

Masculinist Metaphors, Feminist research

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This paper tests the cross-linguistic validity of Hines's findings on English animal-based metaphors depicting women as objects of sexual desire. Data from printed and online sources reveal that comparable metaphors are available in French and Italian but also that they have a wider range of applicability. Relevant metaphorical expressions may serve to represent women in a sexist way (via comparison to such categories of animals as livestock, game, pets, insects, and wild animals) but also to discriminate against other groups perceived as opponents or socially marginal (i.e. competitors like the police or inferiors like homosexuals) by the mainstream dominant group. Our data also show that not all metaphorical epithets are used the same way: some are reserved for talking to people, others for referring to them; some metaphorical address terms serve as expressions of endearment, others as insults; some lexicalised metaphors focus on sexual desirability, others on sexual denigration, still others on other types of trivialisation. Our findings suggest that the ideological significance of a metaphor (i.e. the mappings between its source and target domains and its specific lexical encoding) can be better assessed when explored in relation to complementary or neighbouring domains of experience. Finally, our discussion indicates, more generally, a need to take into account the contextualisation of metaphors in providing an account of their linguistic, social and cultural import.

Der Beitrag fragt nach der einzelsprachenübergreifenden Gültigkeit von Hines Ergebnissen zu englischen Tiermetaphern, die Frauen als Objekt sexueller Begierde beschreiben. Daten aus verschiedenen Quellen belegen, daß es vergleichbare Metaphorisierungen auch im Italienischen und Französischen gibt, die allerdings ein breiteres Anwendungsspektrum aufweisen. Entsprechende metaphorische Ausdrücke können etwa dazu dienen, Frauen sexistisch darzustellen (durch Analogien zu Kategorien wie 'Vieh', 'Spiel', 'Haustiere', 'Insekten' und 'Wildtiere'), oder auch andere gesellschaftliche Gruppen, die im Verhältnis zur dominanten Gruppe abweichende Merkmale aufweisen, zu diskriminieren (z.B. Homosexuelle). Unsere Auswertungen zeigen ebenfalls, dass nicht alle metaphorischen Attribute in der gleichen Weise benutzt werden: einige werden ausschließlich zum Ansprechen von Personen verwendet, andere, um über sie zu sprechen; einige dienen als Koseformen, andere als Beleidigungen; verschiedene lexikalisierte Metaphern fokussieren auf sexuelles Verlangen, andere auf sexuelles Herabwürdigen, wieder andere auf weitere Typen von Geringschätzungen. Unsere Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass die ideologische Bedeutung einer Metapher (d.h. die *mappings* zwischen der Ausgangs- und Zieldomäne und ihre spezifische lexikalische Enkodierung) besser bestimmt werden kann, wenn sie im Verhältnis zu komplementären oder benachbarten Erfahrungsbereichen untersucht wird. Schließlich zeigt unsere Studie auch auf einer allgemeineren Ebene die Notwendigkeit, die Kontextualisierung von Metaphern in die Analyse mit einzubeziehen, um ihre sprachliche, soziale und kulturelle Bedeutung zu erhellen.

1. Introduction

In her influential work *Le Deuxième Sexe* Beauvoir (1994 [1949]: 35-36) wrote that the male gaze projects upon the woman all the females at the same time and often not in very flattering terms:

Le mot femelle fait lever chez lui une sarabande d'images [...] monstrueuse et gavée la reine des termites règne sur les mâles asservis; la mante religieuse, l'araignée repues d'amour broient leur partenaire et le dévorent; la chienne en rut court les ruelles [...] la guenon s'exhibe impunément et se dérobe avec une hypocrite coquetterie, l'homme projette dans la femme toutes les femelles à la fois.

[The word *female* provokes in his mind a tangle of imagery [...] the monstrous and swollen termite queen rules over the enslaved males; the female praying mantis and the spider, satiated with love, crush and devour their partners; the bitch in heat runs through the alleys [...] the she-monkey presents her posterior

immodestly and then steals away with hypocritical coquetry [...] man projects them all at once upon the woman].

Hines's works (1994, 1999) on English metaphors about women appear to corroborate this statement. Using Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theoretical framework, Hines reveals that one of the main conceptual metaphors underlying English linguistic expressions used to describe or address desired women is DESIRED WOMAN AS SMALL ANIMAL (consider, e.g. *chick*, *canary*, *kitty*). This and other metaphors applicable to women, such as WOMAN AS DESSERT (consider metaphorical terms like *tart*, *cheesecake*, *crumpet*), encode, and their usage supports, the dominant male-oriented ideological positions in the discourse of Western, English-speaking society. That is, these lexicalised metaphors show the consistent belittling of women and therefore the sexism entrenched in the English language.

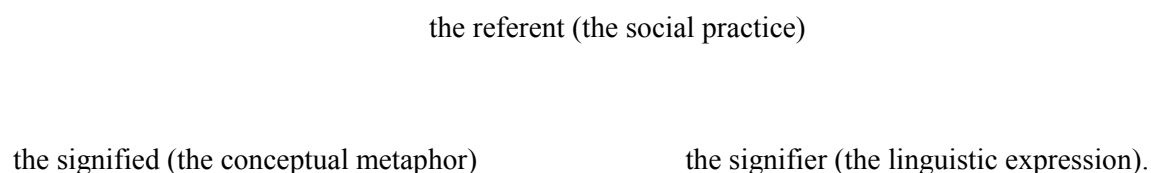
However, the existence of such discriminatory metaphors about women is no guarantee that comparable ones are not also available for men (consider French *mon lapin* "my little rabbit, sweetie" or *un chaud lapin* "a hot rabbit, a stud" and Italian *passero* "little sparrow, dear one"). In addition, similar cross-domain mappings between humans and animals may be more generally applicable to social groups perceived as 'other' (see Guiraud 1986 [1967] about French *milieu* terms for the police and Boggione 2000 about Italian terms for homosexuals).

The aim of this paper is to test the validity and ascertain the cross-linguistic applicability of Hines's findings. On the basis of data from French and Italian, we will analyse metaphorical expressions that use animals as their source domain applicable to both women and men, and others applicable to men only in order to check whether women and men are denigrated in the same way and to the same extent in the two languages. First we will outline Lakoff and Johnson's theoretical framework and summarize Hines's findings regarding the metaphor DESIRED WOMAN AS SMALL ANIMAL, then we will point out the analogies established between women and/or men and animals as revealed by Italian and French metaphorical expressions, and finally we will draw the conclusions from our findings.

