

Metonymic pathways to neuter-gender human nominals in German

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1. Introduction: remarkable syntax in a text by Karl Waggerl

At the end of his tale about the three pledges of love, Karl Waggerl finishes with the rather peculiar sentence in (1):¹

- (1) ... als er in die Stube kam, da lag sein Mädchen auf der Bahre. Da wußte er, daß sie es war, die er dreimal geliebt und dreimal verraten hatte, und nun steckte sein Messer mitten in ihrer weißen Brust.
[...] when he entered the main room, there lay his girl on the bier. And then he knew that she was the one² whom he had loved three times, and three times betrayed, and now there was his knife, thrust in the middle of her white breast.

As the underlining indicates, Waggerl switches back and forth between *fem-* and *neut-*gender in apparent anaphoric reference to the noun *Mädchen*.³ Our goal in this paper will be to provide a general context in which this apparent anomaly is explained. In the process we will first briefly review the state of research on the semantics of nominal classification in German, and then provide evidence for both the historical and current productivity of *neut-*gender classification for human beings, and females in particular, before returning to the Waggerl text. As the discussion moves through these three steps the functional role that *metonymy* plays will become apparent, first as part of the diachronic lexical processes that result in *neut-*gender human nouns, and then in the pragmatics of referential tracking. In developing the argument we will follow Lakoff's analysis and commentary on metonymic ICMs (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: Ch. 8; Lakoff 1987: Ch. 5). Four of Lakoff's (1987: 84–85) points about metonymy are particularly pertinent to our analysis:

- a. A metonymic relation is dependent on a *background metonymic model*, a species of ICM (Idealized Cognitive Model). In many cases this ICM embodies a *socio-culturally defined stereo- or archetype*.
- b. In the ICM there is an element A closely associated with an element B, and [in discourse/situational context].⁴ B will uniquely determine A.
- c. B is [communicatively] useful for the given purpose in context.⁵
- d. "Most metonymic models are, in fact [...] models of *individuals*."

To these four points we add (e), which follows from point (c) and examples in Lakoff and Johnson (1980: Ch. 8):

- e. Some property evoked by B is relevant to the speaker's current discourse intent, and often is carried into the resulting discourse representation.⁶

In particular we will suggest, as depicted in Figure 1, that there is a background metonymic model embodying a socio-cultural stereotype of (sexual) innocence, social naiveté, dependent social status, etc., associated with a class of *neut*-gender nominals referring to human females. Since this is a model of an individual, B is the stereotype, and A is the discourse (or situational) referent. Furthermore, by metonymically identifying the referent through the stereotype, the speaker succeeds in mapping properties of the stereotype onto the referent. The cue for evoking this mechanism is the incongruence between a *neut*-gender nominal or pronoun as the referring expression, and the female sex of the referent. In contrast, the use of a *fem*-gender referring expression establishes a direct deictic link to the referent in the discourse world, by virtue of the *congruence* between the grammatical gender of the referring expression and the sex of the referent (hence "natural" gender), with no intervening metonymic model.

There is, however, a consequence of contrasting *fem*-gender and *neut*-gender reference to females in the same context. This consequence is depicted in Figure 1 in the markedness relationship between *fem*-gender as the unmarked (non-metonymic) referential form for females, labeled (α) in the figure, and the metonymic use of *neut*-gender, labeled (β). Note that *fem*-gender, as the unmarked member of the opposition, may take on a *contextually* marked value, labeled (α') in the diagram. This is another female stereotype, one of sexual experience, social maturity, sophistication, etc. When *neut*-gender is used to evoke the neuter-metonymic model (β) in a particular context, the other, *fem*-metonymic model (α') may be contextually evoked when *fem*-gender referring expressions are also used.

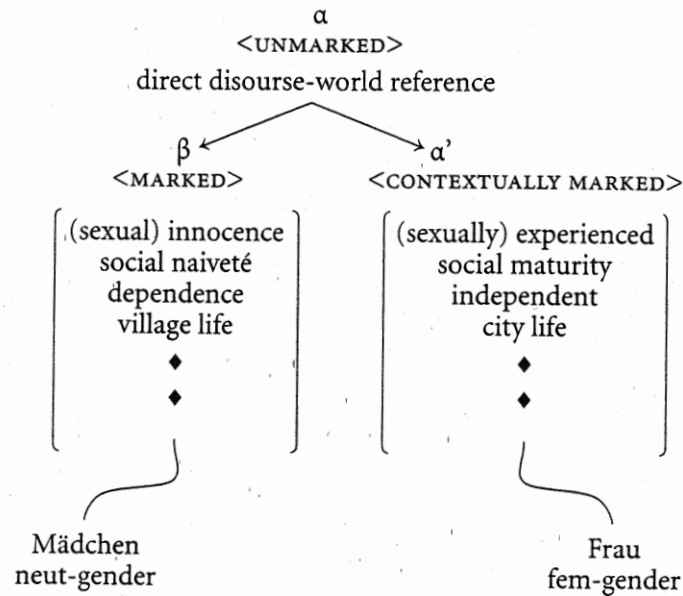


Figure 1. Markedness relations among female-reference nominals.⁷

In order to follow up on this hypothesis we will begin with a brief review of what is known about the semantics of nominal classification in German.

