

THE PROSTITUTE: Paradigmatic Woman

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...one has to be particularly trained to believe that to put a label on a feeling, a state of mind, a thing--to find a set of words or a phrase; in short, to describe it--is the same as understanding and experiencing it.

Doris Lessing, Briefing for a Descent into Hell, pp. 277-78.

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The Prostitute: Paradigmatic Woman

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For as long as the male sex has controlled human communication, the figure of the sexually-available woman, the prostitute, the courtesan, the hetaira, the call girl, has maintained her pre-eminence, in all languages, in all cultures. Whether her fascination for men derives from the contrast of her image with that of another prevalent female figure, the virgin, men have found her both attractive and repulsive, doubtless for their own reasons. The existence of the sexually-available woman, as a social reality and as a male fantasy figure, has served two mutually dependent functions in the maintenance of male supremacy, especially in Western civilization: 1) In the male mind, conditioned by male social desiderata, the stereotype of the promiscuous woman provides a "standard" of comparison of ALL women, so that a specific woman is judged against this standard as either "good" or "bad." Since the basis of judgment is a woman's "degree of sexual availability," she is judged as "worthy" or "not-worthy" relative to her sexual availability to men. Of course, the application of this standard varies in social context, and is dependent upon the expectations the male may have with respect to a specific woman. For example, if a male propositions a woman and she accepts, she may be labeled as either a honey pot or a bullseye, in a brief encounter, as a mistress or a wife, in a lengthy encounter. Whatever the context, the male has a large and flexible vocabulary he can use for specifying the terms of the sexual contract. 2) In the minds of women, the image of the sexually-available woman has served a dual function: First, the stereotype asserts that women, as sexually active human beings, ONLY relate to males, essentially locking us into a mind-set in which we define ourselves sexually through the existence of males; that is, we are either sexual beings, and therefore available to men, OR we are not available to men, and therefore non-sexual; second, the extremely negative value judgments attached to the sexually active woman, OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE, force women to see marriage as validation of our sexuality, in fact, as the ONLY validation available to us. The stereotype of the sexually promiscuous woman, the prostitute, makes it easy for patriarchal societies to keep us in our "place." The terror of being called "a slut" or "an easy lay" is used to bludgeon us into submission, into accepting marriage as a "wife" or "mother" as a more tolerable, less despicable form of slavery.

Any given stereotype embodies the assumptions of the culture that perpetuates the stereotype; its primary function is therefore social: It promotes the assumptions on which it is based, at the same time making it unnecessary for those who

accept the stereotype to examine or question those assumptions. Thus, the stereotype maintains the status quo by implanting cultural assumptions at an unconscious level of the mind, where they are immutable and permanent. These assumptions are accepted as "facts," as "givens." Where do we get our stereotypes? How do we arrive at our neat pigeon-holings of other human beings? We take all of our untested assumptions about this, all of our beliefs about reality, our opinions, value judgments, and biases, and, by analogy, we transfer these assumptions and beliefs to that, about which we know little or nothing. In this way, we bring the unknown within the bounds of our own reality, which enables us to pretend to ourselves and others that we know all there is to know about the unknown. The stereotype allows us to categorize people as we think they are, on the basis of our fantasies and expectations of them. The truth or falsity of these stereotypes is irrelevant, as is usually the case with fantasy worlds; the mere act of naming is sufficient in itself, and we are perpetually naming, defining the boundaries and terms of our own existence and that of others. The names we give things affect, for all time, our attitude toward them. Naming embodies our judgments as inherent features of the objects to which we attend. As Ruth Herschberger has commented, we lose our insight because we are always holding up a screen of language between ourselves and the world (1970:11-12). Further, she points out that "one of the time-honored functions of language is to push reality into more pleasing shapes" (1970:25). One might also say that one of the functions of our use of language is pushing people into shapes that conform to the linguistic straitjackets we have prepared for us. Even the most cursory examination of the terms applied to prostitutes will reveal that these terms directly reflect some of the most violent fantasies of men about their relationship to women and the underlying conflict (the so-called "battle of the sexes") that directs and maintains those fantasies.

In our interactions with social reality, and in our efforts to classify and assign meanings to these events, we use metaphor as an implicit (but sometimes explicit) structure for constructing hypotheses that will interpret social reality as we perceive it. The metaphors then become hypotheses about the way we are related to social events, and these hypotheses are predictions that express our evaluations and perceptions of the relations between and among the events and objects we perceive.

The names that men have given to women who make themselves sexually available to them reveal the underlying metaphors by which men conceive of their relationships with women, and through which women learn to perceive and define themselves. The metaphors that underlie the terms for sexually promiscuous women define and perpetuate the ambivalent sex-role stereotypes that a male-dominated culture sets forth for women. On the one hand, women who "put out" for men are described as hags, slop jars, and pisspallets; but women who don't put out are damned as frigid, cold, or maladjusted. All of these terms assume, of course, that a woman's only means of identification lies in her relationship to a man (or men). My analysis of 220 such terms for women reveals that the only way a woman can define her sexuality with the names provided by our culture is demeaning, shameful, and/or oppressively non-existent,

should she choose to reject the terms that men associate with her sexuality. (Muriel Schulz (1975) has found 100 more such terms.)

The terms for prostitutes provide us with a paradigm of the way both men and women see each other as things to be used. Prostitution, as an occupation, is an act of exploitation. But what the prostitute exploits is not men, but herself as representative of all women, and men's expectations of women, and the fantasies of women projected by their expectations. The prostitute capitalizes on the culturally-favored stereotypes of women, like passivity, instability, materiality, shrewishness, and pliancy, and the male attitudes that create these stereotypes. The prostitute thus validates the fantasy caricatures of women, and her financial success depends upon her ability to fulfill the male expectations embodied in these stereotypes. (Some, of course, specialize.)