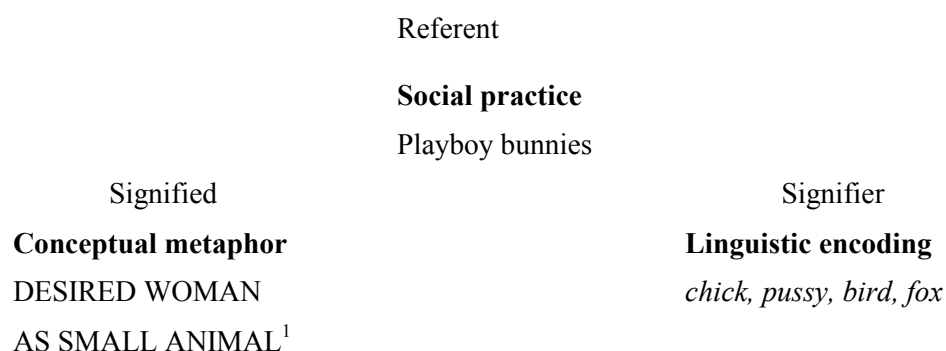
2. Framework and hypotheses

By examining ordinary expressions used in everyday language, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have demonstrated that people very often talk and reason about an entity or event in terms of another, that is in a metaphorical way: they compare a phenomenon they are more familiar with to one that they want to cognitively appropriate, by establishing links between the two domains of experience.

Hines (1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2000) uses Lakoff and Johnson’s theoretical framework to describe the metaphorical usage of terms technically belonging to domains such as desserts (e.g. *tart*, *sweetie pie*, *honey*) and animals (e.g. *filly*, *chick*, *bunny*) to talk to or about women. Her analysis reveals a “rule-governed” pattern of “lexicalisation”: once the conceptual parameters have been established through cross-domain mappings, the choice of terms from the source domain to be applied to the target domain is not random, but motivated by semantic considerations, among others; for instance, the category of dessert terms describing a desired woman is shown to refer to juicy desserts that are made to be shared and/or sliced. In addition to establishing a link between the emotional domain of desire and the physical domains of food or animals, Hines also identifies a third dimension in some of the conceptual metaphors examined, namely a social practice, which embodies the metaphors in question in some way. We thus suggest that Hines’s findings make it possible to conceptualise metaphor as a three-dimensional structure which recalls the semiotic triangle of the sign (Ogden and Richards 1923: 9-12), as in the following schematic set of correspondences:



When applied to the conceptual metaphor DESIRED WOMAN AS SMALL ANIMAL, the relevant analogy can be represented as follows:



¹ The social practice referred to in this triangle is also instantiated, although with different connotations, in birthday cards addressed to women which contain epithets such as *bitch*, *pussy lounge* or key chain holders sold to young girls which read, e.g., *sex kitten*, *groovy chick*, *nutty tart*. (Such items do not exist for men or boys as far as the first author could see in the U.K. and specifically in the *Name Center Collection* shops.) This instantiation of the social practice could be seen as an appropriation of insulting terms for the purpose of meliorating their meaning and connotation by redefining them. However, Wong (2002) describes how difficult it is for such a

Hines's research findings confirm that a metaphor is not only a way of talking, but also a way of thinking and acting. Her work also supports the following statement by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:10): "In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept [...] a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor". Indeed, conceptual metaphors such as DESIRED WOMAN AS SMALL ANIMAL and DESIRED WOMAN AS DESSERT selectively focus on only one aspect of the female world, namely the sexualisation and belittling of the female human being, and Hines's study of such metaphors reveals man's preoccupation with women's sexuality to the exclusion of their other attributes. However, Hines takes Lakoff and Johnson's work further since she also unveils the powerful social implications of these 'masculinist metaphors' (Hendricks and Oliver 1999), that is she decodes and denounces the social practices which embody, enforce and perpetuate the sexist concepts on which such conceptual metaphors are grounded. Maybe most importantly, Hines's *cognitive-linguistic* work reveals the existence of a *social* imbalance between the sexes, which is to be identified in a discriminatory view of women, exemplified in the English language, according to which women are more likely than men to be viewed and treated as less than people. For example, a sexually insulting epithet such as *pussycat* represents women as animals to be tamed for men's comfort, and signals that only members of the latter sex/gender group are implicitly considered prototypical human beings (cf. Lakoff 1975: 6). This type of linguistic practice appears to reflect "a paradigm of the definition of women in our culture" (Penelope 1977: 316, quoted in Hines 1994: 300).

If we focus on Hines's findings on metaphorical expressions representing women as animals, we can see three main trends at work:

- (a) women are considered mere objects of sexual desire more often than men are (more numerous and more varied terms are available to refer to women in sexual terms);
- (b) women are degraded by being treated as equivalent to animals that are hunted and possessed and/or eaten (which shows the conflation of sex, appetite and control);
- (c) women are also more often conceptualised as unreal, fabulous seductive or destructive creatures than men are (consider, e.g. *mermaid*, *enchantress*, *harpy*; see Hines 1996b: 305-307).

process – called *semantic inversion* – to be successful since the source (derogatory) discourse dictates the meaning (whose connotation is to be changed).

Hines's work mainly focuses on metaphorical expressions applying to women to be found in the English language², but previous research has shown that the semantic derogation of women is attested in French (see Guiraud 1986 [1967], Yaguello 1978, Michard 2002) and Italian (see Sabatini 1987, Delmay 1990), too. The use of lexico-grammatical means that discriminate against women can be taken as an indication that a sexist ideology underlies the cultures in which the two languages are spoken. Evidence for this can be found in the following linguistic practices:

sexual derogation of terms identifying women, which is not as evident, or not immediately, for the corresponding terms identifying men; e.g.:

- (1) It. *zitella* originally "girl" then "spinster"
 It. *cortigiano* "man of court" vs. *cortigiana* "courtesan-(fem/sing)"³
 Fr. *maîtresse* "lover" vs. *maître* "master"
 Fr. *coureur* "runner" vs. *coureuse* "slut"
 Fr. *entraîneur* "sport coach" vs. *entraîneuse* "a girl working in a bar, call girl"

asymmetric use of terms for comparable female and male body parts; e.g.:

- (2) It. *fica* "cunt; woman, girl" vs. *cazzo* "penis" (i.e. the synecdoche is not available for the term referring to the penis)
 Fr. *con* "cunt, idiot" (for both sexes/genders) vs. neologism *conne* "idiot" (for females only; a similar usage for male parts is attested less frequently as in *tête de noeud* "idiot")

sexualisation of the meaning of common adjectives when they collocate with the words for "woman" but not with the words for "man"; e.g.:

- (3) It. *una donna facile, una donna leggera, una donna pubblica* "easy woman" vs. *un uomo facile, un uomo galante, un uomo pubblico* (expressions merely identifying or positively describing men)
 Fr. *une femme facile, une femme légère, une femme galante, une femme publique* "easy woman" vs. *un homme facile, un homme léger, un homme galant, un homme public* (these expressions refer to the (good) behaviour or qualities of men).

