Gendered Metaphors in Proverbs. A study on Italian and French

Marina Bletsas, Karl-Franzens-Universität-Graz (marina.bletsas@uni-graz.at)

Abstract

In this contribution, I aim at reconstructing and categorizing the recurrent gendered metaphors for WOMAN in Italian and French proverbs against the backdrop of Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT). After focusing on the particular interplay of metaphors and the paremiological text genre, chosen as a means of gaining insight into diachronically long-standing cultural beliefs, I propose the use of a bottom-up method to address cultural conceptual metaphors about WOMAN. Finally, I address analogies and differences in the metaphorical patterns involved in the construction of gender in Italian and French proverbs.

Der Beitrag will in italienischen und französischen Sprichwörtern rekurrierende Metaphern für das Konzept FRAU vor dem Hintergrund der kognitiven Metapherntheorie analysieren. Die parämiologische Textsorte gilt als privilegierte Brille, um Einsichten in diachron langwährende kulturelle Überzeugungen zu gewinnen. Der Fokus wird zunächst auf das Verhältnis von Metapher und Sprichwort gelegt, bevor die Rekonstruktion und Kategorisierung kultureller konzeptueller Metaphern für Frauen *bottom-up* angegangen wird. Analogien und Unterschiede metaphorischer Muster, die in italienischen und französischen Sprichwörtern zur *gender*-Konstruktion beitragen, werden schließlich aus kontrastiver Perspektive beleuchtet.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the metaphorical conceptualization of the female gender in Italian and French proverbs. In other words, I ask what conceptual metaphors emerge from the linguistic material constituted by Italian and French proverbs on women, i.e. what source domain or domains are used to reason about women in the proverbs of these two Romance languages. The perspective is thus onomasiological at first, in that it takes the concept WOMAN as a starting point to look for the linguistic expressions suggesting a metaphorical construction of the concept. It then becomes semasiological, as we turn to modelling the abstract conceptual metaphors behind their linguistic vestments.

Drawing on Cognitive[1] Metaphor Theory (see Lakoff/Johnson ²2003 [1980]), I distinguish between metaphorical expressions, to be found on the linguistic surface, and conceptual metaphors, defined as the use of "inference patterns from one conceptual domain to reason about another conceptual domain" (Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 246). This linking between the two conceptual domains, source and target domain respectively, gives rise to metaphorical mappings, i.e. to systematic cross-domain correspondences (cf. Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 246) that permeate and inform our thoughts and speech.

As a cognitive instrument, metaphor is thus universal. This does not mean that any specific conceptual metaphor is necessarily universal. We can differentiate between primary metaphors, grounded in universal human experiences, and culturally specific metaphors which can be highly complex, drawing on primary metaphors and/or other culturally specific ones (cf. Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 257).[2] For instance, the cognitive metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH can be traced back to the bodily experience of the heat perceived when involved in the display of affection implied in being held (cf. Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 255). As opposed to such a metaphorical source, the conceptualization of the divine in terms of *father* is specific e.g. to the occidental patriarchal tradition, as testified by alternatives such as extant female conceptualizations of the divine in Sisterhood-of-Avalon-paganism. What does appear to be universal is the indispensability of metaphor in such an abstract domain as that of the divine: it is a concept, just like that of love or time – or gender –, which we can hardly speak about except through the use of metaphor. The specific metaphor we use, however, is culture-bound.

This means that metaphors are not, as the classical rhetorical view will have it, based on similarity of any factual kind. If this were the case, there would hardly be such a wide variety in the choice of source domain for one and the same target. Rather, metaphors are based "on cross-domain correlations in our experience, which give rise to […] *perceived* similarities between the two

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[1] It should be noted that *cognitive* is here used in a broad sense, referring to patterns of thought involving the body, emotion, cognition, actions and cultural background knowledge (cf. Schmitt 2017: 38).

[2] On the issue of universality vs. cultural specificity of metaphors, see esp. Kövecses (2005).

domains within the metaphors" (Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 245, my emphasis).[3] The conceptual metaphor itself, therefore, is not a factual entity to be discovered, but an abstract pattern gleaned from the linguistic expressions at hand; the fruit of a hermeneutic reconstruction (cf. Schmitt 2017: 89–94).[4]

This hermeneutic reconstruction is here to be applied to the conceptualization of WOMAN. Studies on gendered metaphors, i.e. metaphors generally attributed to a gender (cf. Hegstrom/McCarl-Nielsen 2002: 220) specifically focussing on women, are not new to cognitive linguistics. Variations of the conceptual metaphor WOMEN ARE FOOD have been studied for English (cf. Hines 1999b; Hegstrom/McCarl-Nielsen 2002; Kövecses 2006) and Spanish (cf. Gutiérrez-Rivas 2011). It has also been shown that women are conceptualized as things and as animals in English (cf. Nilsen 1996; Hines 1999a; Kövecses 2006; López Rodríguez 2009) and the animal metaphor is attested for French and Italian, too (cf. Baider/Gesuato 2003). Despite these findings, the subject is still oddly understudied, especially since the argument has been made that "gendered metaphorical expressions actually reproduce the patriarchal culture" (Montashery 2013: 107). With this in mind, I turn to proverbs, a text genre that feeds both off metaphoricity and historical replication and which has not, to my knowledge, been analysed from the perspective of gender construction, especially in the languages I focus on here.[5]

The cognitive metaphor approach, on the other hand, has already been applied to the study of proverbs – explicitly by Gibbs/Beitel (2003), who focus proverb understanding, and implicitly by Lakoff/Turner (1989). The latter embed proverb analysis in the broader frame of CMT, suggesting that proverb

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[3] This in turn depends on a philosophical premise of CMT which rejects the objectivist paradigm (see Lakoff 1987).

[4] This useful theoretical clarification is offered as a means of avoiding what Schmitt calls the scientism fallacy of CMT. In fact, (metaphorical) expressions used by Lakoff & Johnson in relation to conceptual metaphors, such as *discover*, are infelicitous in that they imply the finding of a truth in an objectivist sense. However, it is important to stress that the American authors themselves do not ascribe to such a *Weltanschauung*, as pointed out above (see footnote 2).

