserimento in banche dati) e i diritti di traduzione e di adattamento totale o parziale sono riservati per tutti i paesi.

Le fotocopie per uso personale del lettore possono essere effettuate nei limiti del 15% di ciascun volume/fascicolo di periodico dietro pagamento alla SIAE del compenso previsto dall'art. 68, commi 4 e 5, della legge 22 aprile 1941 n. 633.

Le riproduzioni effettuate per finalità di carattere professionale, economico o commerciale o comunque per uso diverso da quello personale possono essere effettuate a seguito di specifica autorizzazione rilasciata da: AIDRO, Corso di Porta Romana n. 108 - 20122 Milano
E-mail segreteria@aidro.org <mailto:segreteria@aidro.org>
sito web www.aidro.org <http://www.aidro.org/>

Volume pubblicato con il contributo
dell'Università degli Studi 'G. d'Annunzio' di Chieti-Pescara
Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Moderne

In copertina

Graphic design by Pierluigi Traini

Videimpaginazione: Paola Mignanego

Stampa: Litogi

CONTENTS

Introduction <i>Eleonora Cianci</i>	7
Neumes in Three Old High German Charms <i>Eleonora Cianci</i>	13
Words as Gestures: Allusions to the Christian Iconography in East-Slavic Charms and Magic Formulas <i>Liudmila V. Fadeyeva</i>	33
Undoing the “Evil Eye” in Italy: A Comparison of Folk Documentation from 1965-70 with Present Research <i>Lia Giancristofaro</i>	53
Taboo Words and Secret Language as Verbal Magic in Childbirth (Russian North) <i>Lubov’ Golubeva - Sofia Kupriyanova</i>	69
Charms, Changelings, and Chatter: Sonic Magic in the <i>Secunda Pastorum</i> <i>Sarah Harlan-Haughey</i>	81
A Written Charm in Oral Tradition: “Peter Sat on a Marble Stone” in Ireland <i>Barbara Lisa Hillers</i>	103
Arguments for the Authority of the <i>Tietäjä</i> <i>Henni Ilomäki</i>	123
<i>The Dream of the Mother of God</i> and Its Oral-Written Performances, with Examples from Early Modern and Contemporary Romanian Tradition <i>Laura Jiga Illiescu</i>	141
Euphemisms upon the Example of Incantations <i>Mare Kõiva</i>	163

Old Norse Poetry and the Language of Magic <i>Maria Cristina Lombardi</i>	191
An Episode from the History of Publishing Russian Folklore Charms and Their English Translations <i>Andrei Toporkov</i>	201
Urine for a Treat! Or, How to Cure Urinary Disease in Early Medieval Ireland <i>Ilona Tuomi</i>	219
Magic as a Statement of Power and Weapons of the Weak: Heroine of the Russian Epos <i>Inna Veselova</i>	235
Restrain, Liberate, Kill: Parsing the Language of Blocking Sickness in Irish Charms <i>Nicholas M. Wolf</i>	251
The Authors	263

EUPHEMISMS UPON THE EXAMPLE OF INCANTATIONS

Mare Kōiva

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7359/996-2022-koiv>

ABSTRACT

The use of euphemisms is a characteristic of everyday language use today, as meanings are negotiated, attenuated and changed. However, substitute names and euphemisms were widely used in incantations, where euphemism was tightly interwoven with taboos. In incantations, euphemisms are used in various situations: healing the sick, coping with animals and natural phenomena, creating social relationships, coping with central rituals of human life (primarily birth and death), retaliating for theft, murder and infidelity, and promoting one's work. Euphemisms represent an important pole in the use of verbal magic, and they are different from references to dysphemisms, that is, using vituperation, cursing, profanity, or hexing to cut off contact or to achieve one's goal. This article discusses general principles for the use of euphemisms and examines which euphemisms are used in which functions, using examples of certain belief rituals and values (fishing), symbolic animals (the wolf and the raven), and cockroaches. Results demonstrate that the appeal is missing in 11 percent (wolf words), 12 percent (raven) or 52 percent of texts (cockroaches); and the euphemisms are used in 66 percent (wolf), 52 percent (raven) and 43 percent (cockroaches) of the texts; dysphemisms in 20 percent (raven) and 3.7 percent (cockroaches).

Keywords: dysphemism; euphemism; incantation; raven spell; ritual; taboo; wolf spell.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the use of euphemisms has been observed in areas such as media and language, religion and human relationships, politics and medicine, gender and sexuality¹. Kate Burridge, a principal theorist of

¹ For the example of language and social sciences, see Warren 1992; Bowers - Pleydell-Pearce 2011; Rybakova 2009; Casas Gómez 2009; Allan - Burridge 2006; Satlow 2020; Rodriguez - Schönfeld 2012; Gammelin 2019.

euphemism research in linguistics, defines it in terms of broad uses over a long period:

In all societies, since the earliest periods of history, taboos and limitations have been inspired by topics such as “intimate body parts,” bodily functions, sex, incest, lust, concepts of social status, hatred, dishonesty, drinking, madness, illness, death, dangerous animals, fear, and God.²

According to G. Abbott (2010), the introduction of substitute words was necessitated by the need to soften inappropriate or unpleasant information, and the possibility of avoiding details perceived as violations of the rules of speech etiquette.

Marina Ryabova has a similar view, adding the modern requirement to be politically correct, which is an important reason for the wider use of euphemisms both in language and in media. For example, in mass media, euphemisms are used as a framing tool. In order to conceal awkward concepts, events, issues, and certain political aspects, a cushioning framework is created. This framework focuses on the individual event and easily understood root causes, but disregards deeper and more complex reasons³. The readiness of researchers to find euphemisms in essentially every text has led to the criticism that not every figurative statement is a euphemism, and defining requires close monitoring of cultural contexts⁴.

In folklore, euphemisms have been studied based on a type or theme and in certain periods for almost a century and a half⁵. Folk poetry writings reflect past and present language usage in various fields. At present, spell texts are mostly a type of the past, and the share of word-magic practices has also narrowed. At the same time, these types provide us with information regarding the communication tactics and attitudes of previous generations, and their functioning in the local ecosystem, be they deep-rooted euphemisms and fixed expressions⁶ or more flexible forms of linguistic behaviour⁷.

The web-based *Merriam Webster Dictionary* (2021) defines euphemism as “an agreeable or inoffensive word or phrase that is used instead of one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant”. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* defines the Greek *eu-* as “good, well” and *phēmē* as

² Burrage 2012, 66.

³ See Ryabova 2013, 41.

⁴ Compare Keith - Burridge 2006 and Laugesen 2019.

⁵ Zelenin 2004; Loorits 1931, 1939; Gura 1995, 1997; Kōiva 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Ní Floinn 2018, and others.

⁶ See Permiakov 1970.

⁷ Warren 1992.

“speech, voice, utterance”⁸. The *Dictionary of Foreign Words* is even more specific: a mellowing and embellishing expression used instead of an indecent or unpleasant one. In folklore, words banned in certain situations and at certain times are important. These words facilitate the use of alternative names – substitute words and aliases⁹. These two terms can be viewed as interchangeable, as both help to resolve a crisis situation and are used in a similar manner. Cryptonyms have a similar definition as well. With regard to folklore texts, it can be assumed that alternative names and aliases are necessary to keep the communication within the limits of decency; euphemisms are necessary for a flattering conversation. Religious reports show that aliases are also used in everyday speech, and often the boundaries between an alias and a euphemism are dispersed. In folklore, interaction with other species is important along with the interaction between individuals. Euphemisms are therefore used not only for dangerous animals, but also with many contact animals. Links are made with the sacral world and its inhabitants, who are being influenced in an appropriate direction.