Given these examples of dissymmetry in language use which belittle or discriminate against the female human being, it is to be expected that French and Italian too may display what Hines's works have revealed for English, namely that in the domain of metaphors, women could be conceptualised and linguistically represented in more trivial ways than men. Indeed,

² However, she also briefly comments on lexicalised metaphors both referring to men and encoded in other languages; see, e.g., Hines (1999: 15-16, the appendix on pp. 17-19, and endnote no. 11 on pp. 20-21) and Hines (1996a: the appendix on p. 200).

³ Here and elsewhere, we are not giving a morph-for-morph translation, but an overall translation, of the terms or phrases in the examples; therefore abbreviations such as *masc.* and *fem.* simply indicate how the relevant terms are grammatically marked, but do not identify or gloss specific morphs.

as in English, in French and Italian too, women are metaphoricised as animals (e.g. pets, game); see the following examples of livestock terms for women:

(4) It. *pollastra* “pullet-(fem/sing); young woman considered as an object of sexual desire”

It. *colombella* “stock dove-(fem/sing); tender and loving girl”

It. *piccioncina* “young pidgeon-(fem/sing); love-bird” (used as a term of endearment)

Fr. *poule* “hen; woman”⁴

Fr. *ma colombe* “dove, tender and loving girl”

Fr. *ma biche* “doe” (used as a term of endearment).

On the other hand, the existence of such metaphorical expressions does not necessarily mean that comparable ones are not available for men when these are regarded as objects of sexual desire; consider, for example, the following:

It. *micio* “pussy-cat-(masc/sing); man considered sexually (contrasts with *macho*; may be used as an address term)”

(5) It. *orsacchiotto* “bear-(dim-aug-masc/sing) (i.e. little teddy bear)”; (may be used as an address term)

Fr. *minet* “cat; young man or boy friend (fam.)”

Fr. *mon lapin* “my rabbit, my darling”

Fr. *un chaud lapin* “a promiscuous man”.

On the basis of the above observations, we propose to address two main issues:

(I) to check the cross-linguistic applicability of the English metaphors identified by Hines concerning the view of women as objects of sexual desire in French and Italian: are women who are viewed as objects of desire trivialised and discriminated against in similar lexicogrammatical ways in these languages as they are in English?

(II) to better assess the ideological import of the metaphors that apply to women by comparing them to derogatory or trivialising metaphors, if any, (a) equally applying to both women and men (considered sexually), and (b) reserved for men (considered sexually). Are the cross-domain mappings that allow one to metaphoricise desired women as small or immature animals (consider, e.g., *kitty*, *filly*) also available to talk to or about desired men?

⁴ The word *poule* “hen” is remarkable for its polysemy: *poule de luxe* “prostitute”, *sa poule* “his partner, his wife” (the possessive determiner restricts the reference of the noun to a partner); *ma poule* “darling” (address term).

This work, therefore, tries to contextualise which metaphors are used to address (or talk about) whom and from what position, since what is derogatory also depends on who is using what to address whom and under what circumstances (McConnell-Ginet 1980).

3. Data collection

Hines (1996a, 1996b, 1999 and 2000) collected her data for the analysis of metaphors about women on the basis of a rigorous methodology, which allowed her to identify *central* terms (monolexic, multiply cited, and with both a metaphorical and a non-metaphorical sense). We did not strictly follow Hines's practice in an attempt not to overlook possibly interesting lexicalisations of metaphors, and so we regarded as valid data also those terms that we found cited only in one source and that were not monolexic⁵.

In this regard, we should also point out that what may count as polylexemic in English may be monolexic in Italian or French: use of derivative suffixes may change the overall meaning of the word by adding nuances that specify concepts like 'size', as in

(6) It. *cagnolone* "dog-(aug-masc/sing), big dog"
Fr. *souriceau* "young mouse", *porceau* "piglet",
or 'attitude', as in

(7) It. *cagnazzo* "dog-(pej-masc/sing), ugly-bad dog".

In English such concepts are typically encoded in separate morphemes.

In addition, in Italian, sometimes it is the suffix that indicates that a term is being used metaphorically; e.g.:

(8) It. *pollastra* literally "chicken-(pej-fem/sg)", but metaphorically "young woman considered sexually".

Furthermore, in such cases the semantic contribution of the suffix may differ from what it usually designates; thus *pollastra* metaphorically designates an young woman considered sexually attractive, even if the suffix *-astro/a* usually has a negative (i.e. pejorative) meaning.

⁵ For French, data were collected from Guiraud (1986 [1967]), Yaguello ([1978]1992), on-line dictionaries such as the *Thresor de la langue française*, the *Robert électronique* and from the Internet. Research done on the computerised data base FRANTEXT (computerised texts) helped to check the usage of such metaphors. For Italian, several dictionaries and other written lexicographical works were consulted, which are listed in the bibliography.

As far as gender marking in French is concerned, the metaphorical term takes the gender of the referent most of the time; thus neologisms have been created to ensure that their morphological gender agrees with the sex of the referent; e.g.:

- (9) Fr. *c'est une cochonne* is now available to mean "she is a pig-(fem/sg), she is physically or morally filthy" (although the word *truie* "sow; fat or filthy woman [insult]" also exists; see also *con* vs. *conne* in section 2. above).

Of course, contextualisation is important in the explanation of the use of lexicalised metaphors: On what occasions are animal terms used to view humans sexually? Of the epithets considered, which ones are reserved for *talking to* people (as address terms) and which ones, instead, for *referring to* them (as topics)? Of the former, which ones serve as terms of endearment and which ones as insults? Do such complementary contexts of use determine restrictions on the kind and number of terms that can be employed, or on the contrary do they offer an opportunity to creatively increase the number of names available to identify, describe or address people? It may well be that the animal terms used as vocatives are more varied and subject to individual variation than those used as reference terms. It may also be that within this group, some potentially disrespectful terms lose their negative connotation in an intimate context. For example,

- (10) It. *scimmietta* "little monkey-(fem/sing)"
It. *topolino* "little mouse-(masc/sing)"
Fr. *souris* "mouse-(fem/sing)"
Fr. *chatte* "cat-(fem/sing)"

are used as affectionate terms between intimates (cf. the use of *dear* in English between intimates vs. strangers); this re-interpretation may be triggered or suggested, for instance, by the morphological marking on a given epithet, which may indicate small size and/or affection; e.g.:

- (11) Fr. *poulette* "small hen"
Fr. *nounours* "teddy bear"
It. *piccioncina* "little pidgeon-(fem/sing)"
It. *orsacchiotto* "teddy bear-(masc/sing)"

and/or by accompanying possessives, e.g.:

- (12) Fr. *ma chatte* "my cat-(fem/sing)"
Fr. *ma biche* "my dow".