2. The semantics of nominal classification in German

There has been a great deal of research in this area, reviewed in such places as Wienold (1967), Zubin and Köpcke (1984, 1986), Claudi (1985), Corbett (1991), and Köpcke and Zubin (1996), but such research has tended to be anecdotal rather than systematic, and limited to a biased sample of high-frequency nouns. In our own previous work (Köpcke 1982; Köpcke & Zubin 1983, 1984, 1996; Zubin & Köpcke 1981, 1984, 1986, in preparation) we have been able to demonstrate the existence of underlying patterns of semantic motivation for gender assignment.

2.1 Some principles of gender assignment in the German lexicon

We have argued for the following general principles underlying gender assignment in folk-taxonomic domains in the German lexicon (cf. Zubin & Köpcke 1986):

- a. **Superordinate terms** are primarily *neut*-gender, for example, *das Obst* 'fruit', *das Gemüse* 'vegetable', *das Auto* 'automobile', *das Motorrad* 'motorcycle', *das Kraftfahrzeug* 'motor vehicle'.
- b. **Basic level terms** are primarily *masc*- or *fem*-gender, the choice often depending on specific field-dependent principles. For example, fruit types are *fem*-gender (*die Birne* 'pear', *die Apfelsine* 'orange'); vegetable types are *masc*-gender (*der Spargel* 'asparagus', *der Brokkoli* 'broccoli') or *fem*-gender (*die Tomate* 'tomato', *die Zucchini* 'zucchini'), depending on the plant part from which the vegetable is derived.⁸ Referring expressions for cars are productively *masc*-gender (*der BMW*, *der Mercedes C200*) while corresponding referring expressions for motorcycles are productively *fem*-gender (*die BMW*, *die Harley-Davidson*).
- c. **Subordinate terms** inherit their gender from the dominating basic-level term. For example beer subtypes (*das Pilsner*, *das Dortmunder*) inherit *neut*-gender from the basic-level term *das Bier*. Wine subtypes (*der Riesling*, *der Burgunder*) inherit *masc*-gender from the basic-level term *der Wein*. Soda subtypes (*die Cola*, *die Fanta*) inherit their *fem*-gender from the basic-level terms *die Brause* and *die Limonade*.⁹

2.2 Empirical support for non-arbitrary gender assignment in German

But just how inclusive are such gender-motivating principles in the lexicon? In order to test the generality of semantic principles, and of corresponding phonological principles, we have constructed an extensive cross-sectional random sample of the nominal lexicon in German (Zubin & Köpcke, in preparation), based on the *Duden Universalwörterbuch* (1983). In the analysis of this sample we created a measure of *cognitive entropy* on a scale ranging from 0 (no semantic association at all) to 5 (the nominal receives its gender based on a fully productive semantic principle); intermediate steps correspond to increasing degrees of generality of the basis for gender assignment.¹⁰ This was coupled with a corresponding measure of formal entropy, again ranging from 0–5. The combined mean entropy for nominals is about 5.0 indicating that on the average, gender assignment is fully motivated through a combination of semantic, phonological and morphological factors. Some nouns have an entropy as high as 10, indicating the cooperation of fully productive semantic and formal factors. And very few nouns in the sample have negative entropy (which indicates an anomalous gender assignment in conflict with overall semantic and phonological factors).

3. German *neut*-gender classification for human beings

3.1 Historical development and current productivity

Several of our studies include diachronic data showing that there is a general drift toward greater semantic motivation in the evolution of gender assignment in the lexicon. For example, the *neut*-gender human nouns – the topic of this paper – have their beginnings as a lexical field in the lexicon with nouns such as those in Table 1.

Table 1. The *neut*-gender nominal cluster for humans in the period between Middle High German and Early New High German

Lexeme	Diachronic Source (MHG > ENHG)	Current Meaning
<i>das Aas</i>	'rotting body'	'nasty woman'
<i>das Luder</i>	'bait'	'loose woman'
<i>das Mädchen</i>	'little girl' < Magd	'girl' (basic-level term)
<i>das Mensch*</i>	der Mensch 'human being'	'loose, useless woman'
<i>das Reff</i>	'skeleton'	'skinny old woman'
<i>das Weib</i>	'woman' (basic-level term)	'(ugly, old) woman'

**Das Mensch* is a *neut*-gender alternate that first appeared in the 16th century.

As the middle column suggests, such *neut*-gender nouns have a wide variety of etymological sources, with only a minority of them originating with female human reference. For example, *das Luder* referred to meat used as bait for trapping animals. One can only speculate about the origins of the cluster. But the following nouns form a plausible basis:

- a. *das Weib* has had *neut*-gender since its Germanic origins and was the basic-level term for 'woman' until the 16th century, when it was gradually replaced by *die Frau* and began to take on its pejorative meaning. The parallel semantic shift of other nouns such as *die Dirne* ('girl' > 'prostitute') points to a general culture-historical basis for the shift (cf. Grimm & Grimm 1984).
- b. *der Mensch* developed a *neut*-gender alternate in the 16th century. Initially this alternate made sex-neutral generic reference to humans, evident in citations from Luther, but then became increasingly restricted in reference to women, first as a completely neutral referring expression (parallel to *das Weib*), but then developing pejorative and objectifying affect in the 17/18th century (cf. Grimm & Grimm 1984).