Dysphemisms also play a significant role. A dysphemism is the replacement of a word or expression with one of a less favourable or derogatory connotation (*Merriam-Webster* 2021). Swear words and names and several types of obscenity are closely related to these. In incantations, dysphemisms were primarily used to avoid contact, reduce the effects a disease or creature, or interrupt adverse effects. Casas Gómez draws attention to the connection between euphemisms and dysphemisms¹⁰. According to him, euphemisms or dysphemisms are a cognitive process of conceptualizing a prohibited reality, expressed in discourse using linguistic mechanisms: lexical substitution, phonetic modification, morphological modification, composition or inversion, syntagmatic grouping, and other combinations. It is a verbal or paralinguistic modulation or textual description, which allows the speaker to use a concept frowned upon in a specific pragmatic context, or to weaken or amplify reality. The definition by Gómez encompasses linguistically marked aspects of situations and behaviours, which are compatible with whatever is occurring in folklore. In public language, there is also a trend of using dysphemisms as an exaggeration of the negative qualities of opponents.

This article sheds light on an aspect of human and animal relations, ethnozoology, including ethnoentomology and ethnoornithology. Using

⁸ OED 2021. See also ETY 2012; EKSS 2009.

⁹ Oskar Loorits also uses the Estonian equivalents of pseudonym and cryptonym. See Loorits 1931, 456 jj.

¹⁰ Casas Gómez 2009, 738.

the example of nature incantations, the substitutive names of animals and birds are explored. Names for the cockroach, the wolf, and the raven are observed more closely, as they are addressing by name, using euphemisms and dysphemisms, and the relationship between banned words and symbolic rituals, as in the case of incantations. The selected animals were important in the past, but they are also visible in today's culture. The wolf and the raven are creatures with a rich mythological background, expressed in contemporary professional art and media mythology. Cockroaches are also more widely represented in folkloric beliefs and folk tales. Nowadays, they are used in high fashion, and connected to art, literature, theatre, and films, including Olivier Jean Marie's animated series *Oggy and the Cockroaches* (2013). A system of reciprocal relations between humans and animals along with banned words are universal phenomena, which appear in the same form in other cultures.

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND NON-HUMANS ON THE EXAMPLE OF WORD MAGIC

Reciprocal contacts with nature extended from the land and the fields to forests and bodies of water, including all of their inhabitants. Fresh and clean drinking water, the fertility of the fields and relations with the forest and its surroundings were all important. Besides rituals and specific practices of stewardship, verbal communication held an important place.

According to phenomenologists, a spontaneous ecological balance was ensured by a mutually respectful pattern of behavior. People operated in a local environment and could not exist outside the intertwined ecosystems, which in turn meant that the interests of both parties were taken into account. The return of some of the fish and game catches to the sea and the forest is believed to have contributed to animal numbers, representing the animal's soul and ensuring their natural regeneration¹¹. As a sign of good intercourse, the first or a few smaller fish were thrown back into the sea¹², the bones of the rabbit were taken over the stump of the forest, or small part of the animal was taken to the wolves – it was not eaten but called the wolf's share¹³. Animals are also believed to understand human speech, and this was the reason for using substitute names. According to

¹¹ Paulson 1958.

¹² Paulson 1971.

¹³ Rootsi 2011.

Oskar Loorits, substitute names are directly related to the imagination of the name-soul, because the soul of the being is hidden in the name, but the nickname does not contain the soul. He also considers the system of substitute names to be a feature of the animistic worldview¹⁴. The use of alternate names is traceable from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, although not in all areas. The Forselius-Boeckler manuscript conveys the use of word magic in the seventeenth century, when numerous naming conventions were used for, among others, hares, foxes, wolves, bears, mice and rats, snakes, and domestic cats and dogs¹⁵.

As beliefs convey universal rules, we find matches in the use of pseudonyms and their interrelationships closer and far away. Hawaiians, for example,

[...] use the general euphemism holoholo, cruising around, so as not to alert the fish to their plans. They also say that fish can not only hear, but can also choose whether to be caught by a particular lawai'a, based on whether he or she exercises respectful fishing behaviours. Fishermen and fisherwomen respect the species they harvest by letting some go and not wasting their catch. Harvest also comes with the responsibility to share and feed the community.¹⁶

Tim Ingold (1994), an anthropologist who studied relations between humans and animals, raised the question of so-called animality as viewed by different disciplines; he summarized the topic with a generalization that animals and animality are deeply embedded in our own ways of thought. Humans and animals might actually engage in social relations with one another. Ingold has stressed that people behave variously with animal species, considering some of them with more affinity than others. As one significant criterion he mentions the giving of names: large animals were regarded as more deserving of names than small ones; the same applies to lone animals rather than those who belonged to herds or flocks and to domesticated animals rather than wild ones.

A few years ago, Thora Herrmann and his research group (2013) published their results based on their study of a South American ethnic group. They summarized several contradictory tendencies that they had observed: (1) fear toward the animal, (2) the willingness to protect them, (3) a diminished or missing cultural dimension of the animal might provoke less identification with the animal, and (4) the relations can be positive or negative – it depends upon personality. This research highlights an

¹⁴ Loorits 1931, 467.

¹⁵ Forselius - Boecler (1685) 1854.

¹⁶ Diver *et al.* 2019.

interesting aspect that is tightly interwoven with narratives and culture. Namely, positive value is attributed to known animals, even if they are large meat-eating predators that cause damage and endanger humans. Positive attitudes and compassion are evinced toward them, unlike animals with which there is less contact.

2.1. *Cockroach words*

The so-called German cockroach (*Blattella germanica*), common in Estonia, loves warmth and moisture. The roughly sixteen-millimeter-long mixed-feeding insects are very annoying due to their sheltered lifestyle and endurance. Symbolic and magical control practices were simple: taking three or nine insects to a crossroad, or closing them in a wood block, dispatching them with the deceased, burying them, and leading them out of the house with yarn or cord. These activities also included short spells. According to beliefs, it was necessary to be careful with repelling insects, otherwise they would start breeding instead:

If someone wanted to destroy these insects: “Do not kill ‘russaks’ and other insects, they will eat you.” There were so many cockroaches that the walls of the threshing room were covered with a red copper plate. With good will, however, one could also get rid of them if such a remedy was used... The cockroach itself is copper-red, but among them there are some white ones, and it was with it that others could be destroyed.¹⁷

The procedure for repelling was usually repeated three times, with time and moon phases taken into the account (Thursday, old moon or full moon) and talking and laughing among people prohibited. Endel Mets describes driving cockroaches out of the house when a well-known local “professional” has been called in to help:

A cockroach slayer says, well, let me try, but mind that no one will utter a word or laugh in between. Well, the family promised to keep their mouths shut and promised not to laugh at the cockroach. Brought a rope from home, tied it to the side of the stove, and dragged the other end to the yard. Said a few words and then they started y to come out [...].¹⁸

Actions ranging from spells, short formulas, and counting to dialogues performed to the accompaniment of a small ritual action were used against

¹⁷ RKM II 85, 560/1 (368) < Karja 1959.

¹⁸ ERA II 300, 36/9 (26) < Jõhvi 1942.

cockroaches; there are often several alternate names in the same text. Short-form spells verbalize the purpose of the ritual action. Sending them away with the deceased is projected; sending them away with running water is also important, as well as a symbolic transfer to the moon. Cockroaches were sent back to the place of origin (*where you came from*) or to different corners of the world. The repulsion included knocking on the outside wall of the house with a grave-digging shovel, axe, or other iron object. Within short order, cockroaches were sent away; in individual cases, a requirement was formulated for them not to return, but to disappear once and for all. The direction specified by the commands sendt cockroaches either simply out of the house and away, or, more precisely, into the sea, into the village, or most often to the grave with the deceased. None of these places are of the same high degree of accuracy, but rather represent something general.

