Great Men and Charming Creatures

On Male and Female Terms in Eighteenth Century Novels

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Abstract

A corpus of terms for human beings collected from 18th century novels is studied from a broad sociolinguistic perspective. A summary of recent linguistic theories and a survey of 18th century culture and society are provided as background. The basic assumption is that the meaning of words is dependent on human beings and their society and that shifts in meaning are linked to changes in attitudes, culture and social structure. Terms used for men and women therefore mirror the concepts of 'male' and 'female' in a society.

Gender differences found in various semantic fields are presented and discussed. Prototypes for certain terms are suggested by means of frame analysis. Sense developments are traced and related to societal changes. Differences in male and female usage are discussed. The findings are analyzed in terms of the following contrasts within the concepts of 'male' and 'female': spirit/matter; power/dependency; active/passive; varied/limited.

Keywords: eighteenth century; sociolinguistics; semantics; experiential realism; gender role; conceptual model; prototype; frame; domain; collocation; metaphor; male; female; epicene; spirit/matter; power/dependency; active/passive; varied/limited.
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Anna-Lena Wallin-Ashcroft

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To Steve
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they were little, they also supplied me with a saying that may serve as an epigram for my thesis: "Mamma-vägar är senvägar" ('Mum’s routes are slow routes...')!

Orthographic conventions

Double inverted commas (" ..... "):  
- Quotations within the body-text.  
- Presentation of linguistic terms and semantic categories.  
- Translations.

Single inverted commas (' ..... '):  
- Meanings, concepts and attribute values

*Italics*:  
- Terms and expressions discussed.

Spelling:  
The spelling in the quotations is the variant used in the edition from which it is taken.
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Theoretical background
The last forty years have seen a rapid expansion in linguistic research. The complex phenomenon that is human language has been approached and studied from new angles. New pieces of information and understanding have been found and fitted into this open-ended jigsaw puzzle.

Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957), based on a biological view of language, challenged the behaviouristic view that dominated the scene at the time and became the starting-point for an intense search for linguistic universals. Chomsky claimed that the basics of language, the "deep structure", must be genetically inherited. The context-free, generative grammar that he produced became, among other things, a useful tool in the accelerating development of computer languages. Ironically, some recent theories emerging from this new field of computational linguistics challenge in turn Chomsky's basic ideas. According to some linguists there are no universal rules of grammar that are genetically inherited. Language acquisition is achieved by adjusting (strengthening and weakening) the connections within neural networks in the brain – a new form of behaviourism (Shanks, 1993:26-30).

1.1.1. Semantics
The search for linguistic universals spread also into the field of semantics. In Chomsky's transformational model, meaning depended on the deep structure and was analysed in terms of sense components (Chomsky, 1965). The belief that there are basic atoms of meanings that are used as building blocks in the formation of lexemes became the basis for componential analysis, a method propagated and tested in the sixties primarily by J.J. Katz and J.A. Fodor (Katz & Fodor, 1964). The decomposition of lexemes into universal and taxonomically related sense components such as 'human', 'male', 'adult', attracted many researchers because of its simple and seemingly efficient
approach to formalising the fuzzy area of meaning. It soon became apparent, however, that very few lexemes were discrete enough for their meanings to be exhaustively – and unanimously – decomposed into basic, universal components.

Componential analysis met with criticism from several quarters. Exponents of truth-conditional semantics attacked the formal logic of the theory, claiming that it used circular arguments when defining semantic components by a lexeme the whole content of which was the semantic component itself (Persson, 1990:13). John Lyons criticised both Chomsky, componential analysis and truth-conditional semantics for regarding language as "essentially an instrument for the expression of propositional thought" and neglecting "the phenomenon of subjectivity" (Lyons, 1981:236, 240). This shift in emphasis from the abstract and formal properties of language to its more subjective and communicative aspects has continued during the eighties and nineties and led to new, fruitful theories and investigations that have contributed to the general theoretical framework of this study.