In our culture, we are taught to be ashamed of our sexuality, to avoid reference to the sex act and to the sexual organs. However, up to the present time, women, more than men, have been intimidated into embarrassment about their sexuality. Men, in their own private conclaves, the locker rooms of the world, have been encouraged to boast about their uses of women. In fact, one of the primary criteria for "manliness" is successful exploitation of women's bodies. The term that denotes masculinity as a morality is *machismo*, and its emphasis is on animal sexuality. The adjective *macho* was originally used only to refer to male animals, emphasizing their maleness. It is especially used to refer to the male animal's "super-sexuality," particularly with reference to over-sized genitals, and/or to the male animal's brutal, bestial traits (i.e., how wild a horse or bull is). Recently, the term *macho* has been transferred to human males with the same meanings. One lexicographer notes that this usage is popular among boys as a highly complimentary attributive (Moliner:1967). *Macho* is a qualitative feature attributed to males; *machismo* is the possessed attribute. (It is now the name of a high-priced men's cologne.)

In order to understand why the English language has a large set of pejoratives that refer to women as sexual objects, we have to understand the "masculine mystique." Sagarin has observed that the pressure to live within the "masculine" moral structure accounts for the creation and use of taboo words.

The adolescent, growing in his awareness of sexuality, is constantly developing and creating the language of prohibited terminology. His vocabulary, although satisfactorily expressive, is unceasingly expanding. The abundance of neologisms imparts a feeling, to the youthful males who create and perpetuate them, of ribaldry, vitality, and strength of a masculine character. (1962:122)

It is through a "screen of language," the language of exploitation, that men establish and maintain their masculinity.

A few pages later, in his discussion of the words for breasts, Sagarin himself feels called upon to comment upon the conflicting emotions that men express about their relationships with women.

The abundance of words for breasts, of which the above is but a minute sampling, is an index of the intense interest in the anatomy of the female on the part of the most imaginative and creative of the slang-using groups, and of the need for masculine identification with peer groups among those who display toward the breast the ambivalence of shame and want, fear and desire, guilt and lust. (1962:125)

Of course, women are expected to be flattered by all of this "intense interest."

While it is not only women who experience social pressure in assuming their sexual identity, I'm concerned here with the problems of women. Terms like *screw*, *rip off*, *nail*, *shove it to her*, and *get into someone* clearly define the role of the woman as a passive object on whom the male acts out violent, sadistic fantasies. With an arsenal of terms like that for the so-called "act of love," it's no wonder that women think twice about indulging themselves. The close relationship between language and culture is perhaps clearest in the area of taboo words in the lexicon, particularly those terms that deal specifically with sexual activities and organs.

Consider the range of possible meanings for the verb *screw*. There is no favorable context in which it can occur. Edward Sagarin has made some interesting observations that illustrate clearly how men and women have created a double bind situation in their relations with each other.

Sex is something, of course, that a nice girl is not supposed to like, but submits to with reluctance because the male has the devil in his flesh. By appropriating the verb *screw* for sexual description, a society perpetuates this concept, and at the same time permits the conquering warrior male to retain an image of himself as having forced himself upon the reluctant female. The language is a reflection of a society that abhors sex while idolizing the male who obtains it and denouncing the female who offers it.

(1962:129)

Sagarin goes on to comment on the additional slang uses of *screw*, none of which are favorable in their connotations.

But a person *gets screwed* when he gets the short end of the stick, when someone betrays him. One says that he worked very hard when his employer needed him, only to be fired in the slow season: *his boss screwed him*, or *he got a screwing*. Or the same thing

would be said of a girl, and it is difficult to imagine any ambiguity.

(1962:134)

I have already cited Sagarin's comments on the male point of view inherent in the use of slang for sexual activities, and you may have noticed the terms "imaginative" and "creative" in his discussion. But perhaps the best example of the totally male orientation of such terms and their use is the following quotation from Eric Partridge, cited by Fryer.

Over 1,200 English synonyms for this word [fuck] have been recorded; their 'vivid expressiveness' and 'vigorous ingenuity' ... 'bear witness to the fertility of English and to the enthusiastic English participation in the universal fascination of the creative act'.

(1963:75)

One wonders about the source of this "universal fascination," but, as we have seen, it is the male portion of the population that is the most active in coining and perpetuating new terms, especially those terms that project their fantasies as realities. It is, of course, the prostitute who, by overtly selling herself as a commodity, makes it possible for men to continue to believe in women who exist only to serve their needs. That is the function of the prostitute in our culture, and that is the reason men permit prostitution to continue. The prostitute personifies for the male the dual aspects of the female that he seems to cherish: He can look down on the prostitute as being inferior to him in social status; at the same time she creates for him a fantasy world in which Woman harkens to his every beck and call. On the one hand, women are not expected to like sex, especially if they are pure and virtuous; on the other, I have heard men say that "All women are whores at heart." This social dichotomy underlies the semantic distinctions between whore and wife. One refers to women who exist outside social and legal boundaries, while wife is applied to those women who have attached themselves, legally and socially, to a male, and thus manage to live within society.