Get out / go / to the village / sea / grave!; Go and accompany the deceased! / Where this [deceased] goes, you go, too! / Go this [graveyard] way!

Where you have come from, go there! / Go where you have come without hearing the moon and without seeing the day!; Now go each one of you your own way and don't come back!

The time factor may be emphasized: the cockroaches' time is over they had a *year already, take your bags-flasks and get away!*

Sometimes cockroaches are driven to the “manor,” meaning a better place.

There is no appeal in any of the fifty-four texts, whereas the ritual side specifies the requirements for the time of action, and the action of the control attribute: sending away one or a few insects includes, for example, beating with willow branches and sending away with shavings:

Kevadel suure vee ajal pannakse prussakas laastuga kraavi, pekstakse hanipajudega öeldes: “Kasige meresse!”

In spring, during high water, the cockroach is put in a ditch with chips, beaten with goose wickers saying: “Go to the sea!”¹⁹

2.2.

The species name *cockroach* is used in six texts in formulas based on own-strangers contrast; the cockroach is identified with a person and is called *men* (1), *village men* (1)²⁰, with the exalted name *Misters* (8), and

¹⁹ E, StK 3, 6/7 (4) < Tõstamaa, 1921.

²⁰ “Village men, go away with a country man”. See E 59455 (5) < Narva, 1921.

the color associated with the golden one, e.g., *gold camisols* (1), *men in gold shirts* (1). The most common color-related substitute name in the spell is a *man in a red frock*. The names of the ten texts are associated with red: *men in red frock* (4), *men of bloody frocks* (1), *red cottonwool men* (2), *red-legged* (2), *red corpse* (1). Folk etymology and explanatory stories point to the belief that cockroaches spread to Estonia with soldiers wearing red uniforms or, according to another common model, that Russians brought their favorite domestic animal with them. In individual texts, *soejalg* (or warm leg) is still used (1). In the text, warm leg, or the living cockroach, contrasts with the dead, or cold leg²¹, *travellers* (1), *migrants* (1), *strangers* (2), derogatory names such as *beggars* (1)²² and reference to the location, e.g., *stove creature* (1). Beggars are essentially combined with dysphemisms, of which you may also come across a *shameless dog* (1) and *useless animals* (1).

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OTHER INSECT-RELATED ADDRESSES

Among other residential and human parasitic insects (bedbug, skitter, field-cricket) we find extensive overlaps in rituals and incantations in appeals. Some texts and rituals were carried out against two or three species of parasites at the same time (in the table under the combined name edible). For example, appeals similar to cockroaches are used for bedbugs: *red frock men*, *red coat men*, *red cottonwool men*, *Misters*, *strangers*; and dysphemisms such as *useless animal* or *wall-eater*. Field-crickets are compared to (singing) birds, but appeals are also used, such as *men*, *friends*, *Misters*, and, particularly, *clay Mister* because, according to beliefs, they arose from clay or were brought home with clay. Skitters (pubic lice, *Phthirus pubis*) have many different names²³, but spells mainly use *centipedes*. The word *skitter* has had a wider use in both language and folklore. The *Explanatory Dictionary* glosses skitter as “a relatively weak, modest cursing word to express and emphasize a negative, less often positive, emotion”²⁴.

²¹ Leida Laasma writes about customs in Kodavere in which a cockroach is sent away by a funeral train that has reached the house with a spell: “The cold leg goes, the warm leg goes after.” After that, the cockroaches disappeared from their room. RKM II 174, 269/70 (1) < Kodavere, 1963. The deceased is also called frostbitten in Võnnu parish.

²² At the same time, beggars’ improvisations come from an amateur scribe, which might explain a change of positions. In the text, cockroaches are called beggars and peasantry: “*Misters*, beggars, out, a Mister has come in!” (ERA II 200, 511/3 (49) < Martna, 1939).

²³ See EMS 1994.

²⁴ EKSS 2009.

The so-called room cricket (*Acheta domestica*, the only cricket species living in Estonia), a species threatened with extinction today, shares similarities with other parasitic insects. The bush cricket (*Tettigonia cantans*) and the wart-biter (*Decticus verrucivorus*) are internationally known for their curative discharge, for which a short spell was read upon receipt:

Rohutirtsu kinni püüdes pigistatakse teda, et ta suust vedelikku välja laseks, selle juures sõnatakse: Sirk, sirk, anna salvi, / minu haige haava peale! – See vedelik (salv) parandavat katkised kohad ning haavad.

Catching the grasshopper, it is squeezed to let the liquid out of his mouth, at which it is spoken: Sirk, Sirk, give ointment, on my sick wound! – This liquid (ointment) heals broken places and wounds.²⁵

These spells, in turn, are similar to ladybug words, where ladybugs are addressed with a species name. However, in one subtype of the text there is a threat of beheading or killing if the command is not followed. The grasshopper is also threatened *to be beheaded; be killed; also thrown into the stove*²⁶. As a difference, let us note that the ladybug is allowed to predict future events or is sent on a flight in a certain direction, but healing ointment is desired from the grasshopper. There are no euphemisms or dysphemisms about the grasshopper; the species name is addressed.

Bees (*Apis mellifera*), the only relatively domesticated insects, are in this range mainly for the purpose of creating a reference moment. The genesis of bees places them among God's creatures in many nations²⁷. In Estonia, they were subject to a number of archaic prohibitions of words and actions: beehive trees must not be counted; strangers are not allowed in the apiary and no swearing is allowed there; honey was taken to church for blessing on the Apple Feast of the Saviour; the beekeeper was required to wear clean clothing and not allowed to drink alcohol before going to the beehives. Word and deed prohibitions relating to bees emphasize their tenderness and vulnerability in the face of the evil eye.

Spells were used in beekeeping operations or to cure a bee bite, but bee words were contaminated with plague-wound words. In addition to verse-form spells, apiculture used prayers (our Lord's prayer or its reverse

²⁵ E 47356 (27) < Harju-Jaani, 1910.

²⁶ Ladybug words have been fixed in more than two thousand texts, there are more than seventy names in them alone, and they are even more numerous in the *Estonian Dialect Dictionary* (EMS 1994; VMS 1995). Read more about the names and rhythm models in Krikmann - Sarv 2008. There are no euphemisms in ladybug words, the local name in the dialect is used when addressing.

²⁷ Gura 2003, 101; Gura 1997, 450 jj.

reading) and older internationally known protective formulas such as the Star Formula SATOR. Euphemisms in use are *bird* / *birds* (7) / *honeybee bird* (1); and *men* (2).

Due to techniques similar to alliterative songs, we can observe the variation of the appeal in seventeen variants of one bee bite spell type. Appeals are found in four verses of conversion. The variation begins in the second verse and increases with each line. In the last verse, “piglets” is replaced by “friends” in five variations. The appeal to piglets is believed to be equated with protectors, or fairies, who call their creatures by the names of domestic animals (piglet, cattle, horse²⁸). The number of lines in the verse with an appeal is 17-17-15-16.

Linnu isake, linnu emake (17),
 linnu vahvad vennakesed (16) / linnu lendajad vennakesed (1),
 linnu lendajad õekesed (14) / linnu helde õeke (1),
 linnu põue põrsakesed (10) / linnu põrsakesed (1) / linnu põue sõbraksed (5),
 father-bird, mother-bird (17),
 bird-loving brothers (16) / bird-flying brothers (1),
 flyer bird-sisters (14) / generous bird-sister (1),
 bird piglets (10) / bird piglets (1) / bird piglets (5).