- c. *das Mädchen* gradually replaced *die Magd* as the basic-level term for 'girl' in the 17/18th century.¹¹ There was no corresponding shift of *der Junge* or *der Knabe* 'boy' to *das Jüngchen* or *das Knäblein* as basic-level terms.

In the transitional period leading up to Early New High German the small group of nouns in Table 1, perhaps led by *das Mensch* and *das Weib*, developed form-meaning correspondences that brought them into a lexical cluster through a variety of processes detailed in Table 3. This small cluster was characterized by semantic/pragmatic downgrading on the one hand, and *neut*-gender on the other. The 19th and 20th centuries have seen a dramatic increase in the size of the cluster, leaving no doubt about its productive potential. In our sample of about 100 *neut*-gender human nominals from this period, many have entered the German lexicon in the last 50 years, some of these quite recently. A few recent additions are given in Table 2.

Nowhere is semantic motivation in the lexicon stronger than in the domain of nominals referring to human beings. Human sex is the basis for the typological distinction between gender systems, as in Indo-European or Australian languages such as Dyrbal (Dixon 1968, 1982) and other non-gender noun class systems such as those in Swahili/Bantu (Contini-Morava 2001) or Navajo/Athapaskan (Young & Morgan 1987) that do not function to distinguish sex. Indeed human sex is the basis for the linguistic term 'gender' itself. In German *masc*- and *fem*-gender are highly productive for nominals referring to human males and females, respectively.¹² Yet in the German lexicon there are long-noted exceptions to sex-based assignment, some already noted above in Tables 1 and 2. A systematic examination of such human-reference nouns shows that *neut*-gender nominals are not randomly distributed and have formed a cluster in the lexicon with some modest productivity, as illustrated

Table 2. Productivity of the *neut*-gender cluster

Lexeme	Diachronic Source (< 5–50 years)	Current Meaning
<i>das Bunny</i>	English: Playboy club bunny	'club hostess in costume'
<i>das Groupie</i>	English	'female rock-band fan'
<i>das Model*</i>	English	'(clothing, photo) model'
<i>das Pin-up</i>	English	'pinup' (picture, woman)
<i>das Video-Chick</i>	English	'female participant in MTV video'

*Pronounced [mádðl]. The lexeme *Modell* [modél] is older and has a more complex history.

Table 3. Diachronic mechanisms in the evolution of human-reference *neut*-gender nominals

Process Type	Neuter Examples	Literal Meaning
Animal metaphor	<i>das Bunny</i>	'little rabbit'
	<i>das Schwein</i>	'pig'
	<i>das Schaf</i>	'sheep'
Shape metaphor	<i>das Klappergestell</i>	'flimsy rack'
	<i>das Knochengestell</i>	'bony scaffold'
Objectification/ dehumanization	<i>das (Sexual-)objekt</i>	'sexual object'
	<i>das Element</i>	'element'
	<i>das Model</i>	'model'
	<i>das Ding</i>	'thing'
Diminutive/ trivialization	<i>das Entlein</i>	'duckling'
	<i>das Hürchen</i>	'little whore'
	<i>das Hausmütterchen</i>	'little house-mother'
Metonymy	<i>das Frauenzimmer</i>	'women's parlor'
	<i>das Callgirl, Covergirl</i>	'call girl, cover girl'
	<i>das Ding</i>	'thing'*
	<i>das Ekel</i>	'disgust'
	<i>das Flittchen < vb flittern</i>	'little flitterer'
	<i>das Loch</i>	'hole'
Archetype† (fairy-tale based)	<i>das Aschenputtel</i>	'Cinderella'
	<i>das Schneewittchen</i>	'Snow White'
	<i>das Rotkäppchen</i>	'Little Red Riding Hood'

*Also, euphemistic reference to vulva, penis.

†Giesela Breitling, writing in *Die Tageszeitung* 3/8/1991, captures the current cultural relevance of fairytale archetypes: "Sie [die Märchenfiguren] sind eingewoben in ein kunstvolles Gebilde aus Geschichten, von denen wir ein Echo vernommen haben in unserer Kindheit, als wir einige dieser Geschichten in kindgemäß zurechtgestutzter Fassung gelesen hatten oder vorgelesen bekamen. [...] – Aschenbrödel, Schneewittchen, Schneeweißchen und Rosenrot –, diesen Griseldis-Figuren, diesen Idiotinnen an Gefühl und Verstand: *richtungsweisende Disziplinierungsinstrumente, die uns Unterwürfigkeit und Schweigen als weibliche Kardinaltugenden angedient haben*" [italics ours].

in Table 2. The nominals in this cluster have the diachronic sources depicted in Table 3.