For both French and Italian, most of the terms collected occur in familiar usage; however, the French words are also used in the slang register; this is true of some of the Italian terms too.

This means that native speakers may have an active or a passive knowledge or, occasionally, no knowledge at all of some of the terms that are mentioned. This also means that when used as slang, these metaphorical terms will be mostly used by men since slang belongs to men's world: "l'argot est la langue virile" (Guiraud 1986 [1967]; see also Yaguello 1978). The data have been summarised in Appendix I *Italian data* and Appendix II *French data*.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Symmetrical usage

Metaphorical animal terms for humans, often insulting or belittling, are found in both Italian and French. Some of them are reserved for describing women as objects of sexual desire, and they fit Hines's original findings, in that they lexically represent women as one of the following categories:

(i) small, tamed, and typically immature animals, i.e. pets; e.g.:

(13) Fr. *poulette* "small and young hen (term of endearment)"

It. *piccioncina* "pidgeon-(dim-fem/sing), little pidgeon (term of endearment)";

(ii) animals to be exploited, i.e. livestock, farm animals; e.g.:

(14) It. *pollastra* "pullet-(pej-fem/sing)"

Fr. *pouliche* "little horse-(fem/sing)";

and occasionally (iii) wild animals to be hunted, i.e. game; e.g.:

(15) Fr. *biche* "doe (term of endearment)".

Such terms instantiate some of the categories found in the first feminist analysis of animal metaphors carried out by Whaley and Antonelli (1983), who identified four categories of insults cross-mapping animals and female human beings, namely (i) pets (e.g. *sex-kitten*), (ii) pests (e.g. *bitch*), (iii) cattle (e.g. *cow*), and (iv) wild animals (e.g. *bunnies* and *foxes*).

Other metaphorical animal terms in French or Italian denote promiscuous women, often treated as prostitutes; e.g.:

(16) Fr. *guenon* "monkey-(fem/sing); ugly woman, prostitute"

It. *troia* "sow-(fem/sing)"

or women who can get what they want from men through their wily ways or because they have authority over them; e.g.:

(17) It. *gatta morta* “dead cat-(fem/sing)”.

Certain groups of animals constitute rich sources of metaphorical terms and seem to vary according to cultural values⁶. In French, birds are a particular productive domain for terms of disparagement, e.g.:

(18) Fr. *grue* “heron-(fem/sing); prostitute”,
and for terms of endearment, e.g.:

(19) Fr. *colombe* “dove”.

Names of animals are also available for men, but they are less numerous. They include terms for farm animals, e.g.:

(20) Fr. *taureau* “bull, virile man”
Fr. *étalon* “stud, virile man”
It. *gallo* “rooster-(masc/sing), lady killer”
It. *stallone* “stud-(masc/sing), virile man”,
terms for wild animals, e.g.:

terms for insects, e.g.:

(21) It. *calabrone* “bumble-bee-(masc/sing)”,
and terms for pets, e.g.:

(22) Fr. *matou* “tom-cat”
It. *pappagallo* “parrot-(masc/sing)”.

Most of these terms metaphorically portray the man in the active role of a pursuer of the female animal. The only exception, attested in Italian, is represented by the terms for game animals which are used to insult men when these are said to have been cheated upon; e.g.:

(23) It. *alce* “moose-(masc/sing)”
It. *cervo* “deer-(masc/sing)”; (see Appendix I).

The sets of animal terms used for women vs. men reveal the following semantic trends:

⁶ Research on choices of metaphors within a given language confirms that each culture defines its own social reality: The DESIRED WOMAN AS A BIRD metaphor is also very productive in Spanish according to Samper’s (1997) research. In the French language, metaphorical terms cross mapping crustaceans and sexuality are common, e.g.: *crevette* “shrimp, darling (term of endearment, typically for a child), female lover”; *langoustine* “small lobster, female partner, lover”; *pieuvre* “octopus, demanding mistress or kept woman”; *moule* “mussel, female genitals”. Such correspondences are not typical of Italian.

(I) terms for women which imply sexualisation (i.e. which represent women as objects of sexual desire) either (a) portray them as totally subordinate animals, e.g.:

(24) It. *pollastra* “pullet-(fem/sing)”

Fr. *chatte* “cat-(fem/sing)”

or (b) represent them as animals enjoying some power, usually over their male counterparts or at least over their lives, but carry a strong negative connotation; e.g.:

(25) It. *lucciola* “firefly-(fem/sing); prostitute”

Fr. *mante religieuse* “praying mantis”;

(II) Terms for men which imply sexualisation either (a) view men as “subjects” of desire, with no or little negative connotation attached to them); e.g.:

(26) Fr. *coq* “rooster” (the term may express awe but not contempt)

It. *toro* “bull; virile man” (the term does not signal promiscuity)

It. *gallo* “rooster; vain and macho man” (the term may express awe but not contempt)⁷

or (b) are negatively connoted when they imply sexually free behaviour of their female counterparts; e.g.:

(27) It. *stambecco* “rock goat (masc/sing); cuckold”.

This last example shows that when negative connotations are associated to an animal-based metaphor used to describe males, it is still the sexual behaviour of women that is at stake. Our data therefore hints at an asymmetrical usage in animal metaphors, that is a double polarisation of the words applied to women towards (a) sexualisation and (b) negative connotations. This characterisation of the terms in question gives rise to the same sexual and social behaviour being linguistically stigmatised for the female human being and rewarded for the male being (see the *gallina/poule* “hen” and *gallo/coq* “rooster” examples).