Table 1. – Insects

INSECT	WITHOUT ADDRESSEE	SPECIES NAME	EUPHEMISM	DYSPHEMISM
Cricket	6	14	11	–
Flea	2	1	2	–
Fly	–	8	1	–
Bedbug	9	9	30	4
Bee	2	10	63	4
Cockroach	54	6	30	3
Grasshopper	1	7	3	–
Parasite insect (cockroach, cricket, etc.)	6	2	5	–
Centipede	6	1	–	1

²⁸ See Looirits 1939.

4. RAVEN INCANTATIONS: FORMS OF ADDRESS IN RAVEN INCANTATIONS

The raven (*Corvus corax*) is the largest member of the genus *Corvus* in the family Corvidae, characterised by a long lifespan. These birds with their jet-black plumage once populated an exceptionally large area of Northern Europe. Their appearance, behaviour, intelligence, and other special qualities have given them a permanent place in the folklore and mythology of the ethnic groups of this region. The raven is a deity or a helper of a god and a character in epic tales from pre-historic Scandinavia to the Far East. In the native Tlingit and Inuit cultures of North America, the raven is a creator god. In the Christian tradition, a raven teaches Adam how to bury his son²⁹. The raven also has a significant place in contemporary mythology and popular culture. In addition to observations regarding habits, Estonian religious folklore contains omens and apotropaic observances for warding off the birds from households, incantations being a central aspect of this. As a scavenger, a raven was assumed to bring bad luck when it approached a house or a herd.

The formulations of incantations are laconic; a very common structure is the following: take x / bring y; x here / y away (good here/bad away); for me x / for you y. Various types of incantations for warding off ravens from the cattle and the household (*Mine x küla/papi/valla/mõisa karja*, “go to the herd of the x village/priest/parish/manor”) were known in various places all over Estonia (Jüri, Halliste, Paistu, Viljandi, Otepää, Rannu, Karula, and Urvaste).

Addressing the bird is followed by directing it to go elsewhere and a promise of better things in other places. Alternatively, the raven is told or asked to go to the herd of a minister, a manor, or a parish, or advised to fly over someone else’s herd. The main message of an incantation is to fly elsewhere; however, the destination is rarely specified. For example, one incantation is used by a person from Halliste to send the raven to a herd in Karksi³⁰, but this is an exception, not a general rule. In a couple of texts, the bird is told to go to a nonexisting place such as Muidupae manor or *must mõis* (“black manor”)³¹. The “black manor” probably signifies a dwelling of demons or supernatural beings:

Kui rongad aga sinu pea kohal riidlevad, siis *ütle* nii:
Head linnukesed, head linnukesed!

²⁹ The same theme is known from Estonian lore (Boganeva - Kõiva 2021). For the list of etiologic themes related to apocrypha, see Hiimäe 1996.

³⁰ H II 48, 25 (7) < Halliste, 1893.

³¹ See Babič - Voolaid 2018.

Minge siit ära!
Minge Muidupae mõisa.
Seal on üks punane päitshärg,
nuga sarvis ja kirves kõrvas!
Kui sa seda salmikest loed, siis ei sünni sulle midagi paha.
“When ravens are quarrelling above your head, say the following words:
Good birds, good birds!
Leave this place!
Go to Muidupae manor.
It has a bridled red ox,
a knife in its horns and an axe in its ears!
If you read this charm, no harm will come to you.”³²

The next sample text is framed by a euphemistic address, meaning that the text begins and ends with an address containing a euphemism, framing the pleas to foretell good and protect the herd as well as an offer for a substitution:

Mööda, valge linnuke!
Ütle hääd, keela kurja.
kaitse ikka meie karja.
Siit tuhka, mujalt toorest,
mööda, valge linnuke!
“Fly by, white birdie!
Bring the good, forbid the evil,
protect our herd as you always do.
Here is ashes, elsewhere raw meat,
fly by, white birdie!”³³

The raven texts can contain mythical themes; for example, the raven puts on copper armor, or the raven has been dispatched to attack a mythical gigantic ox. These texts indicate that the number of mythical themes might have been greater in previous periods.

4.1.

The raven is not addressed in seven incantations. These only include a command or a request:

Kas tulid kanapoegi või munasid vargile?
Või tulid midagi valetama?

³² H I 7, 386 (19a) < Jüri, 1896.

³³ H I 4, 644 (8) < Paistu, 1874.

Kui valetad, siis katsu et minema saad.
Kui tõtt räägid, räägi edasi.
“Did you come to steal chicks or eggs?
Or tell tall tales?
If you lie, make yourself scarce.
If it’s the truth, tell more.”³⁴

4.2.

There are three widespread designations for the raven: *ronk*, *kaaren*, and *korp*, of which *ronk* has a Baltic-Finnic root and can be found, for example, in the Saami and Lithuanian languages. *Kaaren* has a Uralic root and is used widely in Estonia; *korp* is a loanword adopted from Swedish into the dialect of Saaremaa and from Finnish into the northeastern coastal dialects³⁵. All three dialect designations can be found among the words for raven.

The name of the species, *kaaren* or *ronk*, is used in an incantation eleven times (with examples from Rannu, Setumaa, Rõuge, Püha, Noa-rootsi, Urvaste, Türi, and Põlva); the diminutive form *kaarnake* was found in one text (Kambja). There are other variants of designations, such as *kronks*, which are derived from the call of the raven. The dictionary of dialects indicates that this was used in the Urvaste, Rõuge, and Seto regions³⁶, and based on the raven incantations, we can also add Põlva and Karula to this list. *Kronk* as the species name can be seen in charms from Urvaste, Viljandi, Palamuse, and Viru-Nigula, and *klunk* in Rõuge.

4.3.

When addressing the raven, the use of the general noun *lind* (“bird”) is very common. The incantations also use the address in plural as *linnud* (“birds”), with examples from Viru-Nigula (1) and Hageri (1); as the diminutive *linnuke* (“birdie”) in seven examples: Haljala (2), Viru-Nigula, Ambla, Pärnu, Palamuse, and Torma; and as *linnukene* (“birdie”) in two instances from Hanila and Ambla. There is also *taevaalused lõnnud* (“birds under the sky”) in an example from Kihnu. The following euphemisms are in use: *head linnud* (“good birds”) in an instance from Hageri, and the diminutive *head linnukesed* (“good birdies”) found in Viljandi and Jüri.

³⁴ RKM II 272, 38 (b) < Krasnoyarsk, 1970.

³⁵ VMS 1995.

³⁶ VMS 1995.

Must (“black”) corresponds to the raven’s black plumage; its opposite color is *valge* (“white”), which is also used for flattery and protection. However, *valgelind* can be seen in incantations in its plural and diminutive forms and is generally the most popular cryptonym of the raven: *valgelind*, with eight examples from Kolga-Jaani, Tarvastu (3), Rõuge, Rannu, Vairava, and Paistu; *valge linnuke* (“white birdie”) with four examples: Tori (2), Haljala, and one origin unknown; and *valged linnud* (“white birds”), three instances from Pärnu-Jaagupi (2) and Tõstamaa. A mention of the actual color of the birds is less common: *mustlind* (“black bird”), mentioned in an example each from Hanila, Põlva, and Halliste; *must linnuke* (“black birdie”) in a case from Rannu. However, *mustlind* in the meaning of the raven is more commonly used in pain-relief incantations (*Varesele valu*; “Pain to the Crow”); in hundreds of texts, the black bird is the one to whom the pain is transferred.