3.2 Metonymic motivation of German *neut*-gender nouns

At this point we turn to the central role that metonymy plays as a source of *neut*-gender for human-reference nouns discussed in Section 3.1. Many are based on metonymically structured perspectival ICMs, as defined in Figure 2.

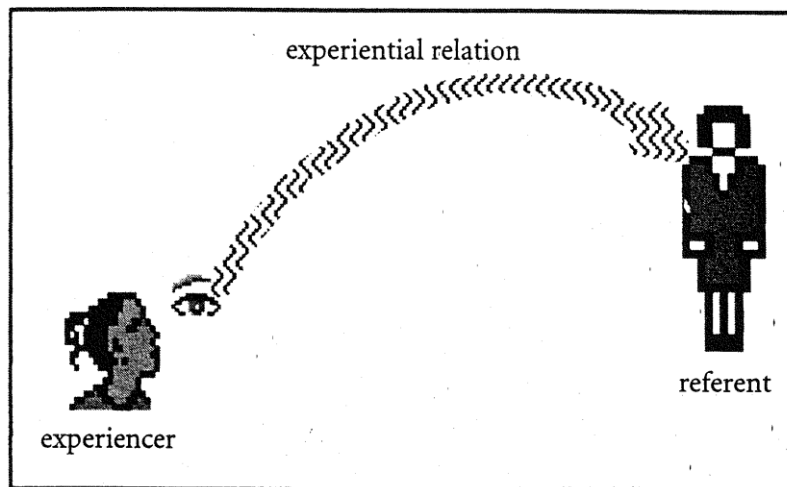


Figure 2. Perspectival metonymically-structured ICMs.

These are an elaboration of the basic metonymic ICM presented in Figure 1. The ICMs are *perspectival* in that they contain not only a referent (an object of perspective) and a stereotype, but also an experiencer and an experiential relation that may have affective content in what Langacker (1990) identifies as a subjective viewing arrangement.¹³

There are at least four subtypes of perspective in these ICMs, as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Types of perspective in the metonymically structured ICMs for downgrading women

PERSPECTIVES	CHARACTERIZATIONS
Type A	The experiencer expresses negative affect such as disapproval, rejection, scorn, dislike, trivialization toward the referent. This ICM is evoked by <i>neut</i> -gender nominals such as <i>Weib</i> 'woman', <i>Reff</i> 'skeleton', <i>Luder</i> 'bait', <i>Ferkel</i> 'piglet', and <i>Aas</i> 'rotten body'.
Type B	The experiencer treats the referent as a visual object. This ICM is evoked by <i>neut</i> -gender nominals such as <i>Mannequin</i> , <i>Model</i> , <i>Pin-up</i> , <i>Revuegirl</i> , and <i>Centerfold</i> .
Type C	The experiencer treats the referent as an object of inspection or analysis, which typically implicates depersonalization. This ICM is evoked by nominals such as <i>Objekt</i> 'object', <i>Subjekt</i> 'subject', <i>Wesen</i> 'being'.
Type D	The experiencer views the referent as the embodiment of (presexual) innocence and conformity to (stereotypic) social values.

In all, we have identified nine subtypes of metonymic grounding that account for about 80% of our exhaustive sample of *neut*-gender human nouns:

- a. **Body part, physical characteristic.** In some cases the metonymic source is transparent, as with *das Mannweib* ('butch,' lit. 'man-woman'); in others the metonymic source is synchronically obscure, as with *das Besteck* 'set of instruments'.
- b. **Dress, accompanying objects.** This includes nouns like *das Rotkäppchen* (lit. 'red cap', i.e. 'little red riding hood'), which evokes a piece of clothing, and *das Nummerngirl* (lit. 'number girl', i.e. 'woman who holds sign on shows'), which evokes a held object.
- c1. **Characteristic activity, behavior.** This includes monolexemic nouns like *das Groupie*, which evoke a specific type of behavior, and compound nouns such as *das Klageweib* (lit. 'weeping woman') that actually describe behavior.
- c2. **Behavior based on animal metaphor.** The initial referential transfer for these nouns is based on an animal metaphor that (stereotypically) describes characteristic behavior. Metonymic reference to a person is then accomplished by using the metaphor to evoke this behavior. Examples are *das Schaf* ('sheep'), which evokes passive dependent behavior or disposition, and *das Schwein* ('pig'), which evokes sloppy and or socially offensive behavior.
- d. **Status.** Some *neut*-gender nouns evoke the social or personal status of the referent, sometimes through an animal metaphor. Examples are *das Mündel* ('ward'), evoking legal dependency, and *das Küken* ('chick'), evoking physical immaturity (as well as other properties).
- e. **Intersubjective reaction.** In this type the structure of the background metonymically structured ICM is especially apparent. Some *neut*-gender nouns in the group, such as *das Ekel* ('disgusting person,' lit. 'disgust'), evoke the affective reaction directly.¹⁴ Others such as *das Miststück* ('piece of dung') evoke an object or situation that gives rise to the affective reaction. In these cases there is an initial metaphor underlying the metonymic relation.
- f. **Representation.** In this type the nominal evokes a representation (picture, doll, puppet, etc.) of a human being. In some cases both the source and the target of the metonymic relation may be referred to, e.g. *das Centerfold*, which may refer both to the picture in the center of the magazine, and to the person who is depicted there.
- g. **Archetype.** In this type a social archetype is named in order to evoke characteristic behavior, appearance, etc. *Das Flintenweib* ('gun-woman'), for

example, describes the archetype of a frontier woman with gun in hand in order to evoke aggressive, uncompromising behavior.