[5] Kerschen (1998) and Storm (1992) have authored reference works of American English and Japanese proverbs about women respectively. While their categorizations of the indexed proverbs relate to the findings of the present paper, there is much to be gained from applying the cognitive perspective.

metaphors are based, among other things, on the great-chain-of-being-system, i.e. the hierarchical order implicitly shared in Western societies that places humans at the top and natural physical things at the bottom (cf. Lakoff/ Turner 1989: 170–171). Despite incidentally mentioning internal categorizations of the human level of the system (cf. Lakoff/Turner 1989: 209), the elaboration of this chain of power strikingly misses a ring: WOMAN. Using the so-called generic masculine in reference to humans, Lakoff/Turner's account indeed fails to really focus on the place reserved to WOMAN in the chain by proverb metaphors, which is clearly lower than that attributed to MAN.[6] What is more, none of these studies focus on the relevance of the diachronic dimension in the metaphoricity of proverbs.

2. Metaphoricity of Proverbs and Diachronic Relevance

Paremiology offers only little help in addressing our questions. Over fifty definitions of *proverb* were counted by Mieder back in 1985, and there have been many other characterisations since.[7] The more recent ones highlight fixedness (Gibbs/Beitel 2003: 111–112; Mieder 2007; Harnisch 2003: 164; Hallik 2007: 35; Steyer 2012a: 311) and syntactic independence (Gibbs/Beitel 2003: 111–112; Harnisch 2003: 64; Steyer 2012a: 311), attributing to proverbs a generally shared deontic content with a directive force (Gibbs/Beitel 2003: 111–112; Harnisch 2003: 164; Mieder 2007) and/or an epistemic content (Gibbs/Beitel 2003: 111–112; Harnisch 2003: 164) with a descriptive, if not explanatory force in a given situation.[8] At the core of most paremiological definitions and characterizations, whether they be structural-semantic,

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[6]   In American English proverbs as well as in Romance ones, as even a cursory glance at Kerschen's collection (1998) easily shows.

[7]   While giving necessary and sufficient conditions for the definition of *proverb* has proven difficult, the evolution of the term at least can easily be retraced: starting out from the Latin *proverbium*, literally "fore-word", the term makes its way into modern European languages (Engl. *proverb*, Frz. *proverbe*, Ital. *proverbio*, Rus. *pogovoka*) thanks to Bible translations and especially via the Old French form *proverbe* (cf. Riedel 2014: 11).

[8]   Recognizing that no single constellation of these traits is necessary and sufficient in defining a proverb, one can side with Harnish (2003) and Gibbs/Beitel (2003), who instead characterize proverbs using the notion of *prototype*. This approach is useful for its flexibility, however their account highlights traits such as literarity and formal figures of speech typical of literary genres, which are arguably not the most central to defining proverbs *per se*.

functional-pragmatic or cognitive, there is an unfortunate lack of a focus on proverb metaphoricity. This is all the more conspicuous since the association of metaphor and proverb dates back at least to Aristotle (Rhet. III, 11, 1413a, 17), who understands proverbs as *meta-phors*, i.e. transfers of one species onto another. In relatively recent years, some scholars have contemplated proverb metaphoricity as only contingent (Röhrich 2000; Steyer 2012b: 7), albeit typical (Gibbs/Beitel 2003: 116; Lapucci 2006: XXVII). Even the cognitivist paremio-logist Honeck (1997) views metaphor as only one among many tropes occurring in proverbs; with his distinction between similes and metaphors, he reveals a quite traditional grasp of the concept. Seitel (1981) and Geary (2012) do take a more radical approach, but still remain within the boundaries of classical metaphor view.

Of course, from a cognitive linguistics perspective, it could be argued that it is almost redundant to state the metaphoricity of proverbs, given the omni-presence of metaphor in discourse. To put it in Gibbs/Beitel's words, pro-verbs' "communicative functions rest on the primacy of metaphor in the ways people ordinarily think" (2003: 152). Thus, we could simply take proverbs as a text genre – as any other text genre – to study conceptual metaphors. This might indeed be true. However, we should not fail to consider the specificity of the interaction between conceptual metaphor and proverb – thus, of the importance of studying the conceptual metaphors displayed by proverbs for a given target domain. For what is all but banal is the semantic crystallisation of the metaphors we can ferret out from this text genre – and the cultural insights this allows.

The cultural relevance of proverbs *per se* need hardly be argued. They are repositories of "attitudes or worldview (mentality) of various social classes at different periods" (Mieder 2007: 401), loaded as they are with cultural symbology (cf. Steyer 2012b: 8). But I believe their key role in identifying metaphors specific to a culture has not been stressed enough so far. In fact, the linguistic crystallisation of an established folk belief relying on a metaphor in the cognitive sense must draw on a diachronically recurrent metaphor, i.e. on a conceptual metaphor. In other words, if a metaphor can be obtained from a fixed text like that of a proverb, that is probably good *prima facie* evidence that it is well represented among a given linguistic and cultural community, and has probably dressed itself in a variety of linguistic garments in everyday

language. In this sense, the study of proverbs holds not only a general historic and social interest (cf. Bierbach 1995: 269) but is also of the utmost importance for the diachrony of a given concept. Even an author like Gibbs, who has worked extensively, from a cognitive-psychological perspective, on metaphors, and specifically on proverb metaphoricity (Gibbs/Beitel 2003), acknowledging as early as two decades ago the "culturally embodied nature of what is cognitive" (Gibbs 1999: 162), has hardly dealt with this point. I thus suggest viewing the proverbial text as a goldmine of conceptual metaphors ingrained in a specific discourse tradition, understood as the discourse regularities producing speech act patterns and text genres that are grounded in a historic dimension (cf. Koch 1997: 46). Proverbs, in other words, serve as a kind of funnel for what can be called *cultural conceptual metaphors* thanks to the metaphoricity of thought and language – and, thus, of the proverb itself – on the one hand, and to their diachronic crystallisation on the other hand (see Fig. 1).

Cultural Conceptual Metaphor
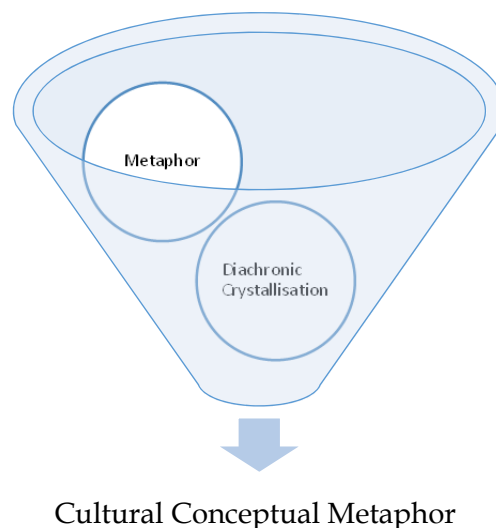
Fig. 1: Paremiological Funnel for Cultural Conceptual Metaphors

If this is the case, then, embracing a contrastive perspective in the linguistic study of proverb metaphors should prove particularly revealing and rewarding in at least two respects. The most obvious one is certainly the comparison of cultural conceptual metaphors. But there is also something else, perhaps something more, to be gained. By reconstructing and comparing the cultural conceptual metaphors used for a target in different languages, we can begin to trace the borders of their discourse tradition. For a discourse tradition

can coincide with, but is by no means bound to the extension of an idiom (cf. Koch 1997: 46).