Whereas the previously cited texts used a general designation of the species or a euphemism to address the raven, some incantations use the designation of the species and a euphemism (good bird, white or black bird) as a particular feature in the following manner:

- designation + good bird, 1 example: Viljandi (*Ronk, ronk, hää lind*; “raven, raven, good bird”) ³⁷;
- designation + pretty birdie, white birdie, 1 example: Paistu (*Rink-ronk, ilus linnuke, valge linnuke*; *Rink-ronk* [a rhyming compound meaning ‘the raven’], “pretty birdie, white birdie”) ³⁸;
- designation + white bird, 7 examples: Viljandi (3), Otepää, Karksi (2);
- black bird + designation, 1 example: Rõngu;
- designation + black bird, 2 examples: Helme, Tarvastu.

4.4.

When used as a form of address, dysphemisms are used either (1) in two parallel verses, or (2) to form a list. Outright terms of abuse are used in a few instances in addressing the bird. *Sitakene* (“little shit” in the meaning of “a small pitiful creature”) is used only once in a verse addressing the bird: *Oh sa vana sitakene* (“Oh, you old little shit”) ³⁹. It is followed by a request to not harm the herd and an offer of a substitute: *for you x, for*

³⁷ H III 14, 413 (8) < Viljandi, 1893.

³⁸ ERA II 34, 360 (1) < Paistu, 1927.

³⁹ E 63674 (4) < Tartu I., 1929.

me y. Another expression in use, *Viru hatt* (“Viru bitch”), is part of an incantation that begins with spitting, which is a centuries-old practice for deflecting evil, followed by dysphemisms: *Tpvui, tpvui, tpvui! Viru hatt, tõrvapüüt, tulitungel, tubkbaud* (“*Ptui, ptui, ptui! A Viru bitch, a tub of tar, a torch, an ashen grave*”; *Ptui* is an onomatopoeic word for spitting)⁴⁰. The list of dysphemisms also includes *Viisrajak* (one of the euphemisms for the devil), one of the most enduring dysphemisms in raven incantations. Dysphemisms are the old items used in farming; sooty, black, torn, and lousy items. The entire list of dysphemisms contains: *ruunanabhk* (“leather or skin of a gelding”), *vana hiiuballi (balli hobuse) nabk* (“leather or skin of an old grey [mouse-grey] horse”); *tulitukk/tuletukk* (“firebrand”), *tuletungal* (“torch”), *pastlapaik* (“shoe patch”), *abjuots* (“end of a furnace”), *pajatuust* (“pot wisp”), *aiaalune* (literally, “one under a garden or a fence”; figuratively, “a viper”), *abjubark* (“oven fork”), *abjuroop* (“fire iron”), *tõrvapüüt* (“tub of tar”), *tubkbaud* (“ashen grave”), *viisrajak* (“the devil”).

The order of dysphemisms in a list seems to be casual: *Oh sa abjuruup ja luvvakonds* (“Oh, you fire iron and stump of a broom”), etc., or *Oh sina viisraak, pastlapaik, tulitukk, abjuots, paatuust, aiaalune* (“Oh, you the devil, shoe patch, firebrand, end of a furnace, pot wisp, the one under a fence”)⁴¹. Designation plus a list of dysphemisms can be found in two texts (*Ronk, ronk, tuletukk, pastlapaik, abjuruup*; “raven, raven, firebrand, patch for a shoe, fire iron”)⁴². Designation with euphemism and dysphemisms can be seen in two texts from Tarvastu, *Ronk, ronk, valgelind, viiskravak, pastlapaik* (“raven, raven, white bird, rag for a bast shoe, patch of a shoe”)⁴³ and *Ronk, ronk, valgelind, viisrävak, pastlapaik, tulitukk, abjubark* (“Raven, raven, white bird, bast shoe rag, shoe patch, firebrand, oven fork”)⁴⁴.

From the point of view of the textual rhythm, it offers an interesting opportunity where the designation, command, verb, and greeting are repeated, or the reduplications are used: *Ronk, ronk valgelind* (“Raven, raven, white bird”); *Rink-ronk ilus linnuke, valge linnuke* (“Raven, pretty birdie, white birdie”); *Räägi head, räägi head* (“Speak of the good, speak of the good”); *Räägi head, linnukene, / räägi head, linnukene* (“Speak of the good, birdie, / speak of the good, birdie”); *Häid sõnumid linnud, häid sõnu-*

⁴⁰ H I 2, 608 (3) < Rõuge, 1889.

⁴¹ H II 25, 258 (221a) < Helme, 1889; E 23826 (2) < Halliste, 1896.

⁴² H III 16, 267 (28) < Karksi, 1890, and ERA II 177, 451 (258) < Viljandi, 1937.

⁴³ E 1224 (74) < Tarvastu, 1893.

⁴⁴ E 8486 (134) < Tarvastu, 1900(?).

mid (“Good messages, birds, good messages”); *Valged linnud, valged linnud* (“White birds, white birds”); *Head, head linnud* (“Good, good birds”); *Head, head, head linnud* (“Good, good, good birds”); *Eemal, eemal, linnuke* (“Yon, yon, birdie”); *Tere, tere, valgelind* (“Hello, hello, white bird”); *Ronk, ronk, häälind* (“Raven, raven, good bird”, etc.).

Table 2. – Birds

BIRDS	WITHOUT ADDRESSEE	SPECIES NAME	GENERAL NAME, BIRD	EUPHEMISM	DYSPHEMISM
Geese	3	2	–	–	–
Hen	17	11	–	–	–
Hawk	2	34 + 28 (dysphemism)	–	–	species name < 9 + 34 +28
White Stork	45	73	13	1	–
Raven	9	15	12	30	16
Crow	9	5	1	–	1

5. WOLF WORDS

A great exception in terms of cryptonyms is the wolf, from whom it was believed one could catch illnesses. If a wolf scares you during pregnancy, the child will be born with wolf disease. Treatment consists of a symbolic transfer wherein the child is whisked with wolf’s skin or the tail of a wolf; the child is chased away and told off like a wolf. *Hunditähk* (literal meaning, “mark of the wolf”) could be gotten by a child if a wolf scared it, prompting a mole to appear on the skin. The wolfsmark is lifelong and cannot be cured. You can lose your voice when a wolf secretly gazes at you. Wolf’s fat was used in the treatment of disease; hands that have turned the tracks of a wolf are healing hands. Candles made of wolf fat enable one to see thieves as well as see and capture nightmares, the devil and other mythical creatures with a devilish background⁴⁵.

Wolves have more substitute names in the Estonian language than any other animal. Wolf researcher Ilmar Rootsi noted that there were, in total, more than 500 cryptonyms and even incantations include 177 unique

⁴⁵ See Rootsi 2011; Gura 2009; Kõiva 2019b.

names collected from 300 written records⁴⁶. A single text will often have several euphemisms and more than one address.

5.1.

Fifty-six texts have no address. These are mostly orders in the imperative: *Sule suu!* (“Close your mouth”) and *Valjasta boost!* (“Bridle the horse”). Such shorter phrases are uttered during rituals or longer wolf incantations in verse form:

Kui susi karja tuleb, viskab karjus kannukesega ja ütleb
Tulitungõl suuhõ,
tõrvakand kaala,
küläkarja minemä.⁴⁷

When the wolf comes, the herdsman throws a pitcher and says:
Torch to your mouth
tar to your shoulders
going to the village livestock.

5.2.

In eighty-three texts, the wolf is addressed by calling it a wolf: *hunt*, *susi*. The diminutive *hundike* (“little wolf”) can be found in four texts. In southern and eastern Slavic folklore, Saint George was known as the herdsman and ruler of wolves⁴⁸, and his name pops up in fifty texts. In most cases, he is asked to keep his pets in line and not let them attack herd animals. Wolves are referred to as his dogs, pups and foals, and the saint is asked to keep an eye on their dogs/pups/foals and lead them away from the herd.