In one way or another, each of us has been a victim of our language, perceived and dealt with through a label that someone else has attached to us. Such labels serve to categorize us on the basis of our personalities, our behavior, a physical or emotional quirk, or a political belief. We would like to believe that such labeling is one of the unpleasant activities of childhood, a brutal and painful experience for those so attacked; but naming, the coining of terms that apply to other people, is an on-going activity, especially in those places that are the preserves of males, the locker room and the bar-room. The terminology that emerges from these gathering places, usually called slang, contains numerous semantic sets, one of which is used by males for labeling women who make themselves sexually available to men. The boundaries established by this semantic set define the double-bind situation in which

and phrases that comprise this semantic set are used by males to assert their proprietary relationship to women, whether the term is euphemistic or dysphemistic. As one current popular singer has expressed it: "If I could have but one possession in this life, I would make you my wife." Whatever the word, whether it's wife, chick, slut, hooker, prostitute, pro-girl, mistress, or sweat hog, its intent is to define the worth of a woman as a human being according to the relationship she has with a man (or men).

The names that men have created for prostitutes fully represent the variety of roles assigned to woman-as-sex-object, the social taboos that make screwing an act of aggression for the male, and express the metaphorical content of female stereotypes in our society. The entire semantic set exemplifies the "screen of language" through which men "see" women and, consequently, the view of themselves that women are taught. A woman learns to define herself as a piece of ass, bitch, pussy, or gash. Since women are taught to please men in our culture, it's no wonder that women go out of their way to "fit into" the semantic categories that our culture provides.

The semantic features that define the categories represented by the terms for prostitutes are listed below; those features that inhere in the reference of the terms are denotative, and the emotional associations that surround the terms are connotative.¹

On the chart on pages 6 and 7, I have diagrammed the internal relationships that exist among the pejorative terms in English that males use to label us. A brief explanation of the way in which the features of these terms provide insight into the structure of this area of our semantic space may facilitate interpretation of the terms as they are used. The two major parameters that define the boundaries of the words and phrases in the diagram are COST and LENGTH OF CONTACT. COST is the vertical parameter and LENGTH OF CONTACT is the horizontal parameter. COST is sub-divided into three areas, FREE (F), CHEAP (C), and EXPENSIVE (E), with two fuzzy, overlapping categories, FREE/CHEAP (F/C) and CHEAP/EXPENSIVE (C/E). LENGTH OF CONTACT, the horizontal parameter, is also sub-divided into three major areas, CONTACT IRRELEVANT (that is, these terms may be applied to any woman, even a stranger walking by on the street), BRIEF CONTACT (one-night stands), and EXTENDED/EXTENSIVE CONTACT (which I think is self-explanatory). The congruence between these two major parameters and their sub-divisions is interesting in and of itself, and reveals

¹Gerald Chambers and Donald L. Smith were very helpful in sorting through and interpreting their own usage of the terms and that of other men. In all, 17 men, ranging in age from 20-42, were asked to react to each of the 220 terms with respect to cost, method of payment, connotations, etc. No one knew all of the terms; some are archaic, some are regional, and others are literary in origin. I have included words and phrases from diverse sources in an effort to represent the infinite possibilities of this semantic set.

the ways in which our culture defines "time as money." Furthermore, the more extensive the contact, the higher the price, and the more favorably-charged the labels themselves. The most pejorative terms are those applied to any woman, those that are marked as FREE and/or CHEAP.

The semantic features that operate within these parameters define the denotative relationships among each group of terms. METHOD OF PAYMENT may be DIRECT (D), INDIRECT (I), or either (D/I). Direct payment is the actual exchange of cash; indirect payment may be something like dinner and a show, or a night on the town. Either way, the man feels that he is spending money with one purpose in mind. I remember one quotation that may explain this point of view better than I can. A disc jockey in Athens, Georgia had just finished playing the song, "Treat Her Like A Lady." The idea behind "treating her like a lady," as it's stated in the song, is that "she'll be good to you." When the record was over, the disc jockey said, "Yeah, treat her like a lady, and maybe she'll give you a money-back guarantee." At any rate, this overlap between the two features also explains why there are no terms with the single feature FREE, and the combination of FREE/CHEAP as a possibility. The other feature, TYPE OF ACTIVITY, with the sub-classes PASSIVE or ACTIVE (+A), isolates the man's expectations of the woman's sexual role, whether or not she's to be an active participant. For most of these terms this feature is irrelevant, so they aren't marked for it.

The connotative features, listed to the right of the denotative, include three possibilities: Negative (NEG), Positive (POS), and Neutral (NEU). Only one term showed overlap, ballbuster, and it's marked NEG/POS. The term is used with negative connotations when it refers to an aggressive woman or someone who is a sexual "tease." Ballbuster has positive connotations when it refers to a woman who is very active sexually. Most of the terms carry only negative connotations. Only four terms have neutral connotations, lady of the night, entertainer, concubine, and mistress, and only one term carries positive connotations, courtesan. Of these terms, four occur with the feature C/E or E, and are in the range of EXTENDED CONTACT. The connotative features were the most problematic, for an obvious reason: most of the men expressed ambivalence about their feelings for several terms, e.g., piece, ass, and prostitute.

In addition to the parameters and features I've just discussed, each term was also marked to indicate whether it is a dysphemism (DYS) or a euphemism (EU), and if the term is a figure of speech, it is marked as either metonymic (P/W) or metaphoric (MET). Although it is possible for a term to be both metonymic and metaphoric, e.g., cockeye, which I've marked as MET, and brown-eye, which I've marked as P/W, I didn't allow for this kind of overlap in my analysis of the terms. The words and phrases that appear in the diagram are representatives of a group of such terms defined by their features.