4.2. Asymmetrical usage

Animal terms for men and women are indeed characterised by asymmetric usage. First, words applying to women tend to identify their referents in sexual terms, unlike parallel words for

⁷ Samper’s (1997) extensive study on Latin American Spanish proverbs suggests that the metaphorical use of *gallina* “hen” and *gallo* “rooster” “sustains the polarities of man/woman; public/private; street/home; active/passive; dominant/submissive” (p. 348).

men, or alternatively, if they are both qualified for sexualisation, the former are negatively connoted; e.g.:

- (28) It. *pollastro* “gullible-(masc/sing)” vs.
It. *pollastra* “gullible; sex object-(fem/sing)”
- (29) It. *scozzonato* “(of a horse) tamed, trained; sexually expert-(past part-masc/sing)” vs.
It. *scozzonata* “(of a horse) tamed, trained; prostitute-(past part-fem/sing)”
- (30) It. *farfallone* “voluble; playboy-(aug-masc/sing)” vs.
It. *farfalla* “butterfly; unstable; prostitute-(fem/sing)”
- (31) It. *cane poliziotto* “(lit.) police dog, man good at locating and controlling a person” vs.
It. *cane poliziotto* (same term) “wife good at locating and controlling her husband”
- (32) Fr. *poulet* “chicken; police; police officer; little darling” vs.
Fr. *poulette* “chicken-(fem/sing), female partner (slang), little darling”.
- (33) Fr. *poulain* “young horse, disciple, pupil of a guru” vs.
Fr. *pouliche* “filly, attractive young woman, prostitute”.

Since animal terms applied to women are more likely to acquire sexual connotations and/or to be negatively connoted, it appears that more discriminating animal terms are available for women, that is such terms are more often used in an insulting or belittling fashion when women are the referents.

Second, both in French and in Italian, several of the terms for describing women as animals are, according to our sources, also terms for women’s genitals. Actually, that is their original meaning, from which an extension took place; e.g.:

- (34) It. *cavalla* “horse-(fem/sing)”
It. *capra* “goat-(fem/sing)”⁸
Fr. *chatte* “cat-(fem/sing)”
Fr. *minou* “kitty” (also terms of endearment)⁹.

This is less frequently true of the terms for men’s genitals; e.g.:

⁸ Other Italian examples are: *pecora* “sheep-(fem/sing)”, *farfalla* “butterfly-(fem/sing)”, *gatta* “cat-(fem/sing)”, *coniglio* “rabbit-(masc/sing)”, *passera* “hen sparrow-(fem/sing)”, *rondine* “swallow-(fem/sing)”.

⁹ On the other hand, a historical perspective can also question some data: the word *chat* “cat, pussy, female genital” developed its metaphorical meaning by association with its homophone *chas* “hole of a needle”, with which it was confused; it is from the latter that the metaphorical, sexual interpretation originates (Guiraud 1986 [1967]). Nevertheless, the reinterpreted *chat* must have appealed to speakers since (a) nobody would question the validity of the metaphor in synchrony and (b) the feminine noun *chatte* extended its meaning in the same way as well.

- (35) It. *gallo* “rooster-(masc/sing)”
It. *falcone* “hawk-(masc/sing)”.

That is, many such animal terms are available for both women’s and men’s genitals, but only rarely do the latter start to get used to metonymically refer to sexually available men: we do not find examples comparable to the English *prick* and *dickhead*, for instance, both used to mean both “penis (vulg.)” and “idiot (term of insult)”. What really sets off women from men linguistically in this area is the fact that by synecdoche they are much more frequently reduced to their sex, which, on top of that, is viewed as degrading because represented metaphorically through animal terms.

Third, even when both groups are ideologically perceived in a degrading fashion, a more dominant position and status is reserved for the males. Additional data from our sources, which we are not discussing here, suggests that this may refer to a broader phenomenon. Boggione (2000) and Guiraud (1986 [1967]) document how reference to the act of sex, genitals and sex partners may be metaphoricised in a variety of ways, by establishing links with other domains of experience, such as agriculture, war, sailing, cleaning, schooling, and cooking. Consistently, it appears that in all such metaphorical fields, the event and its participants are always presented in such a way that the male is an agent engaged in an active act, while the female is a patient, recipient, experiencer or marginal, submissive agent. Thus, for instance, in the metaphorical domain of agriculture, the man involved in sex is represented as the one who tills the land, while the woman engaged in sex is depicted as the land to be tilled or the plant or fruit growing after the tilling; e.g.:

- (36) It. *annaffiare* “to water (of a man)”
It. *innestare* “to graft (of a man)”
Fr. *labourer* “to till (of a man)”
Fr. *ensemencer* “to sow a field (of a man)”.

These examples reflect and reinforce the ideological vision of woman as passive.¹⁰

¹⁰ Comparable sexual analogies in Italian include the following: (a) the man teaches and the woman learns, e.g.: It. *scrittore* “writer (of a man)”, *scrittura* “writing (of a man)”, *apprendere* “to learn (of a woman)”; (b) the man cooks and the woman is the oven, e.g.: It. *informare il pane* “to put bread in an oven, to bake bread (of a man)”; *essere di buona cucina* “to have one’s kitchen good and ready (of a woman)”; (c) the man is a client and the woman is a hostess, e.g.: It. *bussare* “to knock (of a man)”, *albergare* “to lodge (of a woman)”; (d) the man makes a request, while the woman grants a favour, e.g.: It. *prendere soddisfazione* “to take one’s pleasure (of a man)”, *consentire alle richieste di qualcuno* “to agree, to meet someone’s requests (of a woman)”; *soddisfare la volonta’ di un uomo* “to satisfy a man’s will (of a woman)”; (e) the man buys or possesses a precious object, while the woman is the object, e.g.: It. *possedere* “to possess (of a man)”, *godere* “to enjoy (of a man)”, *rubare* “to steal (of a man)”.

These data seem to suggest that although the language system makes available to language users tools for talking about women and men in the same way, language usage tends to unfavourably depict women more often than men. Indeed, recent studies on business discourse (Koller 2002) indicate the possibility for women to be conceptualised as animals (more specifically, as wild animals) twice as often as men. In addition, our data suggest that the ideological significance of a metaphor can be better assessed when compared to and contrasted with metaphors used in complementary domains of experience; more generally, this may indicate a need not to dismiss the social and cultural history of the language under examination.

5. A broader interpretation

Words are shaped by history (McConnell-Ginet 2002:152) and metaphors are no exceptions. The inference we make on the basis of our data is that even when both women and men are ideologically perceived in a degrading fashion, a more dominant position and status is reserved for the latter. The history of the French language sustains the synchronic interpretation of the language data examined. The evolution of the adjective *coquet/coquette* is a case in point.

Originally the adjective *coquet* literally meant “petit coq” (i.e. “small rooster”). It was therefore used to describe the behaviour of men having several lovers; e.g.:

(37) *faire son petit coq* “to do one’s little rooster, to parade”

se comporter comme un coq dans la basse-cour “to behave as a rooster in a henhouse, to parade, to act as a macho”.