I will now present a complete list used in the batch of texts concerning Saint George. The most common cluster variations are *püba Jüri poisikesed* (“Saint George’s boys”; 9 instances), *püba Jüri pübad sulased* (“Saint George’s holy servants”; 1); *püba Jüri varsakõsõ* (“Saint George’s foals”; 1), *püba Jüri kurjad koerad/penid* (“Saint George’s evil dogs”; 19), *püba Jüri suured koerad* (“Saint George’s big dogs”; 9), *püba Jüri armid koerad* (“Saint

⁴⁶ Roots 2021. This does not take into consideration snippets, prayers, counting-based incantations or the treatment of illnesses caused by a wolf.

⁴⁷ E 15784 (1) < Rõuge, 1895.

⁴⁸ See Mencej 2002 for Slavic parallels.

George's dear dogs"; 1), *püha Jüri koerukesed* ("Saint George's doggies"; 1), *püha Jüri kutsikad* ("Saint George's pups"; 16), *püha Jüri kutsikuke* ("Saint George's doggy"; 5), *püha Jüri rakikesed* ("Saint George's little dogs"; 1), *püha Jüri kenad kutsikad* ("Saint George's lovely pups"; 1).

A replacement name for a wolf can be "dog", including *koer* (5), *koerakesed* (3). Diminutive forms of "dog" and "pup" can also be found: *kutsa* (1), *kutsakene* (1), *kutsikad* (1), *kutsikukese*, *pinikese* (2), and *metsakoer*. A variety of "dog" with an epithet include *kiriva pinikese* ("multicoloured dog"; [1], *halli(d) koera(d)* ("grey dog(s)"; [2], *armas hallikoera* ("dear grey-coloured dog"; 2) or even *ilusa elajakese* ("pretty beast"; 1). The use of the belittling forms pups, calves, foals, or boys (for humans) and the diminutive *kutsikake* ("pupper") is noteworthy. In part, this is an antithesis where a wild animal is substituted for a domestic animal, a predator for prey, or a predator for a human⁴⁹.

The most common structural model for wolf incantations comprises (1) flattering addressing verses with respectful addressing in two to four verses (*Metsa ukku, metsa akku, / metsa kuldane kuningas...* ("Old man of the forest, old woman of the forest, the golden king of the forest...")), (2) followed by a prohibition, redirection or another wish. Some of the names make allusions to wolves' appearance, habitat, lifestyle, or behavior. The wolf is referred to as the head of the family and a king, i.e. they are addressed as social equals of someone further up the social ladder: *isand* ("master"), *kuningas* ("king"), *metsasaks* ("forest squire"), *metsaisand* ("lord of the forest"), *vana kuldjalg* ("old golden legs"), and *bärä* ("mister").

Part of the replacement names is related to color. There are not many in total, but they are quite meaningful as they mostly adhere to the color of a wolf's coat. The most common Estonian replacement name in incantations, language, and literature is *ballivatimees-ballikuuemees* ("man in grey coat"). Incantations include a total of twenty-one names based on the color grey, while all other colors come across less frequently: *kirju* ("multicoloured"; 4 instances), *must* ("black"; 5) and *hiirehalli haavakarva; valge* ("mouse grey aspen-coloured"; 3). The latter appears with the main word *varss* ("foal") or *vasikas* ("calf") and the cryptonym refers to the identification of a forest fairy with its herd (cf. pike as the protector of fish or also as a member of the fish-protector's shoal, referred to as a barrow, calf).

⁴⁹ Forest fairies and water fairies also have their own herds. Saint George functions, to a certain extent, as a forest fairy; as such, it makes total sense to refer to wolves as his herd animals.

In some cases, color can also function as a generalized cryptonym: *hal-likene* (“grey”), *kirju* (“multicoloured”), *must* (“black”):

[--] *kirju meid ei kisu,*
ega see musta meid ei murra [--] ⁵⁰

the multi-coloured one won't touch us
the black one won't kill us

Body parts are referred to in a text originating from Setomaa where *kõrvakõnõ* (“ear”), *nännäkõnõ* (“teat”), and *bännakõnõ* (“tail”) appear in three verses from Setomaa.

The incantation starts with an addressing verse, the first of which uses quasi-words as well as reduplicatives. We also find nonsensical words characteristic of incantations. There is a total of thirty-six variations of these name pairs. The following are less fit for the purposes. Part of the pairing compares wolves to domestic animals (*vissid*, “cows”). The address *Maa esä, maa emä* (“Earth father, Earth mother”) that occurs twice among forest-themed addresses is also uncommon. *Metsa sikku, metsa sokku* (both meaning “buck” ⁵¹) of introductory verses with meaning is present in seventeen verses.

The other popular system is related to the alternation of *uku-aku* (meaning “old man, old woman”), but the word pairs vary quite a lot: *Metsa ukku, metsa akka/akku* (4); *Metsa uku – metsa uku, uku – auku; akku – ukku*. All other word pairs vary mostly by containing reduplicates and partly nonsense or quasi-words. Most pairs occur only once and the boundaries between them are unclear:

uigud – aigud
uiku – aiku; alpi – ulpi; ulpi – alpi (3)
ulju – alju (3)
elpi – alpi
illu – allu
illi – balli, itti – atti (3)
itti – ätti, and others ⁵²

The words *balli*, *(h)allu*, *(h)alli* (“grey”) can be interpreted as a reduplication, but also as a wolf itself defined through the color grey; *(h)ullu*, *bulli*

⁵⁰ E 4833 (2) < Viljandi, 1893.

⁵¹ See *Murdesõnastik*, EKSS 2009.

⁵² Every verse is of course preceded by the specification *metsa* (forest), *metsa ulli* (forest lunatic), or *metsa alli* (forest grey). For a full list, see <https://www.folklore.ee/pubte/data/mare>.

(“lunatic”) can be interpreted in the same way and this is in turn supported by the alliteration-based pair *bull hunt* (“lunatic wolf”).

The flattering addresses that come after the starting verse vary by quite a margin. The most common of these addresses the wolf as the king of the forest. This is one of the most stable verse lines (second verse) and occurs more than ninety times, even though the descriptive epithet differs based on the specific dialect: *metsa kuldase/kullase/kullassa/kuldese, kulda kuningas* (“the golden king of the forest”; 5 instances). In single texts, *kurinde, kurdane, kulleri kuningas* appear as epithets. In addition to the popular reference “king”, there are also some cases of *härira* (“mister”) and *isand* (“master”; 8 texts): *metsa ärtnu herrakene* (“mister of hearts of the forest”, referring to a card deck; 5) and *metsa heldised isandad* (“generous masters of the forest”), *metsa ilusa isanda* (“beautiful masters of the forest”), and *mõtsa ilvetud isandä*, which all occur only once.

In forty-two cases, the lady of the forest is addressed (third verse): *metsa emand* (“lady of the forest”; 21 texts), the most frequent being *metsa heldene emanda* (“generous lady of the forest”; 13), *metsa helmene emand* (“decorated lady of the forest”; 2 texts), while the words *ilvetud, ebitud, ejar mu, ärdane* and simply the phrase *metsa emand* all occur once. There is also one occurrence of *metsa kuldakrooni prouakene* (“lady of the forest with a golden crown”), which represents a different quality and address.

There are twenty-eight virgin verses (third or fourth verse): *metsa neitsikene* (“forest virgin”; 15); *nirki-nerki /nirki neitsikene* (4), *metsas noored neitsikesed / nooride neitsikene* (“young virgins in the forest / young virgin”; 2), *numma / siidineitsikene* (“moorland / silken virgin”; 2), with *metsa kuldatrooni neitsikene* (“forest virgin on a golden throne”), *kriimusilma neitsikene* (“wolf virgin”), *nõmme noori neitsikene* (“young moorland virgin”), *siidisaba neitsikesed* (“virgins with silken tails”), *metsa mamka neitsikene* (“forest mother virgin”) ⁵³ occurring one time.