- h. **Instance.** These are nominals that to a greater or lesser extent segregate an individual from a group or collection. Depersonalization is often a perlocutionary effect of this metonymic process. Examples are *das Unikum* ('original') and *das Weibsstück* ('hussy,' lit. 'piece of woman').
- i. **Location.** These nominals evoke reference to a characteristic location. The classic example is *das Frauenzimmer* ('skirt,' lit. 'woman's room'), which has followed a complex diachronic metonymic pathway: (a) the 19th century women's parlor; (b) women gathered in such a parlor; (c) women of a class to participate in parlor gatherings; (d) a single woman as in (c); and finally (e) a shift from positive to negative affect in the metonymically structured ICM.

Whatever their metonymic source, the examples given in (a)-(i) above all depend on the perspectival metonymic ICM structure depicted in Figures 1 and 2. For example, *das Ekel* 'disgusting person' evokes a perspectival ICM in which the experiencer feels disgust in the presence of the object of experience. *Flintenweib* 'gun-woman' evokes a cultural stereotype of the hardy independent frontier woman when used as a referring expression. In general the examples discussed in this section are characteristic of the approximately 100 nouns in our database of *neut*-gender downgrading human nominals.

4. Metonymic processes in discourse: the Waggerl text

We now turn to the final issue: given that there is a nominal cluster in the lexicon that continues to attract human *neut*-gender nominals, and given that the processes underlying the growth of this cluster are supported by metonymic ICMs, we may pose the question, to what extent do these lexical structures play a role in discourse processes, in particular in lexical choice and in pronominal anaphora (see also Ruiz de Mendoza & Pérez Hernández, this volume)?¹⁵

We will illustrate the impact that these lexical structures have on discourse processes in the short story *Legende der drei Pfänder der Liebe* ('The Legend of the Three Pledges of Love') by Karl Waggerl. The story tells of a young village pot-maker who leaves his girl and goes off to sell his wares in the surrounding towns. She gives him three pledges of love: a hair ribbon, a ring, and a knife. On his travels he camps alone, as promised, and each night he is visited by a mysterious woman who sleeps with him. Each morning he gives this woman

one of the love pledges from his girl at home, and on the third night the knife. On the way home he finds the ribbon and the ring, and begins to wonder. Upon entering his house he finds his girl there with the knife in her breast, and realizes that his girl and the mysterious woman are one and the same.

A few pertinent highlights will help to make clear the role that gender plays in structuring the story. First, the story evokes two contrasting archetypes (cf. Figure 1): the sexually innocent naive female bound to village life and morality (β ICM), lexicalized with the *neut*-gender noun *Mädchen*, and the sexually experienced, citified, independent, amoral female (α' ICM), lexicalized with the *fem*-gender noun *Frau*. Second, in section A of the story (see Appendix) in which the girl is the object of perspective, anaphoric pronouns are consistently *neut*-gender. In section B in which the woman is perspectivized, anaphoric pronouns are consistently *fem*-gender.

Finally comes the somewhat unusual syntax of section C, with which the issues of this paper were introduced: “Da wußte er, daß sie es war, die er dreimal geliebt und dreimal verraten hatte.” On a syntactic level the *es* is an expletive pronoun in a cleft construction; i.e. a purely syntactic unit presumably incapable of referring. But on a pragmatic level, such expletive pronouns can be at least quasi-referential.¹⁶ In the sentence at hand, *es* can be secondarily taken to evoke the *neut*-archetype (β in Figure 1), which then metonymically refers to the innocent village girl character.¹⁷ The *sie*, on the other hand, evokes the marked *fem*-archetype (α' in Figure 1), which in turn metonymically refers to the mysterious woman character.¹⁸ A further complication is presented by the following relative clause – *die er dreimal geliebt und dreimal verraten hatte* – containing two verb phrases, coordinately conjoined to the relative clause head, the *fem*-gender pronoun *die*. Up to this point in the story, the referent of “dreimal geliebt” (‘loved three times’) is, from the young man’s perspective, the mysterious woman; and the referent of “dreimal verraten” (‘betrayed three times’) is his village girlfriend. In other words, from his psychological perspective, these are two separate individuals. So who is the referent of the relative pronoun *die*? It cannot be either the girl or the woman, metonymically referenced through the two cultural archetypes, since each of the two predicates applies to only one of them. It can only be a direct, non-metonymic reference (α in Figure 1) to that female person in the story world who plays both the role of the girl and of the woman. The stylistic peculiarity of this sentence thus resides in the fact that with extreme syntactic compactness Waggerl evokes both culturally opposed archetypes for females, and then refers to the “real” person standing behind the archetypes.