The usage of the term was gradually extended to include a female referent. Moreover, as the different editions of the *Académie française’s* dictionary attest, this feminisation was paralleled by a phenomenon of derogation. That is, the more derogatory the term became, i.e. a synonym for ‘vain’, the less often it was used for men. Nowadays, the adjective is more likely to be used to describe a female than a male human being, and the noun *coquette* only refers to women and is negatively connoted (Baider in press).

There are minor exceptions, though; for example when the analogy is established with the domains of hunting or fishing, terms for the vagina refer to the trap set to capture the animal, while terms for the penis indicate the animal to be caught; here too, though, the entity the female is associated with plays the role of an instrument, not an agent. For French, see the work by Nielsen (2002) and the expression *tirer un coup* “to shoot, to screw (a woman)”.

On the basis of our data, we would like to suggest an alternative, broader implication of Hines's findings, which reveals implication for social history. The metaphorical expressions studied may reveal not only the way society views women in particular, but more generally how a dominant social group may conceptualise – and thus talk to and about – another one, viewed as opponent, competitor or inferior. That is, metaphors may show not only sexism but more generally the belittling of the 'other': for any referent or addressee conceptualised in a derogatory and/or trivialising way in a given culture, there are likely to be lexicalised metaphors in the relevant language for expressing the motivating underlying demeaning and abusive ideology; thus similar metaphors might be available for other groups discriminated against or for individuals negatively viewed, independently of their sex. In support of this interpretation, we can mention terms used for two other groups that are discriminated against, but not on the basis of gender *per se*, namely the police for French and homosexuals for Italian.

Guiraud (1986 [1967]: 56) established that almost no word in French which refers to a horse, especially if the animal is old, could not also apply to a woman whether to qualify her physique, as in

- (38) Fr. *jument* "mare, tall and heavy woman"
Fr. *cheval* "horse, tall and heavy woman"
Fr. *haridelle* "old horse; thin and ugly woman"

or to judge her morals, as in

- (39) Fr. *canasson* "old horse, prostitute"
Fr. *carne* or *charogne* "carcass, bad horse, old prostitute (insult for both sexes)"
Fr. *pouliche* "filly, attractive young woman, prostitute".

At the same time, Guiraud (1986 [1967]: 58) noted a mapping between the horse source domain and the police force target domain, when these are talked about within the *milieu* (French for "gangster world"), as well as a cross-mapping between the domains of the police and women:

Il ne saurait donc faire aucun doute qu'il existe en argot un protosémantisme qui assimile le policier à un cheval [...] Sans doute comme la prostituée, le policier est une carne [...] le policier est une putain avec toutes les connotations que comporte en argot l'assimilation d'un homme à une femme ("There is no doubt that in slang there is a proto-semanticism which assimilates the policeman to a horse. The policeman is an old horse and so is the prostitute [...] the policeman is

a whore with all the connotations that are entailed in slang when a man is compared to a woman.”).

The worst insult to a man is then to be compared to a woman. Therefore the woman, being the sub-human in the great chain of being, has to be compared to an animal to be insulted¹¹.

Finally, the data reported in Boggione (2000) show that the same or very similar animal terms used to refer to male homosexuals, such as

(40) It. *agnellino* “little lamb-(masc/sing)”

It. *capretto* “little goat-(masc/sing)”

It. *asino* “donkey-(masc/sing)”

It. *lepre* “hare-(fem/sing)”

It. *tordo* “thrush-(masc/sing)”,

are also used also as insults to women, once appropriately marked for grammatical gender, e.g.:

It. *asina* “donkey-(fem/sing)”

It. *capra* “goat-(fem/sing)”

It. *pecora* “sheep-(fem/sing)”

It. *quaglia* “quail-(fem/sing)”

It. *gabbiana* “sea-gull-(fem/sing)”¹².

This suggests that people similarly conceived of as less than prototypically human, or least considered as ‘marginal’ within the framework of the mainstream values, may be talked about in similarly belittling ways.

6. Conclusions

According to Hintikka and Hintikka (1983) and Corbin (1987), two main ways of identifying objects across possible worlds are either by way of similarity (often by selecting stereotypical traits) or by taking into account the functional role of those entities. Given the above data for

¹¹ Guiraud’s (1986 [1967]) observations support Martin-Berthet’s (1981) comments about the French language, namely that the word *femme* “woman, spouse” and *filie* “girl, daughter” have become insults, i.e. synonymous with “prostitute”, not because of the shortening of the well-known expressions *femme de vie* “prostitute” and *filie de joie* “prostitute”, but because of their reference to a female human being.

¹² These terms are also very similar to the ones used to refer to the penis in Italian, e.g. *asino* “donkey-(masc/sing)”, *agnello* “lamb-(masc/sing)”, *capro* “goat-(masc/sing)” or *lepre* “hare-(fem/sing)”.

French and Italian, it appears that a number of lexicalised animal metaphors are available to represent the female human being as an *object* of desire or of contempt, likened to other unequal beings that people tend to think of existing for the satisfaction of their needs and/or pleasure.

In addition, since lexicalised metaphors are potentially cryptic – because they only mention the source domain, which should be enough to trigger the identification of the target domain (see Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s notion of ‘metaphor *in absentia*’; 1977: 154-155) – such animal-based metaphors require knowledge of the extra-linguistic context to be understood, and basically they make the terms being compared synonymic (i.e. they are directly referential, not predicative metaphors). The more frequently and easily the target domain is implied through the source domain, the more the intended referent is assimilated to the source domain; thus the more obvious and natural the connection to the language users, the more firmly established it becomes ideologically. To adequately assess the conceptual salience of such metaphorical terms, one should check how likely they are to trigger metaphorical interpretations both in isolation and in a number of syntactic contexts.

Moreover we observed that the same general pattern of semantic shift recurs in other (and not necessarily lexicalised) animal metaphorical expressions applying to people, which are thus worth considering. One can find clusters of terms or expressions mutually reinforcing a similar or common core underlying concept; consider the following bird-related metaphorical terms:

(41) It. *uccello* “bird, cock-(masc/sing)”

It. *ornitologa* “ornithologist-(fem/sing), woman expert in men”

It. *ornitologo* “ornithologist-(masc/sing), pederast”

It. *uccellatrice* “bird-(agentive-fem/sing), female seducer of men (lit. female who acts on a bird/penis)”

It. *falconiere* “falconer-(masc/sing); good seducer”

It. *passera* “hen sparrow-(fem/sing); pussy”

It. *cacciapassere* “hen sparrow hunter”

It. *beccare* “to peck, to pick; to get close to a person sexually (slang)”¹³.