In setting up the semantic field diagram, began by centering the group of terms that included the largest number, so that in the CONTACT IRRELEVANT area you'll find broad and lightheels, both carrying the same features, differing only in that broad is dysphemistic and lightheels is euphemistic. After each term, in parentheses, is the number of terms represented by the category. For example, the category (F/C, D/I; NEG) includes broad, floozy, hag, hussy, loose woman, low-rent, pick-up, put out, slut, sor-whore, tramp, wanton, and whore. The related euphemisms include lightheels, roundheels, and shortheels. The rest of the categories arranged around these core terms differ in the addition and/or loss of features, which I've marked beside the lines drawn between categories. At the outer reaches of the field, you'll find the terms marked either (P/W) or (MET). The terms represented by bitch, marked (F/C, D/I; NEG; MET), include bird, dog, mattress, nutcracker, quail, and sow; the terms represented by cunt, marked (F/C, D/I; NEG, P/W), include fleshpot, gash, piece, and tail. All of these are terms that men apply to any woman, and they occur in expressions like "She's a dizzy cunt," "Wow! What a nice piece!," and "What a ballbuster she is!"

Within the range marked as CHEAP, I've grouped the terms for which brief sexual contact is necessary for their application. At the center is hooker, marked (C, D; NEG), by far the largest single category with 73 members, and the related euphemism, painted lady. The terms in this category refer specifically to the act of selling oneself as an object, and the COST may range anywhere from a quarter, as in two-bit whore, up to \$20.00. Other terms in this category include harlot, hustler, peddle-snatch, and slattern. This is not only the largest range within the terms for prostitute, but there're some interesting things going on semantically. The terms are the most semantically consistent and unambiguous; in order for most of the terms to apply, they must be CHEAP and involve DIRECT PAYMENT of cash. There is also what I call a "neutralization of features" at several points in the diagram, where the features (+A) and (-A) are lost, and the lines converge on metaphorical categories that share features with other categories, except for (+A) or (-A). At the bottom, left-hand side of this semantic grouping you'll find bedpan and bedbug, which differ only in the feature + or -A. Both of these categories converge at corn-hole, in which the activity of the woman is irrelevant. The same thing happens with flapgap and fastfanny, which converge in poxbox, and with meatcooker and bullseye/cotwarmer, which meet at the category represented by cornergirl and bat. One other comment: There are no terms in the category (C, D; POS).

The EXPENSIVE/EXTENDED CONTACT area contains the two smallest sets of terms, C/E, with EXTENDED CONTACT, and E, with EXTENSIVE CONTACT. Prostitute and professional are probably the core terms of the entire semantic field, so that the field is heavily loaded toward the range covered by F/C and C. Only 13 terms are covered by the categories in this area. Once you get over into the EXPENSIVE range, you find the terms that are marked as NEU or POS, and the term marked as (POS),

Explanation of Semantic Features and Symbols for Semantic Features

Denotative Features

Cost: Free (F), Cheap (C), Expensive (E);
Method of Payment: Direct (D), Indirect (I);
Activity: Sexually Aggressive (+A), Sexually Passive (-A).

Connotative Features

Negative (NEG), Neutral (NEU), Positive (POS).

If a term or phrase makes explicit male disdain for female sexuality, I have marked it as Dysphemistic (dys). If the term or phrase is used as a "polite" evasion of expressing disdain, I have marked it as Euphemistic (eu).

If a term or phrase refers to women by reference to a specific part of their bodies, I have labeled it as Metonymic, or part for whole (P/W). If a term or phrase refers to women by comparing them to animals or inanimate objects, I have labeled it as Metaphoric (MET).

Free (F): By definition, sex is never free; the features Direct/Indirect take care of that possibility. For the male, it comes down to a question of WHAT will be paid to the woman in exchange for sex, and HOW MUCH. For this reason, there are no terms for women with the feature Free (F).