5. Conclusion

The Waggerl story of the three pledges provides an extensive, systematic, and sophisticated exploitation of the group of ICMs for females presented in Figure 1, leaving open the question whether such exploitation is limited to specific literary genres such as the archaic folk tale. In conclusion we turn to some short passages from current journalistic cultural critique to show that the use of *neut*-gender terms for women, and the metonymic ICM they project onto, has current and wide cultural validity. We take up each of the four perspectival choices set out in Table 4.

Perspective type A: disapproval, rejection, scorn. The following passage contains a double perspective. It is a feminist portrayal of the conservative culture's attitude toward feminists, and their supposedly destructive effects on young men:

Sexualverbot, Geschlechtertrennung und die Warnungen vieler Eltern vor dem Leben und Karriere zerstörenden bösen Weib prägten die hoffnungsvollen jungen Männer. (Tageszeitung 3/8/1991, p. 13)

The *neut*-gender term *Weib* is used by the feminist writer to satirize the use of this noun by conservatives to express their distaste for feminist actions and issues. Thus the passage illustrates both the use of this term by one segment of society to express scorn and rejection toward another, but also the use of the term by the target of scorn themselves to make fun of their tormentors.

Perspective type B: visual object. The following passage describes a poster model in terms of her physical appearance and her affects on the viewer in the context of advertising for a business specializing in physical appearance.

Auf riesigen Plakaten hängt das 'Model mit runden Formen, üppigem Busen und gesundem Selbstbewußtsein' in allen Schaufenstern der Hamburger Body Shop-Filialen. 'Schön ist, wer sich wohl fühlt', wirbt die Creme-und-Shampoo-Kette. (Tageszeitung 3/7/1998, p. 36)

The overall context makes clear that the model is presented as a visually attractive object. Even the expression "healthy self awareness" refers to her confident appearance, not to other, non-visual aspects of her person. Thus the context strongly supports the use of the *neut*-gender noun *das Model* and the metonymic model it projects onto.

Perspective type C: object of analysis. The following passage is taken from an analytic description of a painting:

[...] eine nackte Frau beim Leser darzustellen: leuchtendes, von Licht getöntes Inkarnat vor dunklem Tizianrot.” (Die Zeit 29, 7/17/87, p. 17)

The *neut*-gender noun *Inkarnat* literally denotes the flesh-toned colors used to depict the model's body, and thus metonymically refers to the model herself. The choice of noun and its context decompose her into the play of paint color on the canvas. The use of the noun *Inkarnat* in this context thus evokes the sense of extreme analytic distance from the described person as a human being.

Perspective type D: innocence, conformity to stereotypic cultural values. In this passage the feminist writer laments the stereotypic cultural values (“female cardinal virtues”) embodied by fairytale archetypes such as Cinderella and Snow White.

[...] Aschenbrödel, Schneewittchen, Schneeweißchen und Rosenrot – , diesen Griseldis-Figuren, diesen Idiotinnen an Gefühl und Verstand: richtungsweisende Disziplinierungsinstrumente, die uns Unterwürfigkeit und Schweigen als weibliche Kardinaltugenden angedient haben. (Tageszeitung 3/8/1991, p. 13)

The writer's point is that these archetypes are culturally current: listening to and reading stories with these characters during childhood has negative effects on the psyches of modern women.

The perspectives expressed in the metonymic ICM taken together form a linguistically marked category, marked by the *neut*-gender of their associated nominals. The increasing productivity of the ICM – evidenced by the consistent assignment of *neut*-gender to the influx of primarily English loans over the last 50 years – points to what appears to be a cultural distinction of current relevance in German society in which men are monovalent (they have one status: male) while women are bivalent: they are female, and they have specially marked perspectival values.¹⁹

Notes

1. For a synopsis of the story, see the last section of the paper and the Appendix. Feminine gender referring expressions are marked with single underlining, neuters with double. The abbreviations *masc-*, *fem-*, and *neut-gender* are used to refer to the morphological and lexical gender properties of nouns, pronouns, and referring NPs in order to distinguish them from

both sex and the so-called “natural gender” of referents. The reader is asked to note the alternation between feminine and neuter gender in this passage.

2. lit: “... that she was it whom he had loved...”
3. In a standard syntactic analysis the clause “daß sie es war” is analyzed as an expletive construction, with the implication that the pronoun *es* is non-referential. In Section 4.2 we will argue that this pronoun is *simultaneously* licensed by the expletive construction *and* potentially referential, following functionalist analyses of such phenomena as impersonal and reflexive constructions. In functionalist approaches to syntax such as Construction Grammar, syntactic dependency and semantic/pragmatic value do not preclude each other.
4. Square brackets enclose expansion of Lakoff’s points.
5. Lakoff’s (1987:84) formulation: “Compared to A, B is either easier to understand, easier to remember, easier to recognize, *or more immediately useful for the given purpose in the given context*” [italics ours]. We make use here of the final alternative in the disjunction.
6. Examples from Lakoff and Johnson (1980:36–37) will illustrate:
 - a. We need a couple of *strong bodies* (B) for our team (A=strong people)
 - b. There are a lot of *good heads* (B) in the university (A=intelligent people)
 - c. She’s just a *pretty face* (B) (A=good-looking woman)

Note that not only is the *content* of each of the metonymic B’s appropriate to the context of utterance, and cannot be substituted in the others (e.g. ??? *We need a couple of pretty faces for our team*) but that this specific content surfaces in the interpretation of each of the utterances, e.g. strong bodies help the team succeed.