3.   Studying Gendered Metaphors in Italian and French Proverbs

Hardly any other concept has been the object of such prolific proverb coining as WOMAN (cf. Lapucci 2006: 343).[9] There are 280 Italian proverbs on WOMAN in Lappucci's dictionary alone, which collects proverbs of common usage in Italian (cf. Lapucci 2006: XXV). Similarly, 168 French proverbs on WOMAN could be gleaned from multiple French paremiographic collections (Pineaux 1967; Dournon 1986; Montreynaud et al. 2002). These will be the subject of my analysis in what follows. Specifically, I analyse the metaphors whose target domain is that of WOMAN, i.e. sayings that describe or comment on women or instruct (men) about the norm of conduct around women.[10]

Having established the target domain WOMAN and the proverb corpus, the core of the work lies in the systematic analysis of a group of examples. In Schmitt's refined bottom-up methodology for the analysis of conceptual metaphor (cf. 2017: 456–528),[11] this first involves the identification of

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[9]   According to Contini (1960: 521), the anonymous paremiographic work *Proverbia quae dicuntur super natura feminarum* is the first misogynistic text in Vulgar Italian, in turn inspired by a French one. Proverb production on women in these languages must then be dated back to well before the 12th century. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that "there is not a similar set of sayings about men, since everything is observed from their point of view" (Kerschen 1998: 6).

[10]   Any proverb about women employing a female entity as a source domain or displaying only conceptual metaphors unrelated to women is not taken into consideration.

[11]   Developed in and for social sciences, Schmitt's qualitative metaphor analysis is, to my knowledge, the one attempt to provide a systematic, repeatable bottom-up method based on CMT. Not only does this qualitative metaphor analysis make up for CMT's lack of explicit method, but it also provides the basis for incrementing bottom-up studies, which are still not all too common in the literature. CMT, in fact, was not born from the empirical study of natural language corpora, but from introspection and the linguist's and speaker's intuition. The operationalization of Schmitt's method comprises the following steps relevant for a linguistic study: identification of target domain, unsystematic, broad-based collection of background metaphors and self-analysis, sampling (i.e. corpus definition), systematic analysis of a sub-group, heuristic interpretation (see Schmitt 2017: 458–518). A word should perhaps be spent on the second, less obvious step, the collection of background metaphors. Schmitt explains: „Um die kulturell übliche Metaphorisierung eines Themas zu erfassen, wird ein Horizont von möglichen Metaphernfeldern zu den Zielbereichen aus heterogenen Materialien gesammelt" (2017: 457). This in principle poses a circularity problem: if the

metaphorical expressions, including what classical rhetoric views as similes, through deconstructive segmentation of the texts. Secondly, the reconstruction of conceptual metaphors, i.e. the synthesis of collective metaphorical models must be carried out. These two sub-steps are clearly the crucial ones from a linguistic point of view. Accordingly, we can find some criteria for how this analysis should be carried out in the linguistic literature, too. For instance, Hines (cf. 1999b: 149), who analyses WOMEN AS DESSERT in the CMT frame, asks that a metaphorical expression have a nonmetaphorical, referential sense, to be considered central to a conceptual metaphor. However, the need for a metaphorical expression to be referential seems altogether questionable. If I say *Women have nine lives*, I am neither denoting cats nor am I availing myself of the cat concept to directly designate another extralinguistic entity; but there still is an underlying conceptual metaphor that allows us to characterise WOMAN by projecting a trait attributed to cats onto them. According to Lakoff/Johnson (cf. 2003 [1980]: 36–37) the centrality of the referential function is, in fact, the very thing that distinguishes metonymy from metaphor.[12]

The reconstruction of conceptual metaphors, comprising decisions about the broadness of conceptual metaphor formulation, is a heuristic process that resists precise operationalization – if we are not to entirely clip the wings of the humanities. The material at hand, filtered through the analyst's eyes, is intended to lead to a meaningful categorisation and formulation of the proverb metaphors. What seems to be shared and accepted in the literature is that a claim that something is a conceptual metaphor ought to be grounded on

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ambition of a high degree of method controlling is upheld for this step, the research risks to be stranded in a never ending, as well as impossible, game. Anything else, i.e. anything realistic, is of course inaccurate. The qualification of 'unsystematic' likely accounts for this necessary methodological compromise without renouncing the revenue offered by embedding the focused corpus in a broader setting, honouring the intertextual and cultural web in which it is bound. Nonetheless, it is utopian to carry out this step for each and every single paper on a target domain. The very intertextuality it entails and on which it builds, however, makes it possible to equate such reconstruction of a comparative background with a reference to the extant state of the art. At the same time, each further study can and should be conceived as a tile in broadening the comparative base of metaphors for a given concept for further analyses. This is all the more true of the present paper on gendered metaphors in proverbs, for the diachronic nature of the genre I have already dwelled upon.

[12] They both share the function of enabling understanding, but metonymy has a primary referential function, which metaphor does not necessarily share.

recurrent metaphorical expressions. Given that proverbs occur multiply by definition, this hardly poses an issue for our present purposes. Still, I shall focus the exposition on the metaphors more represented in proverbs. I will also assess the similarities and differences between the two set of proverbs – corresponding to Schmitt's heuristic interpretation step.

4.   Metaphorical Patterns about WOMAN in Italian and French Proverbs

Though the distribution of metaphoric expressions is different in Italian and French proverbs, the most common ones in both languages allow the formulation of two superordinate conceptual metaphors: WOMAN ARE SUPERHUMAN and WOMAN ARE PROPERTY, with a few further subcategories. The unidirectionality and metaphoricity of these mappings is given by the fact that "one domain of knowledge is used to structure another, but not the reverse" (cf. Gibbs/Beitel 2003: 116). Even when the traits selected from the source domain are themselves the result of metaphorical personification, they are not drawn from a gendered source like the target domain they are used to structure. Before taking a closer look at them, a few lines should be spent on the linguistic means employed to instantiate these metaphors.