One of the most influential linguistic models that has emerged during the last decade is "cognitive grammar". In contrast to Chomsky, Ronald Langacker and others argue that grammar cannot be regarded as an autonomous level of linguistic structure, separate from meaning. All grammatical elements carry some meaning, albeit not always immediately transparent. Langacker calls his model "the symbolic alternative", since only symbolic links, "pairings between semantic and phonological structures" are needed for an exhaustive description of grammatical structures and restrictions (Langacker, 1995:89). Grammar has been reduced to symbolic relationships.

As the role played by grammar in the more traditional sense has diminished, attention has focussed on the lexicon. According to Jean Aitchison, a number of linguists now regard the lexicon as "the central component of a person's internal grammar with the syntax as subsidiary" (1994:232). Instead of being seen largely as a list of words that act as a sort of labels, it is now believed to be the base from which
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much of the syntax is projected. In her own analysis of the mental lexicon Aitchison emphasises the network structure, the need to study words not in isolation but in relation to other words. In this structure the links between co-hyponyms and the collacational links are firmer and more basic than the vertical links between superordinates and hyponyms. The hyponymy connections require analytical reasoning and are not part of the basic storage of the mental lexicon.

Aitchison also subscribes in general to the so called prototype theories, based on experiments carried out in the seventies by the psychologist Eleanor Rosch (1975). Since the meanings of most words are too fluid and fuzzy to be broken down into a discrete number of components that are both necessary and sufficient, the question why humans still seem to have few problems in agreeing on them remained. Rosch found that certain examples of a category are regarded as “better” or more typical than others. A chair is a better example of 'furniture' than a refrigerator and a sparrow is "birdier" than a penguin. When confronted with a new object, people match it against a typical example of a category, a prototype, when deciding whether it fits into the category or not. It does not have to be a perfect fit, rather the kind of "family resemblance" that Wittgenstein (1958:66-67) talked about. No single property has to be shared by all members of a family but they can still resemble each other.

In *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987) George Lakoff put forward a comprehensive theory about the nature of concepts and categories and their linguistic expression, which fits the prototype models into a wider theoretical framework. The basic idea of his "experiential realism" is that thought and reason are not abstract and independent of human beings and their make-up. Our conceptual system is instead directly or indirectly grounded in the human body, its movements and its perceptual system. It is also linked to the organisation of the society and culture in which we live. In Lakoff’s words, thought is "embodied" and "imaginative". Its structure is characterised by "idealised cognitive models", some of which are discreet, others scalar
with degrees of membership and therefore resulting in prototype effects. There are also metonymic and metaphoric models. All these models are "motivated by bodily or social experience" (Lakoff, 1987:154-55). Language consists of symbolic models that pair with this conceptual system.\(^1\) A theory of language as an abstract phenomenon without reference either to the basic outfit of the human beings using it, or to their knowledge, culture and society, will therefore inevitably produce limited results.

A very different approach to linguistic universals has been taken by Anna Wierzbicka. In *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition* (1992) she opposes the claims of prototype theorists that words are "fuzzy" and cannot be adequately defined. She also objects to the search for artificial sense components or features, claiming instead that the way forward goes via "systematic lexicographical research on a broad cross-linguistic and cross-cultural basis" (Wierzbicka, 1992:25). Wierzbicka has embarked on an ambitious search for universal words that make up a natural semantic metalanguage which is supposed to reflect the basic human conceptual system, irrespective of culture-specific contexts. According to her, it is essential to find or construct this "language" in order to define and compare meanings across cultural and linguistic boundaries, without a Western European or English bias. To be accepted as part of this basic linguistic set, the words, or lexical equivalents, must appear in all languages. They must be intuitively understandable and not in need of any further definition. Instead they must serve as building-blocks in the defining of other words. These criteria, if rigorously applied in the search for what she calls "semantic primitives", will probably result in a list comprising not more than a few dozen items, about ten of which Wierzbicka regards as having been proven valid so far, *e.g.* ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘something’, ‘say’, ‘want’, ‘think’ (1992:10-12). She demonstrates in her book how a number of human concepts and their lexicalisation in various languages can be examined and explained within this analytical framework.