7. Unmarked referential forms (α) have *fem*-gender, and refer directly to discourse-world individuals. Marked (neuter) forms (β) evoke an intermediate scenario. Context may induce an intermediate scenario for *fem*-gender forms, labeled (α').
8. While many basic-level nouns exhibit field-dependent gender assignment, others seem to have idiosyncratic gender. Basic-level terms for drinks exhibit all three genders. *Masc*-gender: *Wein* ‘wine’, *Schnaps* ‘liquor’, *Saft* ‘juice’; *fem*-gender: *Milch* ‘milk’, *Limonade* ‘soda’; *neut*-gender *Wasser* ‘water’, *Bier* ‘beer’. But note that each is a hub for the productive assignment of gender to subordinate nominals, as pointed out below. The myth of extensively arbitrary gender assignment in German and other noun-class languages stems largely from almost exclusive attention being paid to a small set of high-frequency basic-level nouns.
9. An exacting analysis of gender in oral and written discourse reveals that soda types in fact vary between *fem*- and *neut*-gender. This variation is recent, and seems to stem from the competition of *Brause* and *Limonade* on the one hand and (*Mineral*-) *wasser* on the other for the dominating node in the lexical network.
10. In other words, the higher the numerical value on the cognitive entropy scale, the more semantically and/or formally motivated is gender assignment; conversely, the lower the numerical value, the higher the degree of arbitrariness of gender assignment.
11. It has often been argued that *Mädchen* and some of the other *neut*-gender human-referring nominals have *neut*-gender only because of their derivational suffix *-chen*, which is categorically associated with *neut*-gender, and do not have any semantic basis, other than

the diminutive meaning of the suffix itself. Proponents of such an hypothesis would have to explain (i) that such *chen*-suffixed nouns have become conventionalized for reference to females, and *not* to males; (ii) that *Mädchen* in particular has become the basic-level term for 'girl', while the corresponding *Jünglein* remains a semantic diminutive for *Junge* 'boy'; and that (iii) an increasing number of non-diminutive terms such as *Playmate*, *Groupie*, and *Video-chick* are receiving *neut*-gender assignment as they enter this lexical field. The form-obsessed analyst must face the possibility that the structuring of this field is driven by *pragmatic* forces and that word morphology is just a pawn in the process.

12. And *masc*-gender is highly productive for generic-reference nominals, one of the main sources of difficulty in attempts to make the language more sexually egalitarian (cf. Bußmann 1995).

13. This in contrast to Langacker's "optimal viewing arrangement," in which only the referent is in the scope of predication.

14. Note that the nominal expressing the emotion of revulsion itself is *masc*-gender: *der Ekel*.

15. Pronominal anaphora is of course important for the current study when it agrees in gender with its *neut*-gender antecedent.

16. In the so-called "weather" construction the *es* in *es regnet, schneit* ('it is raining, snowing') does not seem to evoke any referent. But in the context of other verbs the *es* is associated with a vague, indeterminate referent: *es hat eben geklopft* ('someone just knocked'); and in the context of an extraposed complement, the *es* is understood as cataphoric: *es gefiel ihm, daß sie da war* ('it pleased him that she was there').

17. That Waggenerl would use a *double-entendre* at this point is characteristic of his mastery of the short story.

18. A further problem with this pronoun *sie* is the lack of gender agreement with its antecedent *sein Mädchen* (see Appendix). This is problematic for a derivation-based syntactic theory, which in characterizing agreement maps fully specified features of a head (noun) onto a target (pronoun), but not for a constraint-based theory such as HPSG, in which referential indices may be under pragmatic control. In commenting on:

(a) That dog is so stupid, every time I see *it* I want to kick *it*. *He's* a damned good hunter, though.

Pollard and Sag (1994:73–74) note that "as illustrated in [a], a pronoun that refers to an entity already referred to by some earlier expression may have a new index with agreement features different from those of the earlier expression, *in order to serve some specific discourse purpose (in the present case, to signal a change of attitude toward the referent)*. In such cases, according to our definition, the earlier expression does not qualify as an antecedent; to put it another way, instead of being 'referentially dependent' on the earlier expression, such pronoun uses must be regarded as *deictic*" [italics ours].

19. A new archetype we have become aware of from current journalism, especially teen literature, is the sassy independent, unconstrained, sexually active, aggressive young woman who is free of the traditional constraints of womanhood, embodied e.g. in cartoon characters such as "das Tankgirl." The two nouns most closely associated with this archetype are *das Mädchen* and the borrowed noun *das Girl*, both *neut*-gender. It looks like youth culture

has “stolen” these nouns from the old archetype of dependence and sexual innocence, and appropriated them for their own archetype embodying strikingly contrasting values.