The correspondences between the source domains and the target domain of WOMAN that make out the conceptual metaphors are established by associating the latter with a hyponym of the source domain. It is perhaps the popular origin of the text genre that accounts for the simplicity of the way this cognitive association is carried out. My findings in fact contradict Geary's observation (2012: 194) according to which "proverbs are all source and no target", as the linking mostly takes place rather explicitly by direct identification of two noun phrases via copula (1)–(2) or through the meta-phoric markers *come* and *comme*, i.e. the preposition introducing the second comparison element in an equality comparative (3)–(4). At times, the identification is aided by parallelism, which sheds light on (perceived) analogies between concepts or in elliptic predications where the copula or the prepositional marker are omitted, but can easily be added (5)–(7).

(1)   La donna *è* l'angelo della casa.
(2)   Femmes *sont* à l'église saintes, ès rues anges, à la maison diablesses.

    (3)   La donna cambia *come* la luna.
    (4)   Les femmes sont *comme* les omelettes, elles ne sont jamais assez battues.
    (5)   Donna iraconda [*è un*] mare senza sponda.
    (6)   Foi de femme [*est*] plume sur l'eau.
    (7)   Belle femme [*est*] mauvaise tête [*comme*] bonne mule [*est*] mauvaise bête.

In (4) the trait perceived as common of the two associated domains is made explicit: women, just as omelette eggs, need a good beating according to popular wisdom. This is an extremely common strategy in proverbs, often used when source and target domain are not explicitly equated, but rather associated through accumulation. This is achieved linguistically either through enumeration of phrases (9, 11) or through a single phrasal pair forming a dual concept (8, 10). Taking the entity paired with WOMAN as metonymically standing for the quality it is considered to hold, the pair can really be treated as a hendiadys, which amounts to recognising the conceptual metaphor at play, with the source acting as a qualifier of the target (e.g. *donne bestiali* 'beastly women' instead of *donne e cavalli* 'women and horses'). What follows can either be the predication of a trait perceived as common of the two domains or the enunciation of the norm of conduct perceived as advisable with both these entities, presupposing a trait perceived as common, which is to be inferred, e.g. imperfection (8) or unreliability (9–11).

    (8)   Des femmes et des chevaux il n'y en a point sans défauts.
    (9)   Temps, ciel pommelé *et* femme fardée *ne sont pas de longue durée.*
    (10) Il tempo e le donne hanno sempre fatto come gli pare.
    (11) Donna, vento *e* ventura *presto si mutano.*

A common way of creating the association between target and source domain, especially in Italian proverbs, is making the target the winner of an explicit or implicit competitive comparison. This entails that WOMAN not only shares the qualities of the entity with which she is set in a competitive relation but also holds them in a particularly strong way. The hyperbole thus brings about an identification. This pattern is most often displayed associating WOMAN with DEVIL, with the apparent rivalry between the two abstract entities being conveyed by morphosyntactic or lexical comparative.

    (12) Le donne [la *donna*] ne sanno [ne sa] una *più del diavolo.*
    (13) La donna piccola è *più furba di* due diavoli.
    (14) La donna *la fece anche al* Diavolo.

(15) La donna, per piccola che sia, *vince* il diavolo per furberia.

(16) Femme sait un art *avant* le Diable.

Even when there is no clear identification of two referred elements, since an opposition between the two is established, the mere comparison implied by the contrast suggests that the two elements must be of the same kind. The following proverb, e.g., maintains that time has a better effect on wine than women:

(17) Vin qui vieillit s'*améliore*, femme vieille *devient revêche.*

At times, it is merely the syntactic and semantic parallelism of the action to be performed upon the two elements compared that leads to equating them. Below, the ability to purchase is to cattle and edibles as choosing is to women (18) and both can be made (19):

(18) Chi *sa comprare* buoi e poponi *sa scegliersi* anche una donna.

(19) Cheval *fait* et femme *à faire.*

The identification is achieved to a great extent syntactically in the following case, where *quando* has the sense of *se* in a conditional clause (*realis*):[13]

(20) Quando la *donna* vuole il *diavolo* l'aiuta.

The coincidence of will and action expressed here suggests namely a causal correlation as in the simultaneity of deciding to perform a gesture and carrying it out, and thus leads to cognitively associating the sources of the will and of the action.

More rarely, WOMAN is equated to (a hyponym of) the source domain through the projection of an attribute pertaining to the source:

(21) Le donne *hanno* il cervello *di gallina.*

This makes the metaphor slightly more implicit. The utmost degree of implicitness is however achieved in few French proverbs, such as:

(22) Plus *le* bouc est bourru, plus *la* chèvre le lèche.

(23) Le *ménage* va mal quand *la* poule chante plus haut que *le* coq.

Here, the reference of the proverb to people, both part of common cultural knowledge about the usage of the specific proverbs and a general

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[13] The same simultaneity is conveyed if we understand *quando* as an independent relative pronoun, paraphrasable as *nel momento in cui.*

characteristic of the genre (cf. Lakoff/Turner 1989: 166), is key in decoding the metaphor. In the case of (23), *ménage* provides at least a hint to human society, whereas in the case of (22), the correspondence of animal sex and human gender necessary to understand which behavior is expected of WOMAN is to be derived from the general human reference of proverbs.

4.1 WOMAN IS SUPERHUMAN

The first conceptual metaphor that can be reconstructed through analysis of the material at hand is WOMAN IS SUPERHUMAN. From late Latin *superhumanus*, 'above/beyond + human', the abstract concept of the source can be derived by the orientational metaphors HAVING CONTROL OR FORCE/HIGH STATUS/GOOD IS UP (see Lakoff/Johnson 2003 [1980]: 15–16). The superhuman WOMAN as can further be divided into SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES and NATURAL FORCES.

4.1.1 WOMAN IS A SUPERNATURAL ENTITY

A plethora of proverbs, especially Italian ones, can be ascribed to the conceptual metaphor woman is a SUPERNATURAL ENTITY,[14] with either positive or negative connotations. Positively, they are mostly equated to angels (24–25; 27, 2), but even to the epitome of the divine (26; 28–29). By highlighting the privileged relationship of women with the divine, which makes the will of the two entities coincide, an equivalence is established between the two by transitivity relation in (26) and (28). Example (29) has the same meaning, but the divine source domain is coded by the metonymic use of *ciel*, held to be God's residence (cf. Larousse, s.v. *ciel*), as well as by the use of the idiomatic expression *être écrit (dans le ciel)* signifying God's will.