Texts from southern Estonia also mention *metsa ema ja metsa isa* (“forest mother and forest father”; in this region, fairies are referred to as “mother”, “father”). There are six such addresses, two of them in diminutive form: *mõtsa esa, mõtsa ema* (4), *mõtsa esäke, mõtsa emäke* (2). Another possibility is represented by verses addressing wolves using substitute names alluding to their appearance: *harvalõuga* (“open jaws”; 24), *pikkalõuga* (“long jaws”; 24), *halliparda* (“grey beard”; 9), *metsa kardane kasukas* (“steely coat of the forest”; 7), with *metsa karvane kasukas* (“hairy

⁵³ For the last example of *metsa mamka neitsikene*, see H IV 9, 18 < Ambla parish, Lehtse rural municipality.

coat of the forest”), *metsa pikka peenilõuga* (“narrow jaws of the forest”), *metsa kaskene koonuke* (“birch snout of the forest”) all represented once. For example, the expression *halliparda* (“grey beard”) is represented in the following forms: *metsa halliparda* (“forest grey beard”; 5), *metsa armsad ballid parrad* (2), and in single texts as *armas hallas pardake*, *ballivati parda*. Similar verses include *metsahalli harva lakaga* (“with a forest-grey mane”; 1) ja *metsa hatu halli pärge* (“grey wreath of the bitch of the forest”; 3), the first of which uses a cryptonym based on the color of the wolf’s coat and supplements it with a descriptive testimonial, *harvalakaline hunt*, the second of which uses the word *hatu*, likely a denotative of *batt*, and *pärg*, probably just a random alteration.

In conclusion, incantations starting with several addressing verses include examples of almost all of the subtypes specified above: 1) relations with habitat and name (diminutive) combinations, 2) color names based on references to the color grey, as mentioned above, as well as other colors, 3) clothing details referring to a higher status generalized to form substitute name, e.g., in a list, *Oo, hunti, udukübara; siidisukka, kuldakinga*⁵⁴ (“Oh, wolf, fancy hat, silken stocking, golden shoe”), 4) assignment of specific forest-related positions, *metsälaane lambapoissi* (“forest sheep boy”), and 5) references to wolves being in the herd of forest fairies or Saint George who holds a similar position, including references to forest calves or horses, *saare valgedpea vasikad* (“ash tree whitehead calves”; 1), *metsa valgepea vasikas* (“whitehead calf of the forest”; 1), *metsa kimmel* (“brown and grey horse of the forest”; 1). One thing to note is that wolf incantations include very few cases of dysphemisms (20 instances).

6. CONCLUSION

Euphemisms and forbidden/taboo words, enigmatic use of words, and avoidance of direct naming reflect norms of behavior and stereotypes in the past. They also highlight topics that were sanctioned, feared, or avoided in daily speech. Euphemisms and substitute names were very widely used in daily communication, especially in times of crisis and in sensitive situations (eating, fishing-cycle, hunting, and herding periods). Word prohibitions were valid throughout the year and were used as needed, but the repel ritual and spells could also be associated with a specific critical time and

⁵⁴ H II 65, 10 < Rakvere, 1894.

due date. For example, it appears from the wolf folklore that the transfer of talents to wolves took place as needed, but they certainly communicated on St. George's day and the time of All Souls.

There is no direct appeal in 11 percent of wolf words, 10.9 percent of raven words, and 58 percent of cockroach words. By contrast, using the species name (or the general category bird, etc.), 36.5 percent of raven words, 15 percent of wolf words, 6.4 percent of cockroach words are used to address. The use of euphemisms is also different for all species: 66 percent of wolf words, 19.5 percent of raven words and 32.2 percent of cockroach words. Although the number of permanent substitute names and appeals is high (*Golden King of the Forest* – over 90 realizations), *Forest Mistress* (42 realizations) most are still minor or unique realizations.

In substitute names and euphemisms, the main dichotomies come to the fore: younger/older, white/black, rich/poor, settled/migrant, own/stranger, etc. In many species, relationships with supernatural beings and animal protectors also come to the fore: wolves have Saint George in the same position as the forest fairy, which is why wolves are called his dogs, calves, and foals; the same technique is used in bee words. In part, it is an antithesis in which a wild animal is replaced by a domestic animal, a predator by prey, or a predator is replaced by a human.

A person in a socially higher position is addressed for a number of beings. In wolf words, the choice is *Lord, King, Forest Mister, Forest Lord, old golden leg, sir, Queen*; in cockroach words, *Mister*. Remarkable is that the birds never identify with humans in euphemisms. Identification with an ordinary person also occurs in wolf and cockroach words (*man, village man*) and in bee words (*little men, workmen*); highlighting of kinship occurs in wolf words (*uncle, village guy, father, mother*) and in bee words (*mother, brothers, sisters*). In addition, in cockroach words *travelers, migrants, and strangers* are opposed to their own ones.

Substitute names related to color are common in all observed creatures: wolf names have the most grey-based names, but less often also variegated: white; raven white, black. Cockroach and some other insects are designated *golden*, but mostly *red*. *Pars pro toto*, or body part instead of animal, occurs in wolf words; a piece of clothing indicating a higher status, used as a replacement name in wolves, the opposition of living and dead occurs in cockroach words (*warm leg/cold leg*). In longer alliterative incantations, there are one to four appealing verses. In the first verse of wolf spell, the verse uses both quasi-words and reduplicates, and non-sense words characteristic of incantations, alongside substitute names with meaning. There are also repetitions, reduplicates and quasi-words in the

appeals of raven words; the same is characteristic of some crow words. A part of wolf replacement names refers to appearance, way of life, or place of residence.

The number of dysphemism is modest (absent in crickets, flies, grasshoppers and fleas, and also in ladybug words), there is no direct cursing or swearing, and a few dysphemisms are used in wolf appeals, while in the hawk they are central. There were few ways to influence the hawk other than symbolical offering young animals and repelling with dysphemism. In terms of dysphemisms, identification with human beings (beggars, cripples), demonic beings (for raven, five-tailed raven, for wolf, e.g., forest monster) or with animals (shameless dog, unfit animal for cockroach) are represented. In raven words, the names are associated with old, soot, black-colored, tattered and poor farming objects, black-colored objects.

The results presented are interesting, and appeals, substitute names, euphemisms, and dysphemisms are a reason to look further at the example of reptiles and other animals, as well as diseases and social relations. There is a reason to review both the religious background and other explanations, as well as compare them with the spells of other peoples.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The article was supported by research grant of the Estonian Literary Museum EKM 8-2/20/, and by the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (TK 145) through the European Regional Development Fund.

REFERENCE

Afanasev 1865

A. Afanasev, *Poeticheskie vozzreniya slavyan na prirodu*, I, Moscow, Soldatenkov, 1865.

Allan - Burridge 2006

K. Allan - K. Burridge. *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Babič - Voolaid 2018

S. Babič - P. Voolaid, "Swearing: Dissolution into Nothingness", *Studia Mythologica Slavica* (2018), 147-159.

Boganeva - Kõiva 2021

A. Boganeva - M. Kõiva. "Maailma esimesed inimesed", *Mäetagused* 80 (2021), 5-30, https://doi.org/10.7592/MT2021.80.boganeva_koiva.

Bowers - Pleydell-Pearce 2011

J.S. Bowers - C.W. Pleydell-Pearce, "Swearing, Euphemisms, and Linguistic Relativity", *Plos One* (2011), <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0022341>.