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Appendix

Excerpts from: Waggerl, Karl Heinrich. *Legende von den drei Pfändern der Liebe*. In: *Kalendergeschichten*. Insel-Verlag, no year.

Underlinings: = feminine gender, = neuter gender. Square brackets indicate bridging summary not in the original.

A Da war ein armer Mann, ein Kesselschmied in einem Dorf, der hatte ein Mädchen, mit dem er bald Hochzeit halten wollte. Und das war gut, denn das Mädchen liebte ihn mehr als alles in der Welt. Weil es aber nun am Geld für die Heirat fehlte, [zog] ... der Mann in die Fremde, um seine Kessel in den Dörfern zu verkaufen. ... Da weinte nun das Mädchen und bat ihn, zu bleiben. "Du wirst nicht wiederkommen," klagte es, "ach, du wirst mir untreu werden...!" ... Das Mädchen schwieg und verbarg seinen Kummer vor ihm. Aber als er auszog, gab es ihm drei Pfänder der Liebe mit auf den Weg [Haarband, Ring, und Messer ... Als er nach der Arbeit auf dem Markt sein Nachtlager fand], geschah es, daß sich in der Dunkelheit eine fremde Frau an sein Lager gesellte. "Du gefällst mir," flüsterte sie, "du junger Kesselschmied!" ... Er küßte die fremde Frau und vergaß alles und zog sie an sich. "Hast du kein Mädchen," fragte sie...? "Nein," antwortete der Mann ... Und vor Tag, als die Frau von ihm Abschied nahm, und als sie zu weinen anfang, da schenkte er ihr ein Band für das Haar zum Angebinde. ... [In der zweiten Nacht] kam abermals eine Frau aus der Stadt an sein Lager, die sagte ihm süße Worte ins Ohr und schief bei ihm. "Hast du kein Mädchen daheim," fragte sie leise...?

B "Nein..." ...auch in der dritten Nacht schlief er nicht allein, und sie schien ihm die kostbarste von allen zu sein, diese Frau in der dritten Nacht. Die Frau schlang plötzlich die Arme um seinen Hals und küßte ihn und weinte bitterlich. ... "Ach," sagte die Frau, "ich bin todtraurig. Sicher hast du ein Mädchen daheim, das dich so liebt wie ich und das vor Kummer stirbt..." Da verlangte der Mann nur noch heißer nach dieser Frau und schwor seine Liebe vor ihr ab... Und am Ende der Nacht bat ihn die Frau um ein Zeichen, daß sie an ihn denken könnte. ...er fand nur sein Messer in der Tasche, und das gab er ihr zuletzt, weil es blank und scharf war, ein hübsches Ding. ...

C Nun...dachte er heimzukehren.... [Auf dem Heimweg findet er bei seinen Nachtlagern den Ring und das Band wieder]. In der letzten Nacht aber kam er endlich heim.... Und als er in die Stube kam, da lag sein Mädchen auf der Bahre. Da wußte er, daß sie es war, die er dreimal geliebt und dreimal verraten hatte, und nun steckte sein Messer mitten in ihrer weißen Brust.

A There was once a poor man, a village pot maker, who had a girl whom he soon wanted to marry. And that was fine, since the girl loved him more than anything in the world. But since there was not enough money for the wedding, the man went off from home in order to sell his pots in other villages. Now the girl cried and begged him to stay. "You'll never come back," she wailed, "you won't be faithful to me!" Then the girl was quiet and concealed her sorrow. But as he left, she gave him three pledges of (her) love to take with him, a hair ribbon, a ring, and a knife. When he had finished a day's work at the market and found a camp for the night, it happened that in the dark a mysterious woman came to be with him. "You're nice," she whispered, "you little pot maker, you." He kissed the mysterious woman and forgot everything and drew her to him. "Don't you have a girl?" she asked. "No," answered the man. And before morning, as the woman took leave of him, and as she began to cry, he gave her a ribbon to put in (her) hair. The second night a woman came again from town to his camp. She whispered sweet things in his ear and slept with him. "Don't you have a girl at home" she asked softly. No. ... Neither in the third night did he sleep alone, and she seemed to him the most precious of all, this woman in the third night. The woman suddenly threw (her) arms around his neck and kissed him and cried bitterly. "Ah!" cried the woman, "I'm so sad I could die. Surely you have a girl at home who loves you as I do and who will die of sorrow." Then the man desired this woman even more passionately and declared his love to her. And at the end of the night the woman begged him for a token for her to remember him by. But he could find only the knife in his pocket, and that he finally gave her, because it was shiny and sharp, a pretty thing. And now his thoughts turned to the trip home. [On the way he finds at his sleeping places the ring and the ribbon] The last night he finally arrived at home. And when he entered the main room, there lay his girl on the bier. And then C he knew, that she was the one that he had loved three times, and three times betrayed, and now there was his knife, thrust in the middle of her white breast.