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\(^1\) *Cf.* Langacker's "symbolic alternative" as described above.
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Another approach to the study of word meaning that has been widely adopted (and proved useful also for the present investigation) is concerned with the relations between words within a conceptual domain rather than with individual words. Theories about semantic fields were first put forward in the thirties, but have been taken up and further developed during the last decades by John Lyons, Adrienne Lehrer and Eva Kittay, among others. The basic idea in semantic field theory is that the meaning of a term is partly determined by its relations to other terms within a common or similar content domain (Lehrer, A. & Kittay, E., 1992:3). Although words can be characterised by defining properties, these properties "are determined through contrasts and affinities that become salient in a given context, or in a given grouping in which comparisons are drawn" (Kittay, 1992:236). It is presupposed that true synonymy does not exist. If two terms seem to denote exactly the same thing, the speech community tries to find a contrast. Gradually differentiating properties develop and a semantic field is being generated. A shift in meaning in one term will affect other terms in the same field. Sometimes there will be repercussions also in other fields, since terms often belong to different fields depending on the context (Kittay, 1992:243-245).

Whereas field theorists emphasise the importance of studying whole sets of lexemes within content domains and how they are related to each other, frame theorists focus on the meaning of words with reference to a structured conceptual background. C. J. Fillmore, the "father" of frame semantics as well as of the earlier case grammar, illustrates the difference between the two approaches with the example of terms for weekdays (Fillmore, C.J. & Atkins, B.T., in Lehrer, 1992:77). Field semanticists would identify the terms Monday, Tuesday etc, as items in a closed, cyclic set, partly defined by their positions in the cycle and their relationship to the set label, week. Frame semanticists would instead concentrate on how these terms fit into our whole conceptual structure of time, made up by our background knowledge about the movement of the earth in relation to the sun as well as about our practices of dividing
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up the week between work and non-work, and so on.

Frames have proved to be a useful tool for analysing and defining terms and also for tracing developments in word meaning. Several linguists have adopted the theory and developed and adapted it in various ways. Lawrence Barsalou (in the above volume) presents a model for frame analysis in which the frame comprises all the aspects that are relevant in the context. These aspects are described by attributes which in turn are defined by the values they can take. A frame for car, for example, may include the attributes ‘driver’, ‘fuel’, ‘engine’, ‘transmission’ and ‘wheels’. The ‘transmission’ attribute can take the value ‘automatic’ or ‘standard’, the wheels attribute the values ‘steel’ or ‘alloy’ etc. (Barsalou, 1992:30). The most common combination of values across the relevant attributes make up the prototype for a category (Barsalou, 1992:47).

Gunnar Persson has shown how this model can be fruitfully used to describe sense developments in diachronic word studies. In his article Social Change, Prototypes and Word Meaning Persson traces the various stages of the lexeme spinster in terms of changes in the attribute-value sets (Persson, 1994b:169-177). This method has also been employed in the present study.

1.1.2. Language and society

The last few decades have seen a growing interest in various aspects of the relationship between language and society. It is of course not a new discovery that factors such as social class, age and gender are of importance for linguistic variation. It is only lately, however, that this variation has been studied in a structured and quantitative way. Some researchers, e.g. William Labov in America and Peter Trudgill in England have been mainly interested in variability and change as linguistic phenomena. Their detailed and quantitative studies of social and regional dialects are basically aimed at gaining more knowledge about the nature of language. Others have adopted a broader view of the interdependence of linguistic and social phenomena, especially as far as the lexicon is concerned. In Language – The Loaded Weapon Dwight Bolinger (1980) shows how
language not only reflects values and attitudes prevailing in society but also how it can be used as a hidden tool to create and enforce them. Geoffrey Hughes (1988) endorses the same view of the manipulative power of language, but takes on a diachronic perspective in *Words in Time*, a study of the relation between social change and semantic change in English from the Middle Ages and down to our time. Detailed investigations of semantic fields, with new terms plotted along a time scale, demonstrate the impact on language of religious, economic and political developments. In *Language and Class in Victorian England* K. C. Phillipps (1984) takes out a chunk from this historical spectrum and studies it more closely, concentrating on the covariation between language and social class. The book is a survey of upper and lower class usage in the 19th century, based on ample examples from a wide variety of sources. Changes in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and modes of address are recorded and put into the context of developments taking place in society, the democratisation process in particular.