¹³ Consider also *cavallina* “sexually attractive young woman” (lit. “little horse-(fem.)”), *correre la cavallina* “to ride the little mare; to have a lot of affairs with women”, and *cavalcatrice* ‘horse-rider-(fem.); woman who has a lot of affairs with men’. However, systematicity is not always easily found. For instance, in Italian, *pavone* “peacock” is not used like *gallo* “rooster” to mean “seducer” but the expression *fare la ruota* “to spread one’s tail” means, among other things, “to court”, which reinforces the general metaphorical paradigm; similarly, *bue*

Finally, we suggest that in order to better explore how human beings are conceptualised as objects and/or subjects of desire, it is important to explore metaphorical terms and expressions pertaining to complementary contexts of use and relevant to neighbouring semantic fields.

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“ox, bull” is not used in that way either (although it can be used as an insult totally unrelated to the domain of sex), but *arare col bue* means ‘to plough with the ox/bull; to court every woman’.

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Endnotes

Appendix I: Italian data

I. Animal terms for women connoted sexually

I. a Livestock, farm animals

coniglietta “rabbit-(dim-fem)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire; used to translate *Bunny Girl*)

coniglia “rabbit-(fem/sing); prolific”

pollastra “pullet-(aug/pej-fem/sing), young attractive woman” (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire; the derivational suffix *-astr-* typically indicates augmentation/pejoration)

pollastrella “pullet-(aug/pej-dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

ragazza coccodè “cluck girl-(fem/sing)” (from a TV programme with young women dressed like hens; term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

signora coccodè “Mrs Cluck” (from a TV programme with young women dressed like hens; the term represents the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

sgallettata “lively, bold-(fem/sing)”; (adjectival participle from the verb *sgalettare* “to become bold, to behave like a rooster”, originally from the noun *galletto* “rooster-(dim-masc/sing)”)

cicca (regional) “hen, prostitute”

cavallina “horse-(dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

poltra “filly-(fem/sing)”; (term the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

puledra “filly-(fem/sing)”; (term for the immature the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

puledrina “filly-(dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

giumenta “mare-(fem/sing), prostitute”

miccia (regional) “dunkey-(fem/sing), prostitute”

vacca “cow; prostitute”; (typical term for “cow” is *mucca*)

frisona “cow-(fem/sing), prostitute”

giovenca “heifer-(fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

troia “sow-(fem/sing), prostitute”

troione “sow-(aug-masc/sing); prostitute; lustful, big and ill-shaped woman”

scrofa “sow-(fem/sing)”; (typical term for “sow” is *scrofa*)

pecora “sheep-(fem/sing), prostitute”

I. b Pets

micia “kitty-(fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

micetta “kitty-(dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

gattina “cat-(dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

cagnetta “dog-(dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

piccioncina “pidgeon-(dim-fem/sing)”; (term for the immature animal representing the woman as desirable, i.e. as an object of sexual desire)

cagna “dog-(fem/sing); promiscuous woman; prostitute”

gatta “cat-(fem/sing); cunning, sly woman who knows how to get what she wants, even from men; prostitute; vagina”

I. c Insects

terms indicating fickleness

falena “moth-(fem/sing); sexually unstable woman”

farfalla “butterfly-(fem/sing); sexually unstable woman; prostitute; vagina”

lucciola “firefly-(fem/sing); prostitute”

I. d Game and wild animals

lupa “wolf-(fem/sing); prostitute”

zoccola “sewer rat-(fem/sing); prostitute”

pantegana “big rat-(fem/sing); prostitute”

gabbiana “sea gull-(fem/sing); prostitute”

quaglia “quail-(fem/sing); gullible person; plump and sexually easy woman”

I. e Other

terms originally referring to the female genitals and by extension used to refer to male homosexuals

capra “goat-(fem/sing)”; (also “sexually available woman”)

cavalla “horse-(fem/sing)”

coniglio “rabbit-(masc/sing)”

passera “sparrow-(fem/sing)”

pecora “sheep-(fem/sing)” (also “sexually available woman”)

rondine “swallow-(fem/sing)”

II. Animal terms for women not connoted sexually

II. a Livestock, farm animals

gallina “hen-(fem/sing); small-brained, stupid woman/girl”

oca “goose-(fem/sing); stupid woman/girl”

cavalla “horse-(fem/sing); big and ungraceful woman”

cavallona “horse-(aug-fem/sing); very big and clumsy woman”

ochetta “goose-(dim-fem/sing); stupid woman/girl” (despite the diminutive suffix, the term does not identify a “desirable woman/girl”)

tortorella “turtle dove-(dim-fem/sing); tender, simple, loving girl” (despite the diminutive suffix, the term does not identify a “desirable woman/girl”)

colombella “dove-(dim-fem/sing); tender, simple, loving girl” (despite the diminutive suffix, the term does not identify a “desirable woman/girl”)

exception: proverb *Gallina vecchia fa buon brodo* “[An] old hen makes good stock (lit.); She may be an old woman, but is still worth pursuing”; (although in isolation the term *gallina* has a derogatory cognitive meaning, it acquires the sexual connotation of desirability in the proverb)

II. b Pets

gatta morta “cat-(fem/sing) dead-(fem/sing); woman who feigns to be less active and alert than she is to get what she wants, especially from men”

cane poliziotto “dog-(masc/sing) police-(agent-masc/sing) (i.e. police dog); wife who watches husband’s behaviour”

II. c Insects

epithets denoting power and relatable to Hines’s notion of ‘woman as femme fatale’

ape regina “bee-(fem/sing) queen-(fem/sing) (i.e. queen bee); woman exerting power over men”

mantide religiosa “religious-(fem/sing) (i.e. praying) mantis; woman exerting power over men”

vedova nera “widow-(fem/sing) black-(fem/sing) (i.e. black widow)”

II. d Game and wild animals

civetta “owl-(fem/sing); coquette”

III. Animal terms for men considered sexually

III. a Livestock, farm animals

terms representing the man in the active role of the pursuer of the woman:

stallone “stallion-(masc/sing)”

cavallo da monta “horse-(masc/sing) at stud”

montone “stud-ram-(masc/sing)”

gallo “rooster-(masc/sing); womaniser”

galletto “rooster-(dim-masc/sing); womaniser”

gallaccio “rooster-(pej-masc/sing) (i.e. bad rooster); womaniser”

gallastro “rooster-(pej-masc/sing) (i.e. ugly rooster); womaniser”

gallerone “rooster-(aug-masc/sing); womaniser”

gallione “rooster-(aug-masc/sing); womaniser”

cane da tartufo “dog-(masc/sing) for (i.e. good at finding) truffle (i.e. truffle dog)”

cane da punta “pointer-(masc/sing); man with eyes fixed on woman to court as if she were game”

bracco “sleuth-(masc/sing); man courting women as if they were game”

derogatory terms:

coniglio “rabbit-(masc/sing); man unable to copulate for a long time”

porco and *maiale* “pig-(masc/sing); lustful man”

troione “sow-(aug-masc/sing) (i.e. big sow/pig); very lustful man”

becco “male goat-(masc/sing (i.e. male goat); cuckold”