SEMANTIC FIELD RELATIONSHIPS

C
O
S
T

FREE/CHEAP

ACTUAL CONTACT IRRELEVANT

CHEAP

BRIEF SEXUAL CONTACT

CHEAP/EXPENSIVE

EXTENDED CONTACT

EXPENSIVE

EXTENSIVE CONTACT

LEGALIZED PROSTITUTION

LENGTH OF CONTACT

Explanation of Semantic Features and Symbols for Semantic Features

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F/C,D/I;NEG (dys)	F/C,D/I;NEG;P/W (eu)	C,D;NEG (dys) (continued)	C,D/I;NEG;P/W (dys)	C,D;NEG;MET (dys)
broad	honey pot	prossie	doxy	bat
donah	gift box	puddletrotter	C,D/I,-A;NEG;MET (dys)	biddy
floozy	F/C,D;NEG (dys)	puta	bedpan	chamberpot
gamewoman	nookie	queen	C,D/I,+A;NEG;MET (dys)	crane
hag	bellylass	romp	bedbug	mattressback
hussy	F/C,D;NEG;MET (dys)	rumper	C,D/I;NEG;MET (dys)	nannygoat
loose woman	baggage	rut	corn-hole	nightbag
low-rent	F/C,D,-A;NEG (dys)	sally-dally	pig	nightbird
pick-up	backgammon	scabber	sweathog	pipecleaner
put-out	C,D;NEG (dys)	scrubber	C,D,-A;NEG (dys)	quarter-piece
slut	hooker	scuffer	canvasback	ragbag
sor-whore	brown Bess	slattern	C,D,-A;NEG;MET (dys)	rawhide
split-tail	bumbessie	spreadeagle	bullseye	ringer
straw-girl	bumpbacon	springherder	cockeye	saltflitch
tramp	bunter	strumpet	furrowbutt	slop jar
wanton	Charlotte Harlot	strumpthumper	pisspallet	C,D;NEG;MET (eu)
whore	chippie	swilltrough	posthole	cornergirl
F/C,D/I;NEG (eu)	chubcheeker	termagant	C,E,D;NEG (dys)	goldmine
lightheels	claptrap	Tess Tuppence	prostitute	pretty little flowers
roundheels	cockatrice	trapan	C,D,-A;NEG;MET (eu)	C,E,D;NEG (eu)
shortheels	cocktail	trick	cotwarmer	professional
F/C,D/I,+A;NEG (dys)	codhopper	trotter	warming-pan	pro-girl
arsebender	codwinker	trull	C,D,+A;NEG (dys)	social girl
arsievarsie	conycatcher	tumbler	capercok	C,E,D;NEU;MET (eu)
back bender	coxswain	tup-me-upright	frisker	entertainer
backscratcher	craterbutt	two-bit whore	hipflipper	E,D/I;NEG (dys)
bawd	dell	wench	pole climber	kept woman
breechdropper	diddler	C,D;NEG (eu)	C,D,+A;NEG;MET (dys)	paramour
F/C,D/I,+A;NEG;POS (dys)	fatback	painted lady	meatcooker	E,D/I,+A;NEG (dys)
ballbuster	fleece	fille de joie	fuckin' fillies	call girl
F/C,D/I,+A;NEG;MET (dys)	fluter	hotel matron	full-o'-tricks	E,D/I,+A;NEU (dys)
minx	gadder	joygirl	meatgrinder	mistress (after 7
F/C,D/I,+A;NEG;P/W (dys)	gamester	lamp-post Lorelei	organgrinder	years, commonlaw
hotpot	gipsy	sweet cream lady	sausage-grinder	wife)
F/C,D/I;NEG;MET (dys)	gutterflop	window girl	smokehouse	E,D;NEG (dys)
hack	hack	woman of ill repute	C,D,+A;NEG;P/W (dys)	hetaira
hamhocker	hamhocker	woman of pleasure	fastfanny	E,D;POS (dys)
hardtonguer	hardtonguer	working girl	C,D;NEG;P/W (dys)	courtesan...wife
harlot	harlot	C,D;NEU (eu)	poxbox	E,I;NEG (dys)
harridan	harridan	lady of the night	brown-eye	Delilah
hedgewhore	hedgehore	lovely lady	gullybum	E,I,+A;NEU (dys)
hoyden	hoyden	C,D/I;NEG (dys)	lowgap	concubine
hustler	hustler	tart	pinkpot	
leasepiece	leasepiece	bimbo	pink toes	
leg-over	leg-over	drab	sink-o-perdition	
Magdalene	Magdalene	galleywench	tollhole	
meatvender	meatvender	Jezebel	ventreter	
narycherry	narycherry	lay	C,D,-A;NEG;P/W (dys)	
nellie	nellie	moll	flapgap	
nobjobber	nobjobber	rum-and-rut	flap	
peddlesnatch	peddlesnatch	trollop	prick pocket	
pigpoke	pigpoke	C,D/I;NEG (eu)		
pillowgut	pillowgut	mama		
poontang	poontang			
potlicker	potlicker			
priest-layer	priest-layer			

courtesan, falls under legalized, state-sanctioned sexual use, along with marriage. With the categories occupied by courtesan, common-law wife, and wife we arrive at the point at which the state and the church have institutionalized the use of women. The state of marriage, signified by the application of the term wife, is one in which the man pays and pays, sometimes for life, for his use, and exclusive property rights, to one woman. What we can see in this diagram is a movement from general terms, applicable to any woman in the world, to the specific term wife. The more time and money that a man is willing to invest in a woman, the more he legitimizes her existence in our society.

More specifically, an examination of the metaphorical terms for prostitutes reveals the object classes to which women who relate sexually to men are compared. The classes themselves reflect the traditional views of "woman's place," from bedpan and slopjar, woman as receptacle for the excretions of men, to narycherry and woman of ill-repute, the woman who has not "lived up" to the chaste, Madonna stereotype. In a list of classes of objects, none of which I can sincerely call "unobjectionable," the least objectionable class contains only three lexical items: entertainer, full-o'-tricks, and cornergirl. I say "the least objectionable" because the terms in this class at least compare the prostitute to other persons. Thus, she "entertains" in the sense that she "amuses" men; she is a "girl" who stands on the corner; she is "full of tricks" insofar as she "performs" for men.

The next largest class of objects contains the names that compare women to animals: bird, bitch, dog, quail, sow, fuckin' fillies, canvasback (?), bat, biddy, crane, nannygoat,

nightbird, bedbug, pig, and sweathog. We can see in these terms the underlying conceptual categories into which men place women: They're something to be hunted and killed, a quail or a canvasback; they should be subordinated and domesticated, as a horse, a sow, a dog; they should always be like "a bitch in heat," receptive to men; and they're things to fear, like bats.

But whatever else women should be, they are classified as the exclusive property of men, and they're to function only as the objects of men's desires and sexuality. The third class of metaphors, in which women are compared to inanimate objects, breaks down into two sub-classes. The first labels women as passive objects on or through which men "relieve" themselves. In this class we find the terms mattress, baggage, piss-pallet, cotwarmer, warming pan, mattressback, quarterback, saltflitch, slop jar, bedpan, and corn-hole. All of these terms define women as objects upon which men act out their sexual dramas. But the second class of inanimate metaphors makes the role of women even more explicit: we are specifically "holes" into which a long object is inserted--nothing more. This is, of course, the basic metaphor that governs our lives and defines the nature of our existence; it is the metaphor upon which our culture is founded: women have holes, men have external appendages that were made to fill those holes, and that's the reason that we have holes. It's all so beautifully simple, and the sub-class includes nutcracker,

meatcooker, meat grinder, organgrinder, sausage-grinder, smokehouse, bull's-eye, cockeye, furrowbutt, goldmine, honey pot, chamberpot, nightbag, pipecleaner, ragbag, rawhide, ringer. We exist only as holes for men, as fields to be plowed, as "pots" full of good things for men. And the semantics of this sub-class of metaphors perhaps explains the neutralization of the features (+A) and (-A) that I mentioned earlier in the CHEAP/BRIEF CONTACT area of the semantic field. Such features are irrelevant in terms that define women as passive, inanimate objects; no action is expected, required, or desired.