(24) La donna è *l'angelo* della casa.
(25) Le donne son sante in chiesa, *angele* in casa e gazze alla porta.
(26) Quel che donna vuole, *Dio* lo vuole.
(27) Femmes sont *anges* à l'église, diables en la maison et singes au lit.

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[14] Similar proverbs can be found, partly for having wandered from Italian or French, in American English, too: *Better the devil's than a woman's slave*; *What woman wills God wills* (French); *When a woman reigns the devil governs* (Italian); *When the wife rules the house, the devil is man-servant*; *Woman rules man, but de debil [devil] rules her* (cf. Kerschen 1998: 112–113).

(28) Femmes sont à l'église saintes, ès rues *anges*, à la maison diablesses.

(29) Ce que femme veut, *Dieu* le veut.

(30) Ce que veut une femme est écrit dans le *ciel*.

While the parallelism and the coreference of God's and woman's will in (26), (28), and (29) leads quite straightforwardly to a characterization of WOMAN through the divine attribute of omnipotence, it is more frequent that such an attribution is not realized through explicit mention of God. The divine nature of the trait, then, can be inferred on the grounds of common cultural knowledge and religious beliefs, as in examples (30) and (31), stating woman's ability to influence the weather or, in fact, anything at all:

(31) Quando una donna vuole, *fa piovere e nevicare.*

(32) Se la donna vuole, *tutto puole.*

This slight implicitness does, however, leave room for less favourable interpretations, too – a not so unlikely possibility, as attested by the fact that at least as many French and most Italian proverbs in the category WOMAN IS A SUPERNATURAL ENTITY are negatively connoted. In fact, they explicitly relate WOMAN to DEVIL – another in turn metaphorically shaped entity from the religious sphere. The association can take place e.g. by direct identification through a straightforward predication as in (32), (27), and (2) or by attribution to woman of even higher powers than the devil's (37, 16) – i.e. by means of characterizing woman or her activities as devilish.

(33) La *donna* è il *diavolo* della casa.

(34) Quando la *donna* vuole il *diavolo* l'aiuta.

(35) Quando la *donna* grida il *diavolo* scodinzola.

(36) Delle gambe delle *donne* si fa le corna il *Diavolo.*

(37) *Donna* oziosa esca del *diavolo.*

(38) Le donne [la *donna*] ne sanno [ne sa] una *più del diavolo.*

(39) Quando una *donna* vuole *neanche il diavolo* ce la fa.

(40) Femmes sont anges à l'église, *diables* en la maison et singes au lit.

(2) Femmes sont à l'église saintes, ès rues anges, à la maison *diablesses.*

(16) Femme sait un art avant le *Diable.*

These proverbs often suggest an instrumental relationship between WOMAN and DEVIL: in (20), it is suggested that the woman can avail herself of the devil to accomplish her will, while (33), (34), and (35) reverse the relation, at times

metonymically reducing woman e.g. to her emotivity (33) or to a body part – the legs in (34) – serving as an instrument of temptation of the devil.

The supernatural entities that make up the first subcategory of the source domain WOMAN IS SUPERHUMAN, drawn from the religious sphere and rooted in the tradition of book religions, have in common that they are at least as abstract as the target domain. This means they in turn originate in the metaphorical shaping of abstract concepts in terms of more concrete ones, as their etymology gives away, allowing a glance behind the curtains of lexicalisation. The Greek *ánghelos* 'messagger' at the origin of ecclesiastical Latin *angĕlu*(m), the Greek *diabállein* 'to slander', from *dia* 'across' + *ballein* 'to throw' at the origin of Latin *diabŏlu(m)* and the Indo-European root meaning 'luminous' at the origin of Latin *dēu(m)* (cf. Garzanti 2013; OED) give a sense of just how concrete and common the experiences underwriting religious concepts are.

4.1.2 WOMAN IS A NATURAL FORCE

This typical concreteness of the source domain is apparently more evident in the second most frequent superhuman-metaphor in both Italian and French proverbs, WOMAN IS A NATURAL FORCE, where the hyponyms associated with the target domain are elements of nature such as the weather (41, 10; 9, 47), the wind (11; 47, 51), the moon (42; 47, 48), the sea (43, 5; 49–51), or fire (43, 46; 51).

> (41) Fa prima il *tempo* a cambiare che la *donna* a vestirsi.
> (10) *Il tempo e le donne* hanno sempre fatto come gli pare.
> (42) *Donna e luna* oggi serena e domani bruna.
> (11) *Donna, vento* e ventura presto si mutano.
> (43) La *donna*, il *fuoco* e il *mare* fanno l'uomo pericolare.
> (5) *Donna* iraconda, *mare* senza sponda.
> (44) *Donne e fuoco* stuzzicali ogni poco.
> (9) *Temps, ciel pommelé* et *femme fardée* ne sont pas de longue durée.
> (45) *Temps* et *vent* et *femme* et *fortune* changent autant comme la *lune*.
> (46) *Comme* la *lune* est *variable* pensée de *femme* est *variable*.
> (47) Si traîtresse que soit la *mer*, plus traîtresses les *femmes*.
> (48) De la *mer* naît le sel et de la *femme* le mal.
> (49) *Femme, feu, messe, vent* et *mer* font cinq maux de grand amer.

These elements have all been considered of paramount importance for the very subsistence of the human race, since the livelihood of entire peoples depend, and depended even more in archaic societies, on them. So much are humans at their mercy, that they have all been deified via personification, alias metaphor. Aeolos, Selene/Artemis,[15] Efestos, Helios, Poseidon are only the Greek names of some of the deities constructed to grasp these forces of nature. On closer consideration, then, the concreteness of this source domain might not be quite as immediate as our contemporary worldview, with its different mythologies, might suggest. The traits it maps unto the concept of WOMAN, i.e. unpredictability, uncontrollability and danger, are not only perceived as true of physical nature, but once again of divine nature. *Fuoco*, for instance, counts among its meanings, metonymically crystallised, "causa di danni, di rovine" (Battaglia, s.v. *fuoco*) and can stand for the divine majesty and wrath, while *mare* can signify "situazione difficile, pericolosa" (Battaglia, s.v. *mare*) and is used metaphorically by Dante (*Par.*, III, 86) for the divine: "Ell'è quel *mare* al qual tutto si move".[16]

4.2 WOMAN IS PROPERTY[17]

The second group of cultural conceptual metaphors can be led back to the general metaphor WOMAN IS PROPERTY. This hyper-metaphor is achieved by means of hypo-metaphors that associate women with both animate and inanimate entities on which it is legally possible to exercise property, i.e. a "right to the possession, use, or disposal of something" (OED).