III. b Pets

immature animals:

micio “kitty-(masc/sing); sweet and desirable man”; (contrasts with loanword *macho*)

piccioncino “pidgeon-(dim-masc/sing) (i.e. little pidgeon)”; (used as endearment term)

mature animals:

pappagallo “parrot-(masc/sing); insistent suitor”

III. c Insects

terms signalling persistence in courting:

calabrone “bumble-bee-(masc/sing); insistent suitor”

moscone “fly-(aug-masc/sing); insistent suitor”

III. d Game and wild animals

terms referring to animals with horns and representing men as cuckolds (the Italian expression *avere le corna* literally means “to have horns” but is used to mean “to be cheated upon, to be a cuckold”):

alce “moose-(masc/sing), cuckold”

cervo “deer-(masc/sing), cuckold”

stambecco “rock goat-(masc/sing), cuckold”

cornipede (a blend from *cornuto* “horn-(past part-masc/sing)” (i.e. with horns) + *bipede* “two-legged”), cuckold”

terms indicating lust and determination to seduce:

lupo “wolf-(masc/sing); sexually hungry”

lupo spelacchiato “wolf-(masc/sing) almost hairless-(masc/sing); still sexually hungry but no longer successful with women”

mandrillo “mandrill-(masc/sing), lustful”

fauno “faun-(masc/sing), lustful”

merlo “blackbird-(masc/sing); stupid; wooer”

falco “falcon-(masc/sing); good seducer”

cobra “cobra-(masc/sing); deceitful seducer”

exception: *civettone* “owl-(aug-masc/sing), coquettish”

IV. Animal terms for men not considered sexually

IV. a. Livestock

asino “donkey-(masc/sing); very stupid”

bue “ox/bull-(masc/sing), tactless” (but *forte come un bue/toro* “as strong as an ox/bull”)

V. Animal terms for male homosexuals

terms specific to homosexuals:

agnellino “lamb-(dim-masc/sing) (i.e. little lamb)”

capretto “goat-(dim-masc/sing) (i.e. little goat)”

asino “dunkey-(masc/sing)”

lepre “hare-(fem/sing)”

tordo “thrush-(masc/sing)”

terms comparable to those used for women (see section I above):

asina “dunkey-(fem/sing)”

capra “goat-(fem/sing)”

pecora “sheep-(fem/sing)”

quail “quail-(fem/sing)”

gabbiana “sea-gull-(fem/sing)”

terms originally referring to the male genitals and then by synecdoche extended to refer to male homosexuals (with no diminutive suffixes):

asino “dunkey-(masc/sing)”

agnello “lamb-(fem/sing)”

capro “goat-(masc/sing)”

lepre “hare-(fem/sing)”

Appendix II: French data

I. Animal terms for women considered as objects of sexual desire

I. a Livestock, farm animals

poule (de luxe) “hen, generic term for woman, prostitute, female partner”

poulette “small hen, generic term for woman, prostitute, female partner”

pouliche “young mare, prostitute”

I. b Pets

chatte “cat-(fem/sing); a woman who uses feminine behaviour and attributes to get what she wants”; also term of endearment

chienne “bitch; promiscuous woman; nasty woman (insult)”

I. c Birds

terms of endearment:

canari “canary”

colombe “dove”

tourterelle “turtledove-(fem/sing)”

alouette “lark”

caille “quail; also amorous person”

chouette “owl”

perdrix “partridge”

other:

grue “crane, prostitute (because of the long standing and waiting period for the customer), woman”

salope “(etymology: sale-huppe); unclean bird; promiscuous woman, general term of insult comparable to the term *bitch*”

I. d Game and wild animals

terms indicating sexual behaviour:

louve “wolf-(fem/sing); ideal mother; loose woman; aggressive woman” (hence *lupanar* “brothel”)

tigresse “tiger-(fem/sing), very jealous or aggressive woman or partner”

lionne “lioness, vigorous woman, jealous woman or partner”

guenon “monkey-(fem/sing), prostitute, ugly woman”

panthère “panther, attractive and slender man or woman”

souris “mouse-(fem/sing); shy woman, female partner”

endearment terms:

biche “doe, hind; kept woman”

bichette “little doe”

mon lapin “rabbit, my darling for both sexes”

other:

gazelle “gazelle, graceful woman, term of endearment”

I. e Crustaceans

pieuvre “octopus, a kept woman who spends the money of her lover”

crevette “shrimp-(fem/sing), female partner”; also term of endearment for a child

langouste “lobster-(fem/sing), female partner”

langoustine “crawfish-(dim-fem/sing) (i.e. small lobster), female partner”

Note: *moule* “mussel; vagina”

II. Animal terms for women not considered as objects of sexual desire (can be derogatory or abusive in other ways)

II. a Farm animals, livestock

canasson “horse, old prostitute”

carne “carcass, bad horse, old prostitute”; or term of insult for both sexes.

charogne “carcass, bad horse, old prostitute” or term of insult for both sexes.

truie “sow; fat and unclean woman, easy woman”

mère lapine “female rabbit; prolific woman”

oie “goose, stupid woman”

oie blanche “white goose, innocent woman as far as sex is concerned”

vache “cow, prostitute, nasty or fat person”

II. b Insects: to signal power or fickleness

terms signalling power or fickleness:

mante religieuse “praying mantis, female seen as a man eater”

papillon “butterfly; fickle woman or man”

III. Animal terms for men considered sexually

III. a Livestock, farm animals

terms representing the man in the active role of the pursuer of the woman

coq “rooster, macho man”

lapin “rabbit, don Juan, premature ejaculator in the expression: *baiser comme un lapin*” but

taureau “bull, virile man”

étalon “young horse, stud”

bouc “goat-(masc/sing), a man who is abnormally horny”

porc “pig-(masc/sing); lustful and unpleasant man”

faune “faun-(masc/sing); seducer”

cochon “pig-(masc/sing); lustful man”

III. b Insects

papillon “butterfly, fickle”

III. c Game

daim “young deer; young flirtatious man”

III. d Wild animals

panthère “panther, slim and attractive man”

IV. Terms originally referred to genitals of discriminated referent and then by synecdoche extended to refer to the whole person

animal terms for vagina:

chat “cat-(masc/sing)”

chatte “cat-(fem/sing)”

minou “kitty”