As it is, if we were to set up a parametric grid, we would find that there are 2,160 possible interactions of parameters, but only 44 of these possibilities are realized in the semantic set. Of these 44 semantic categories, only ten occur in the EXTENDED CONTACT range. The other 34 are in the CONTACT IRRELEVANT or BRIEF CONTACT ranges. In Appendix I of this paper you will find a list of the 220 terms, broken down into Dysphemistic and Euphemistic, then listed alphabetically, with their semantic features, under these two categories.

My sources were varied, and there will probably be a large number of terms with which many readers are unfamiliar. Aside from dictionaries like the OED, Partridge's Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, Wentworth and Flexner's Dictionary of American Slang, I have also drawn from books like Down in the Holler, a book on Ozark slang, from The Sod-Weed Factor by John Barth,² and I have used information provided by friends, colleagues, and students. Omitted from this list are some terms that are limited in their use to literature, like bona roba, demimondaine, callat, callet, giglot, blowen, and fricatrice.

I have also excluded strictly literary coinages like the Victorian no better than she should be. In general, I included terms that I found in two or more sources because the lexicography in this area is uneven, often apparently whimsical. For this reason, you will find split-tail in the list, which is used in The Sod-Weed Factor and cited in Down in the Holler. To give you some idea of the problems with isolating the origins and usage of these terms, Randolph and Wilson provide the following definition of split-tail.

Similar to feisty is the noun split-tail, a disrespectful name for an active young woman. A split-tail is not necessarily a woman of bad morals, but rather

²I queried John Barth, trying to find out exactly how many of the terms he had made up in the long exchange between the two prostitutes (Sod-Weed Factor, 466-72). In his letter of September, 1972, he told me that he could no longer remember which he had made up and which he had heard over the years. Even if he made up as many as 20 of the terms used in the exchange, that would still leave 200 terms, plus all the ones that I found after I'd reached my cut-off point in compiling the list. I don't think there can be any question regarding the extraordinarily large number of terms referring to the sexual activity of women. In addition, if I could ascertain the terms that Barth had created, they would follow the semantic patterns described in this article.

one who is too lively, perhaps inclined to some sort of indiscretion.

(1953:107)

It is hard to tell where one should draw the line, but I have tried to make the list representative and diverse. Sweat-hog has been used in south Georgia, split-tail is Ozark slang; flap is archaic, but low-rent is current slang. Bimbo, a term I had never heard when I began my research, has been used three times on television in the past year, and I've heard it used recently to refer to a male regarded as "stupid" by the speaker (also male). I should also point out that this is by no means an exhaustive list and does not include bob-tail, gill-flirt (or jill-flirt), spoffskins, blister, streetwalker, and many others. I stopped when I had collected 220 terms because I'd reached the point of diminishing returns. I think any term for prostitute/woman would fit into one of the categories that came out of the terms I analyzed. In fact, this semantic set is one that's infinitely expanding; although some terms may become archaic, new terms are always being added, probably faster than lexicographers can record them. The very size of the set and the impossibility of collecting ALL the terms for prostitute is itself a comment on our culture. As linguists, we assume that the existence of a new lexical item indicates a cultural need for a term that expresses a new concept. Isn't it strange that the set of terms that refer to prostitutes is one that's constantly expanding? If there is a "cultural need," surely it is that only of men, defining and asserting their "masculinity" through their use of women's bodies.

There is one semantic features for which the terms in the appendix aren't specifically marked in the lexicon: The feature (+FEMALE) is the inherent feature shared by all of these terms. If a term is (-Female), that is, if it refers to a man, then the feature must be marked, and it surfaces in such cases, e.g., male prostitute, male hustler, male whore.

I did collect a relatively small number of terms for promiscuous men, but the two sets cannot really be compared.

TERMS FOR MEN WHO CHASE WOMEN

animal	hooko
ass man	letch
Casanova	male hustler
cockhound	male prostitute
cocksman	male whore
cunnyhunter	snowman
DOM (dirty old man)	sport
Don Juan	stud
gigolo	Svengali
good old boy	whorehopper
hanger-on	whoremonger

First of all, there's no linguistic reason why the set is so small. As I've indicated though, most of these words refer to the sexuality of men in terms of the degree of their success in pursuing women. Three of the terms, male hustler, male prostitute, and male whore, are actually terms that refer to women that are marked with the feature (+ male). Second, only gigolo, and perhaps stud, carry the same denotative features as the larger set for women. Stud, however, has only positive connotations when it's used, and gigolo carries negative connotations

only insofar as it refers to a man demeaning himself by accepting money from a woman. A gigolo gives up his "right" to dominate a woman because the acceptance of money represents dependence and passivity in the relationship, and paying money represents choice and power over the other person. The gigolo thus violates the prerogatives assigned to men by surrendering his power. The term carries positive connotations when it refers to the same violation of sex-role stereotypes, but also draws attention to the fact that it's a woman paying for sex instead of a man, and the users find the role-switch humorous. Third, words like animal, beast, and brute, which do refer to male sexuality, and which are used pejoratively by women, refer specifically to those personality traits encouraged by reverence for machismo but not especially sought by women in sexual relationships. Fourth, the remainder of the terms are all used with positive connotations and a "boys-will-be-boys" intonation. If a man is a cockhound, one shrugs one's shoulders; if a woman is a slut, the moral fiber of the nation is in danger.