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[15] Besides being adored as Selene, Artemis, and Ecate in Greece and, starting with king Titus Tatius, in Rome, where she was later identified with Diana and Lucina, *luna* plays a metaphorical role in medieval symbology, where it is viewed as *astro dell'Amore*. Personifications in Italian literature are displayed in Petrarca, Tassoni, Foscolo, Leopardi, Ungaretti etc. (cf. Battaglia, s.v. *luna*).

[16] Interestingly, the feminine *luna* has not come to maintain its divine metaphoricity in Christian times, but appears to have assumed the meaning of "Carattere lunatico, balzano, stravagante; condizione di alterazione mentale o di stravaganza periodica" (Battaglia, s.v. *luna*) metonymically, given that the moon was considered to be the cause of such mutable and altered states.

[17] In Kerschen's (1998: 67–73) collection of American proverbs, the ones subsumed under the property rubric, such as *Arms, women and books should be looked at daily* or *Gold, women, and linen should be chosen by daylight* are the most numerous, with only *Women and hens are lost by gadding* attested as of Italian origin and none of French background.

4.2.1 WOMAN IS A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL

The animal metaphor draws on a great variety of domesticated animals. Most domesticated animals called upon are LIVESTOCK, i.e. "farm animals regarded as an asset" (OED): horses (52–55; 65, 66, 8), donkeys (56, 57) and mules (68); hens (21, 59, 60; 70–72, 23) and geese (61, 62); goats (57–58; 22, 67–69), oxen (18, 63), and even generic beasts in the restricted sense, already present in Latin (Robert, s.v. *bête*), of farm animal (64; 68).

(50) *Donna* e *cavallo*: nulla di migliore e nulla di peggiore.
(51) Chi cerca *donne* e *caval* senza difetto va sempre a piedi e sta solo nel letto.
(52) *Moglie* e *ronzino* pigliali dal vicino.
(53) *Cavallo* e *signora* prendili nel villaggio.
(54) *Donne e asini* tirano sempre al peggio.
(55) *Donne, asini* e *capre* vanno sempre dove c'è più pericolo.
(56) *Donne* e *capre* vogliono la corda lunga.
(21) Le *donne* hanno il cervello di *gallina.*
(57) *Donne* e *galline* per troppo andar si perdono.
(58) Malattia di *donna* e zoppicare di *gallina* durano poco.
(59) Dove son *femmine* e *oche* parole non son poche.
(60) *Donna* vana mezza *oca* e mezza puttana.
(18) Chi sa comprare *buoi* e poponi sa scegliersi anche *una donna.*
(61) *Donne* e *buoi* dei paesi tuoi.
(62) Una buona *donna* è sempre una cattiva *bestia.*
(63) Abreuver son *cheval* à tous gués, mener sa *femme* à tous festins, de son *cheval* on fait une rosse et de sa *femme* une catin.
(64) Il n'y a *femme*, *cheval* ni *vache* qui ridait toujours quelque tache.
(8) Des *femmes* et des *chevaux* il n'y en a point sans *défauts.*
(22) Plus le bouc est bourru, plus la *chèvre* le lèche.
(65) Une *femme*, une *chèvre* et un *pis* (puits) c'est pour gâter tout.
(66) Une bonne *femme*, une bonne *mule* et une bonne *chèvre* sont trois méchantes *bêtes.*
(67) Une *femme*, une *chèvre* et un *puits*, c'est pour gâter tout un pays.
(68) *Femme* qui parle comme homme, et *géline* qui chante comme coq *ne sont bonnes* à tenir.
(69) Les *filles* et les *poules* se perdent de trop courir.
(70) *Fille* qui trotte et *géline* qui vole de légier sont adirées.
(23) Le ménage va mal quand la *poule* chante plus haut que le coq.

Animals are themselves notoriously targets of metaphorical mappings consolidated in language use. For *bue* 'ox', for instance, the metaphorical meaning of

"Persona di mente ottusa; stolido, goffo; ignorante" is attested, and the traits *mansueto* 'tame' and *placido* 'placid' have been crystallised as typical attributes thanks to poets Marino and Parini (cf. Battaglia, s.v. *bue*). *Asino* 'donkey' is reported to mean, metaphorically, "Persona grossolana, zotica, villana; testarda, ignorante" (Battaglia, s.v. *asino*), while the idiom *farsi asina* is reported to mean "to prostitute oneself". Even for *cavallo*, which holds also positive connotations,[18] Battaglia reports less than flatteringly: "Cervello, intelletto da cavallo: intelligenza piuttosto ottusa, poco acuta".

The circle closes when these human traits attributed to animals are led back to humans, here to women, through the metaphors displayed in the proverbs. It is also noteworthy that many of these metaphoric expressions are attested in literature as well, if not consolidated by lexicography with a specific reference to women: Bencivenni uses the horse metaphor for women;[19] *cavalla*, "femmina del cavallo", which has its own lemma in Battaglia, is attested in the expression *salir la cavalla* meaning "congiungersi carnalmente con una donna"; *capra* is used by Brancati in reference to a woman.[20]

Still in the animal realm, but beyond livestock, we often find animal metaphors involving pets –almost exclusively cats (73–79), rarely dogs (80):

(71) Donne e *gatti* amano la casa.
(72) Donna e *gatto* chi non li conosce cari li paga.
(73) Le donne hanno *sette spiriti in corpo*.
(74) Le donne sono come i *gatti: hanno sette vite.*
(75) Donne, mosche e *gatti si preparano con comodo.*
(76) La donna gabbò il Demonio e il *gatto* gabbò la donna.
(77) La femme *tombe sept fois et toujours se relève.*
(78) Donne l'os au *chien*, le mensonge à la femme.

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[18] When Tasso (1837: 68), in the dialogue *Il conte ovvero dell'impresa*, contraposes the warrior-horse and the servant-ox in his *Dialoghi*, we can safely assume that the former is considered a more noble creature: "La natura del cavallo, come sapete, è guerriera, ed egli è segno della Guerra. […] Però, dipinti e scolpiti in varii modi, sono immagini convenientissime d'animo guerriero, non meno che il bue sia di ferocità insieme con la soggezione."

[19] "Appresso elli [Santo Paulo] insegna, ch'elle siano d'onesto e semplice riguardo […], e non […] come sono le *folli femine*, che vanno col collo isteso e a capo erto […], e riguardano a traverso come cavallo di pregio" (Bencivenni 1842: 196).