Burrage 2012

K. Buggage, "Euphemism and Language Change: The Sixth and Seventh Ages", *Lexis* 7 (2012), 65-92, <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.355>.

Casas Gómez 2009

M. Casas Gómez, "Towards a New Approach to the Linguistic Definition of Euphemism", *Language Science* 31 (2009), 725-739, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2009.05.001>.

Diver 2019

S. Diver *et al.*, "Recognizing 'Reciprocal Relations' to Restore Community Access to Land and Water", *International Journal of the Commons* 13, 1 (2019), 400-429, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26632726> [June 20, 2021].

EKSS 2009

M. Langemets - M. Tiits - T. Valdre *et al.*, *Eesti keele seletav sõnaraamat*, Tallinn, Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2009.

EMS 1994

A. Haak - E. Juhkam *et al.*, *Eesti murrete sõnaraamat. Dialectological Dictionary of Estonian*, Tallinn, Eesti Keele Instituut, 1994, <https://www.eki.ee/dict/ems>.

ETY 2009

I. Metsmägi - M. Sedrik - S.E. Soosaar, *Ethymology Dictionary*, Tallinn, Eesti Keele Instituut, 2009.

Forselius - Boecler (1685) 1854

J. Forselius - J.W. Boecler, *Der Einfältigen Ebsten Abergläubische Gebräuche, Weisen und Gewonheiten*, Reval, C. Brendeken, 1685, 2nd edition St. Petersburg, Buchdr. der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1854.

Gammelin 2020

L. Gammelin, "Gendered Narratives of Illness and Healing: Experiences of Spirit Possession in a Charismatic Church Community in Tanzania", in *Faith in African Lived Christianity: Bridging Anthropological and Theological Perspectives*, edited by K. Lauterbach - M. Vähäkangas, Brill Stable, 2020.

Gura 1995

A. Gura, "Volk", in N. Tostoi, *Slavjanskije drevnosti. Etnolingvisticheski slovar*, I, Moscow, Prozoschenie, 1995, 415-416.

Gura 1997

A. Gura, *Simvolika zivotnykh v slavyanskoi narodnoi traditsii*, Moscow, Indrik, 1997.

Herrmann 2013

T. Herrmann *et al.*, “Values, Animal Symbolism, and Human-Animal Relationships Associated to Two Threatened Felids in Mapuche and Chilean Local Narratives”, *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 13 (Jun 2013), 9-41. doi: 10.1186/1746-4269-9-41, [June 20, 2019].

Hiiemäe 1996

M. Hiiemäe. “Nelikümmend lindu eesti rahvausundis”, *Mäetagused* 1 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.7592/MT1996.01/02.linnud>.

Ingold 1994

T. Ingold, *What is an Animal?*, London - New York, Routledge, 1994.

Keith -Burrige 2006

A. Keith - K. Burrige, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Kõiva 2017

M. Kõiva, “Loitsud ja rahvaarstid Virumaal”, *Mäetagused* 67 (2017), 141-180, doi: 10.7592/MT2017.67.koiva.

Kõiva 2019a

M. Kõiva, *Eesti loitsud I. Arstimissõnad*, Tartu, ELM Scholarly Press, 2019.

Kõiva 2019b

M. Kõiva, “The Wolf: Human/Non-Human Relations on the Basis of Etiologies And Verbal Communication”, *Folklore: EJF* 77 (2019), 181-199. doi: 10.7592/FEJF2019.77.koiva.

Kõiva 2020

M. Kõiva, “Molitva i zagovor. Bibleiskie motivy i kharatery v zagovorakh”, in *Fol'klor i fol'kloristika. Vzgljad iz Belarusi i Estonii*, edited by T. Volodina - M. Kõiva, Minsk, Belarusskaja navuka, 2020, 12-48.

Kõiva - Särg - Vesik 2004

M. Kõiva - T. Särg - L. Vesik, *Berta: Eesti rahvakalendri tähtpäevade andmebaas*, Tartu, EKM Teaduskirjastus, 2004.

Krikmann - Sarv 2008

A. Krikmann - M. Sarv, “Eesti lepatriinusõnade levikust ja rütmikast”. *Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi toimetused*, Tartu, EKM Teaduskirjastus 25 (2008), 215-245.

Laugesen 2019

A. Laugesen, “Changing ‘Man Made Language’: Sexist Language and Feminist Linguistic Activism in Australia”, in M. Arrow - A. Woollacott, *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia*, Sydney, ANU Press, 2019, 241-260, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvq4c17c.16> [June 20, 2021].

Loorits 1931

O. Loorits, "Eesti-liivi kalurite sõnakeeld ja salakeel", *Viritäaja* 35 (1931), 447-468.

Loorits 1939

O. Loorits, *Gedanken-, Tat- und Worttabu bei den estnischen Fischern*, Tartu, ERA, 1939.

Mencej 2001

M. Mencej, *Gospodar volkov v slovanski mitologiji*, Ljubljana, Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo, Filozofska fakulteta, 2001.

Merriam-Webster 2021

"Euphemism", in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/euphemism> [June 20, 2021].

Ní Fhloinn 2018

B. Ní Fhloinn, *Cold Iron: Aspects of the Occupational Lore of Irish Fishermen*, Dublin, Comhairle Bhealoideas Eireann, 2018.

OED 2021

"Euphemism", in *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=euphemism> [June 20, 2021].

Paulson 1958

I. Paulson, "Die Vorstellungen von den Seelen der Tiere bei den nordeurasischem Völkern", *Ethnos* 2-4 (1958), 127-157.

Paulson 1971

I. Paulson, *The Old Estonian Folk Religion*, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1971.

Permiakov 1970

G. Permiakov, *Ot pogovorki do skazki. Ob obschei teorii klishe*, Moscow, Nauka, 1970.

Rodrigues - Schönfeld 2012

S.B. Rodrigues - T.L. Schönfeld, "The Organ-That-Must-Not-Be-Named: Female Genitals and Generalized References", *The Hastings Center Report*, 42, 3 (2012), 19-21.

Rootsi 2011

I. Rootsi, *Hunt ja inimene: suhted Eestis XVIII sajandi keskpaigast XIX sajandi lõpuni*, Diss., Tartu University, 2011.

Ryabova 2013

M. Ryabova, "Euphemisms and Media Framing", *European Scientific Journal* 9 (2013), 32. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2013.v9n32p9p>.

Satlow 2020

M.L. Satlow, "Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality", *Brown Judaic Studies* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvzpv5s5>.

VMS 1995

V. Pall, *Väike murdesõnastik. Dialectological Dictionary of Estonian*, Tallinn, Eesti Keele Instituut, 1982, 1995, <https://www.eki.ee/dict/vms>.

von Luce 1827

J.W.L. von Luce, *Wahrheit und Mutbmassung, Beitrag zur ältesten Geschichte der Insel Oesel*, Pernau, Gotthardt Marquardt, 1827.

Warren 1992

B. Warren. "What Euphemisms Tell Us About the Interpretation of Word", *Studia Linguistica* 46, 2 (1992), 128-172, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9582.1992.tb00833.x>.

Zelenin 2004

D. Zelenin, *Izbrannye trudy. Statii po dukhovnoi kul'ture 1934-1954*, Moscow, Indrik, 2004.

Sources

Digital corpus of Estonian Incantations, digitized from the Estonian Folklore Archives and The Mother Tongue Society. In this article manuscript series H (= collections by Jakob Hurt), E (= collection by Matthias Johann Eisen), ERA (= collection by Estonian Folklore Archives), RKM (= collection by The State Literary Museum), A (= collection by Walter Anderson), E, StK (= collection by stipendiats of the Matthias Johann Eisen).