To complete the picture of "woman as sex object" in our culture, let me, in closing, make one or two additional observations. Only a woman can "go astray"; only a woman can be "loose." But only a man can be a "cuckold"; there is no term for a woman in a similar situation. But a woman can be called a cocktease and a pricktease if she doesn't "put out." Women insult men by reference to unpleasantness in their personalities, but men insult women by reference to their availability for sexual use. That is, we insult men as individuals, but women as a class. If you want to compliment a man, you can say "He has balls," but we cannot say of a woman "She has labia" or "She has ova."

What I have described is a semantic set and its features that provide a paradigm of the definition of women in our culture, a culture that defines the "nature" of woman on the basis of untested assumptions, embodies these assumptions in its metaphors, and uses these metaphors to create the stereotypes of women with which we have to live.

APPENDIX I

The list of terms provided below makes an initial division of the terms into dysphemistic and euphemistic. In the spaces that follow each term, denotative features are given first, and then the connotative features are given. Following these primary features will be (P/W) or (MET), if either of these classifications applies.

DYSPHEMISTIC TERMS

arsebender [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG]
 arsievarsie [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG]
 ass (piece of) [F/C, I, -A; NEG; P/W]
 backbender [F/C, D/I, +A, NEG]
 backgammon [F/C, D/I, -A, NEG]
 backscratcher [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG]
 baggage [F/C, D; NEG; MET]
 ballbuster [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG/POS]
 bat [C, D; NEG; MET]
 bawd [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG]
 bedbug [C, D/I, +A; NEG; MET]
 bedpan [C, D/I, -A; NEG; MET]
 bellylax [F/C, D; NEG]
 biddy [C, D; NEG; MET]
 bimbo [C, D/I; NEG]
 bird [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 bitch [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]

breachdropper [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG]
 broad [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 brown Bess [C, D; NEG]
 brown-eye [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 bullseye [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 bumbessie [C, D; NEG]
 bumpbacon [C, D; NEG]
 bunter [C, D; NEG]
 canvasback [C, D, -A; NEG]
 capercock [C, D, +A; NEG]
 chamberpot [C, D; NEG; MET]
 Charlotte Harlot [C, D; NEG]
 chippie [C, D; NEG]
 chubcheeker [C, D; NEG]
 claptrap [C, D; NEG]
 cockatrice [C, D; NEG]
 cockeye [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 cocktail [C, D; NEG]
 codhopper [C, D; NEG]
 codwinker [C, D; NEG]
 concubine [E, I, +A; NEU] (more servitude involved)
 conycatcher [C, D; NEG]
 corn-hole [C, D; NEG]
 courtesan [E, D; POS]
 coxswain [C, D; NEG]
 crane [C, D; NEG; MET]
 craterbutt [C, D; NEG]
 cunt [F/C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 Delilah [E, I; NEG]
 dell [C, D; NEG]
 diddler [C, D; NEG]
 doe [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 donah [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 drab [C, D; NEG]
 doxy [C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 fastfanny [C, D, +A; NEG; P/W]
 fatback [C, D; NEG]
 flap [C, D, -A; NEG; P/W]
 flapgap [C, D, -A; NEG; P/W]
 fleecer [C, D; NEG]
 fleshpot [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 floozy [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 fluter [C, D; NEG]
 frisker [C, D, +A; NEG]
 fuckin' fillies [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 full-o'-tricks [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 furrowbutt [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 gadder [C, D; NEG]
 galleywench [C, D/I; NEG]
 gamester [C, D; NEG]
 game woman [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 gash [F/C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 gipsy [C, D; NEG]
 gullybum [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 gutterflop [C, D; NEG]
 hack [C, D; NEG]
 hag [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 hamfucker [C, D; NEG]
 hardtongue [C, D; NEG]
 harlot [C, D; NEG]
 harridan [C, D; NEG]
 hedgewhore [C, D; NEG]
 hetaira [E, D; NEG]
 hipflipper [C, D, +A; NEG]
 hooker [C, D; NEG]
 hotpot [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG; P/W]
 hoyden [C, D; NEG]
 hussy [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 hustler [C, D; NEG]
 Jezebel [C, D/I; NEG]
 lay [C, D/I; NEG]
 leasepiece [C, D; NEG]
 leg-over [C, D; NEG]
 loose woman [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 lowgap [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 low-rent [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 Magdalene [C, D; NEG]
 mattress [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 mattressback [C, D; NEG; MET]
 meatcooker [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 meatgrinder [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 meat vendor [C, D; NEG]
 minx [F/C, D/A, +A; NEG; MET]
 mistress [E, D/I, +A; NEU]
 moll [C, D/I; NEG]
 nannygoat [C, D; NEG; MET]
 narycherry [C, D; NEG]
 nellie [C, D; NEG]
 nightbag [C, D; NEG; MET]
 nightbird [C, D; NEG; MET]
 nobjobber [C, D; NEG]