[20] "La ragazza abbassò la testa, guardando storta come una capra" (Brancati 1949: 10).

Metaphorically, the term *gatto* signifies, with a negative connotation: "Persona astuta, sorniona, dissimulatrice, maligna e perversa (o anche avida e rapace)" (Battaglia, s.v. *gatto*) – a characterization first appearing in ancient Greek fables (cf. Grimm 2014: 37–58). The female form *gatta* is identified *tout court* with women: "volendone indicare i sentimenti piuttosto fieri, crudeli, selvatici; oppure l'indole sfuggente; anche i modi morbidi, teneri, il contegno amoroso, voglioso" (Battaglia, s.v. *gatta*).[21]

The concept of pet, of course, is relatively recent in its modern expansion, having to await the rise of the bourgeoisie to enter common use.[22] Before advancing to family members, the animals in question were prototypically working animals almost as much as livestock. This is especially the case in the farm life reflected in the proverbs, with dogs employed as guardians and cats keeping diseases at bay (cf. Grimm 2014: 37–58). Hence my suggestion to gather both sets of animals under the rubric DOMESTICATED ANIMALS. Cats, in fact, are held to have originated in a "sottospecie del gatto selvatico" domesticated in ancient Egypt[23] (Battaglia, s.v. *gatto*) and all animal metaphors occur with animals key to agricultural life and to securing human lives and livelihoods.

4.1.2 WOMAN IS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

Unsurprisingly, then, the same agricultural world can be credited with metaphorical expressions involving on the one hand WOMAN and on the other hand AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE. The literature already accounts for the metaphor WOMAN ARE FOOD, i.e. a "nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink or that plants absorb in order to maintain life and

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[21] It can thus be noted that, of all the farm animal employed to conceptualise WOMAN in our proverbs, the ones for which a feminine form is available next to the masculine, *cavalla* 'female horse' and *gatta* 'female cat', have – in the female – sexual connotations and can carry a trait of wilderness despite the occurred domestication of the species they belong to.

[22] And, presumably, its emulation of aristocratic habits, as dogs kept for pleasure, a trend started by the Romans, were already in European aristocracy in the 16th century (cf. Grimm 2014: 37–58), when the English term *pet* begins to refer to them (cf. OED).

[23] The godlike status the cat had here would briefly spread to Greece along with the animal and the influence of Egyptian cult, as the Egyptian cat god Bastes was associated with Artemis (cf. Battaglia, s.v. *gatto*).

growth" (OED). Some of the Italian proverbs studied also reflect this metaphor, most notably mapping a typically divisible fruit like citrus fruits (85) or melon (86) onto the heart of woman, drawing on a double metonymy, with a body part standing for both the person and her feelings (85–87), and alluding to a lack of fidelity.

(79) Asini, **donne** e **noci** voglion le mani atroci.
(80) Le **donne** e le **sardine** sono buone piccoline.
(81) **Donna** magra **carne** dura.
(82) **Donne** e **bistecche**, più si battono e più diventano tenere.
(83) Il **cuore delle donne** è fatto a **limoncello**: uno spicchio a questo e a quello e l'amore se ne va.
(84) Il **cuore delle donne** è fatto a **melone**: a chi ne va uno spicchio, a chi un boccone.
(85) Il **cuore della donna** è fatto **a spicchi.**

But when it comes to food metaphors, it is the French proverbs that attest the greatest frequency and variety, ranging from real foods such as bread (89), soup (90), melon (91), pears (92) salad (93), egg variations such as *œufs* and *omelettes* (94, 4) or *salade* to fictional foods as in *crème de singe* 'monkey's cream' et de *fromage de renard* 'fox's cheese' (88), or even hust hinting at food through related adjectives and verbs, e.g. *aigre* 'sour', *douce* 'sweet', *saler* 'to salt' (95–96).

(86) Le cerveau de la femme est fait de **crème** de singe et de **fromage** de renard.
(87) Jeune femmes, **pain** tendre et bots vert mettent la maison au désert.
(88) Vieille **viande** fait bonne **soupe.**
(89) Femme et **melon** à peine les connaît-on.
(90) **Poires** et femmes sans rumeur sont en prix et grand honneur.
(91) Cartes, femmes et **salade** ne sont jamais trop secouées.
(92) La femme et l'**œuf** un seul maître veut.
(4) Les femmes sont comme les **omelettes**, elles ne sont jamais assez battues.
(93) Femme maigre, femme **aigre**.
(94) Les femmes sont trop **douces**, il faut les **saler.**

Finally, women are metaphorically associated with oenological produce in both languages:

(95) Di donna e di **vino** s'ubriaca il grande e il piccino.
(96) Donna di finestra, **uva** [**vigna**] di strada.

(97) Le donne belle e il *vino* buono son le prime cose che t'abbandonano.

(98) Femme et *vin* ont leur venin.

(99) D'une bonne *vigne* prenez le plant d'une bonne mère prenez la fille.

(17) *Vin* qui vieillit s'améliore, femme vieille devient revêche.

(100) Femme de *vin*, femme de rien.

Considering the typology of foods used in all these metaphorical expressions – simple ingredients, fruits and vegetables, home cooked foods and viticulture products stemming from one and the same agricultural world – I suggest the umbrella source domain of AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

4.1.3 WOMAN IS COMMODITY

The metaphor WOMAN IS COMMODITY, i.e. a "raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold", or a "useful or valuable thing" (OED) can be considered a specification of WOMAN ARE THINGS/ANIMATE OBJECTS or even of PEOPLE ARE THINGS/INANIMATE OBJECTS. In fact, expressions primarily used for possession are of common use for both women and men in most European languages (e.g. possessive adjectives in *my wife*, *my husband*; verbs expressing possession in *I have a boyfriend* etc.). This occurs in proverbs too, with adjectives and prepositions expressing possession (119, 122; 114, 123), and especially verbs like *avere* 'to have' (103, 121), *vendere* and *vendre* 'to sell' (104; 117), *valere* and *valoir* 'to be worth' (105; 109–111, 115, 118, 120), *comprare* 'buy' (18), *scegliere* 'choose' (18, implicit in 106; 124), *prendre* 'to take' (107, 113, 123, 125), *garder* 'to keep' (112), *perdre* 'to lose' (108), which are all prototypically referred to inanimate objects and most of which are used in relation to deeds of sale:

(101) Chi non *ha* donna ha un gran debito.