nookie [F/C, D; NEG]
 nutcracker [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 nympho [F/C, D/I, +A; NEG]
 organgrinder [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 paramour [E, D/I; NEG]
 peddlesnatch [C, D; NEG]
 pick up [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 piece [F/C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 pig [C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 pigpoke [C, D; NEG]
 pillowgut [C, D; NEG]
 pinkpot [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 pink toes [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 pipecleaner [C, D; NEG; MET]
 pisspallet [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 pole climber [C, D, +A; NEG]
 poontang [C, D; NEG]
 posthole [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 potlicker [C, D; NEG]
 poxbox [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 prick pocket [C, D, -A; NEG; P/W]
 priest-layer [C, D; NEG]
 prossie [C, D; NEG]
 prostitute [C/E, D; NEG]
 puddletrotter [C, D; NEG]
 put out [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 puta [C, D; NEG]
 quail [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 quarter-piece [C, D; NEG; MET]
 queen [C, D; NEG]
 ragbag [C, D; NEG; MET]
 rawhide [C, D; NEG; MET]
 ringer [C, D; NEG; MET]
 romp [C, D; NEG]
 rum-and-rut [C, D/I; NEG]
 rumper [C, D; NEG]
 rutter [C, D; NEG]
 sally-dally [C, D; NEG]
 saltflitch [C, D; NEG; MET]
 sausage-grinder [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 scabber [C, D; NEG]
 scrubber [C, D; NEG]
 scuffer [C, D; NEG]
 sink-o-perdition [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 slattern [C, D; NEG]
 slop jar [C, D; NEG; MET]
 slut [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 smokehouse [C, D, +A; NEG; MET]
 sor-whore [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 sow [F/C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 split-tail [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 spreadeagle [C, D; NEG]
 springherder [C, D; NEG]
 strawgirl [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 strumpet [C, D; NEG]
 strumpthumper [C, D; NEG]
 sweatbag [C, D/I; NEG; MET]
 swill trough [C, D; NEG]
 tail [F/C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 tart [C, D/I; NEG]
 termagant [C, D; NEG]
 Tess Tuppence [C, D; NEG]
 tollhole [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 tramp [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 trapan [C, D; NEG]
 trick [C, D; NEG]
 trollop [C, D/I; NEG]
 trotter [C, D; NEG]
 trull [C, D; NEG]
 tumbler [C, D; NEG]
 tup-me-upright [C, D; NEG]
 two-bit whore [C, D; NEG]
 ventreter [C, D; NEG; P/W]
 wanton [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 wench [C, D; NEG]
 whore [F/C, D/I; NEG]

EUPHEMISTIC TERMS

call girl [E, D/I, +A; NEG]
 cornergirl [C, D; NEG; MET]
 cotwarmer [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 entertainer [C/E, D; NEU; MET]
 fille de joie [C, D; NEG]
 giftbox [F/C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 goldmine [C, D; NEG; MET]
 honey pot [F/C, D/I; NEG; P/W]
 hotel Matron [C, D; NEG]
 joygirl [C, D; NEG]
 lady of the night [C, D; NEU]
 lamp-post Lorelei [C, D; NEG]
 light heels [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 lovely lady [C, D/I; NEG]

mama [C, D/I; NEG]
 painted lady [C, D; NEG]
 pretty little flowers [C, D; NEG; MET]
 pro-girl [C/E, D; NEG]
 professional [C/E, D; NEG]
 roundheels [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 scarlet woman [C, D; NEG]
 shorthells [F/C, D/I; NEG]
 social girl [C/E, D; NEG]
 sweet cream lady [C, D; NEG]
 warming-pan [C, D, -A; NEG; MET]
 windowgirl [C, D; NEG]
 woman of ill-repute [C, D; NEG]
 woman of pleasure [C, D; NEG]
 working girl [C, D; NEG]

APPENDIX II

January 7, 1974

Dear Ms. Stanley,

Thank you for sending your paper, 'Paradigmatic woman: The prostitute.' The paper has interesting points, but I am sorry to say that it is not what we are seeking in this area. Setting aside the questionable thesis that the prostitute is a paradigm for the place of women (what about the cultural myth of the whore with a heart of gold? or the complexity of William Carlos Williams' treatment of the theme of virgin and whore in Paterson?) -- the problem for our ethnographic perspective is two-fold. We would want to know about validation of the semantic attributes used to classify the terms--preferably in contexts of use--and we could not imagine that there is anywhere a single speaker or group for whom all the terms are pertinent. In addition, many questions arise about the terms. For instance, my wife, who had an English grandmother, recalls being called 'biddy' as a girl, and recently the term was suggested on television (CBS NEWS in morning) by someone as an alternative to 'senior citizen' insofar as women are concerned.

There seems to be missing any notice of ways, and terms, in which women exploit men as objects via sex. E.g., 'sugar-daddy', 'john'. It is not unknown for women to define sex themselves as 'not free', and to control its disbursement as a means of maintaining power. Then again there have been some apparent exceptions in both sexes to the 'not free' = 'price' attitude. Though an alternative way of regarding the matter, would be to insist that intimacy entails obligation, rights entail responsibilities. It is not really clear how the analysis relates the demeaning economic interpretation of 'free'-cheap' etc., to the interpretation in terms of personal responsibility.

I am sorry to be negative about a paper which has obviously involved much work and dedication. Right now we are deluged with papers which take up one or another facet of this general problem, but have not received anything which has the specific ethnographic focus that would be most pertinent to the particular role of the journal.

Sincerely yours,

Dell Hymes, Editor
Language in Society

May 13, 1975

Dear Julia,

I regret that the editorial committee did not find your article "What's in a label" suitable for publication in ETC. We recommend some man's magazine as an outlet.

All good wishes.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Weiss, Editor
 ETC., A Review of General
Semantics

February 20, 1974

Dear Miss Stanley,

Thank you very much indeed for the article "Paradigmatic Woman: The Prostitute" which you submitted for publication in LINGUISTICS a few weeks ago. Interesting and important as the subject treated undoubtedly is, I do not think your study resulted in a piece of work for which LINGUISTICS should be considered the proper outlet. I hereby want to inform you that the paper has been returned to you by separate airmail.

Thanking you for having considered Mouton, I remain, with my feelings of respect,

Sincerely yours,

Paul M. Waszink, Editor
Linguistics

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