(102) Donna che prende donna che *si vende.*

(103) Se le donne fossero d'oro non *varrebbero* quello che *valgono.*

(18) Chi sa *comprare* buoi e poponi sa *scegliersi* anche una donna.

(104) Né donna né *tela* a lume di candela.

(105) Celui qui *prend* la vieille femme, aime l'argent plus que la dame.

(106) Qui *perd sa femme* et quinze *sous* c'est dommage pour l'argent.

(107) Femme bonne *vaut* une couronne.

(108) Femme de bien *vaut* un grand bien.

(109) Brave femme dans une maison *vaut* mieux que ferme et que cheval.

(110) Qui a femme à *garder* n'a pas journée assurée.

(111) L'homme a deux bons jours sur terre quand il *prend* femme et quand il l'enterre.

(112) Femme *de* marin femme de chagrin.

(113) Si la femme *vaut,* elle *vaut* un empire, si elle est autre, il n'y a bête pire.

(114) *Maison faite* et femme à *faire.*

(115) Femme qui prend, [elle] *se vend*, femme qui donne s'abandonne.

(116) Homme de paille vaut une femme *d'or.*

(117) A qui Dieu veut aider, *sa* femme [lui] meurt.

(118) Femme bonne *vaut* couronne.

(119) Qui *a* une femme de bien vit longtemps bien.

(120) Dieu aime l'homme quand il lui ôte *sa* femme.

(121) Qui *prend* la fille *du* voisin en sait le *défaut.*

(122) La femme ni la *toile* ne *se choisissent* à la chandelle.

(123) Ne *prends* jamais femme chez un cafetier ni une *vache* chez un meunier.

Such metaphors are particularly interesting for their implicitness. But proverb metaphors also give away more specifically the kind of inanimate commodity women are conceived as – vases (126), clocks (127), clothing items (128, 135) etc.:

(124) Chi vuole donna senza difetti, se la faccia fare dal *vasaio.*

(125) Donne, *orologi* e *fogli* son quasi tutti imbrogli.

(126) Donne dotte e *vesti* brutte rimangono sempre appese.

(127) Chi *casa* vuol fare, dalla donna deve cominciare.

(128) Femme prudente et bien sage est l'*ornement* du ménage.

(129) La femme est la *clef* du ménage.

(130) Jolie femme, *miroir* de fous.

(131) La *charrette* gâte le chemin, la femme l'homme et l'eau le vin.

(132) Pas d'*étoupe* près du feu ni de *femme* proche de l'homme.

(133) Belle fille et méchante *robe* trouve toujours qui les accroche.

Standing for the source domain, there are mostly very tangible household artefacts of everyday life – the same rural life of the animal and oenogastro-nomic selection previously seen.

5.   In conclusion

Looking at the distribution of the concrete entities used as source tokens between Italian and French proverbs, it would appear that the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS A SUPERNATURAL ENTITY displays a greater frequency in Italian proverbs and the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE in French ones. WOMAN IS A COMMODITY appears to be instantiated more frequently in a less transparent way in French proverbs. Within the WOMAN IS A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL metaphor, both Italian and French proverbs seem to be partial to horses and hens, while goats are more represented in French proverbs and oxen only in Italian ones.

Beyond such distributional differences of metaphoric expressions, however, the metaphorical pattern emerging from the proverbs of both languages appears to be the same, placing WOMAN on a different level of the great chain with respect to the deictic centre. This deictic centre is identifiable – against the backdrop of a worldview with a strictly binary understanding of gender – with MAN. WoMAN is in fact metaphorically placed either above or underneath MAN, according to the metaphors CONTROL OR FORCE/HIGH STATUS/GOOD IS UP (see Lakoff/Johnson 2003: 16) – so that the chain might actually be better visualised as a ladder. Given that this "above" and this "under" correspond to entities perceived as governing humans and entities perceived as governed by humans, and that WOMAN is associated to them in opposition to MAN, it follows that she is metaphorically excluded from the human status, or at the very least distinguished from its prototypical representative. This would confirm Kerschen's observation that "proverbs about women are […] a part of sexist language just as much as the generic pronoun" (1998: 11). Of course, the sexism would also be a matter of frequency and exclusivity of the outlined order and the findings ought to be verified against a study of proverbs about MAN. However, the sheer quantity of proverbs about women as opposed to men indicate the constancy of the centrality of MAN.

This metaphorical pattern betrays archaic, rural origins and fosters, with regard to WOMAN IS PROPERTY, associations with an archaic legal order in which ownership is tantamount to physical control.[24] It is for example

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[24] For the legal metaphor of OWNERSHIP AS GRASPED THING, see Arms (1999).

noteworthy that oxen, horses, mules and donkeys fall under the legal category of particularly valuable goods called *res mancipi* in the agrarian Roman society (cf. Marrone 1994: 292). For these things, property is transmitted via *mancipatio*, from '*manus*' hand + *capere* 'grasp' – a legal metaphor rooted in the physical experience of holding one's possession in one's hand. Women cannot be active party of this bilateral transaction, whose original function in archaic times is believed to be that of sale deed (cf. Marrone 1994: 135), by themselves. They can however be its objects, since the transaction can not only transfer real rights on domesticated animals and valuable inanimate things, but can also concern slaves as well as *filii* and *filiae familias* (equated to slaves under the *patria potestas* in archaic Rome) – and women in case of marriage accompanied by *conventio in manum* (cf. Marrone 1994: 133–135).

Metaphors raising WOMAN beyond human status can be just as problematic. As Marrone (1994: 275) sharply notes: "considerazione e rispetto non comportano necessariamente parità: il rispetto può essere a scapito dell'uguaglianza." More so, since the mappings created via WOMAN IS SUPERHUMAN carry mostly negative connotations.

These findings could, especially paired with previous studies on the matter, be regarded as a first hint of a discourse tradition in Romance languages – but possibly even neighbouring languages and English. The hypothesis does not appear too far-fetched, if one bears in mind the historic routes of proverbs dissemination: from Greece and Rome through Latin, by means of Erasmus's *Adagia*, thanks to the Bible and Luther' translations and writings, via didactic materials throughout Europe and beyond the European continent by way of English (cf. Mieder 2007). Further studies enquiring on the metaphoric patterns about WOMAN in other languages' proverbs ought to shed light on the matter, while at the same time further contributing to pointing out the symptoms and researching the origins of prejudice without succumbing to the temptation to censor folklore (cf. Kerschen 1998: 6).

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