1.1.3. Language and gender

An area of sociolinguistics that has attracted much attention during the last twenty years is the correlation between language and gender. Ever since the 18th century grammarians (all male) tried to standardise the English language, male usage has been taken as the norm and female usage, when different, as deviation. Whenever female language has differed from male, it has therefore been commented on and, by definition regarded as less desirable. This is now changing, partly due to new, non-prescriptive attitudes among linguists, and partly to a new consciousness about sexism in language, mainly brought about by the feminist movement. These two causes have resulted in different approaches to the analysis of gender differences in language use: one that interprets the differences simply as a result of men and women belonging to different

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2 For a comprehensive survey of research done in this field, see Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language* (1993) from which most of the following information is taken.
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sub-cultures, and one that interprets them as reflecting the pattern of dominance and subordination in society (Coates, 1986:12). One of the earliest and most prominent proponents of the second approach is Dale Spender, who in *Man Made Language* (1980) provocatively and often convincingly, argues that men control language and, albeit subconsciously, use it as a tool to retain their superior position in society.

Some of the differences in male and female language patterns that have been exposed by structured and quantitative studies are connected to social groupings and conversational contexts. It has been shown that female speakers use more overtly prestigious forms (forms that are closer to Standard English) than male speakers, when there is a choice of variants (as related in Coates, 1993). Women tend to conform to the language pattern used by men on the peg just above them on the social ladder. This is interpreted by I. Cheshire (1982) and L. Milroy (1980) as resulting from a difference in social networks. Vernacular forms are reinforced by tightly knit networks where a group of people interact in many areas of life (workplace, housing, social activities), a type of network that traditionally has been typical of lower class men. In this kind of social context it is often the nonstandard forms that are (covertly) prestigious. Women have belonged to more loosely-knit networks and have therefore been more inclined to adopt the norms of Standard English. The fact that female speakers tend to use swear-words and taboo words less frequently than male speakers is interpreted as part of the same pattern. There are signs, however, that this difference is levelling out, as working patterns for men and women change.

Another factor of importance is the conversational context. Gender differences in communicative competence have been found by researchers interested in discourse analysis. Women use a more cooperative conversational style, characterised by minimal responses and other supportive devices, while men's conversation is more assertive and competitive, with frequent overlaps and interruptions. The female style is effective in all-women groups, which tend to be less hierarchical in structure than all-male groups.
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In mixed gender interaction, however, this difference in style often leads to male dominance.

But there is not only a difference in male and female usage, there is also an inherent sexism in the English language as such. Old social structures and attitudes survive in grammar and vocabulary and this helps them to linger on in society. "Language is a stage built over a graveyard from which fossils rise and dance at night", as Dwight Bolinger (1980:103) so poetically describes it. The perhaps best known grammatical example of sexism in English results from the lack of a singular pronoun that can refer back to either a male or female. The prescriptive linguists of the 18th and 19th centuries recommended that he and his should be used in such cases and this practice was even decreed by Parliament in 1850 (Bolinger, 1980:93). Efforts have been made to get rid of this linguistic bias (the use of they/their also for singular; double pronouns his/her, as well as various new coinages) but no completely satisfactory solution has yet been found.

The use of he/his for both sexes is a parallel case to the sexual bias in the most central term for human beings, man. Since there is no equivalent in English to the Swedish människa ('human being'), man serves as a comprehensive term for both male and female. Here also efforts have been made to equalise the sexes, at least as regards compound terms. Chair or chairperson are nowadays often replacing chairman although these new terms tend to be used mainly about women, and so replacing an old bias by a new one.

Remnants of old social structures abound in the semantic field of occupational terms. The fact that the great majority of occupational terms have male prototypes reflects a situation in society where few women had professions outside the home. Although women are commonplace nowadays in law and medicine, just to mention two examples, they are often referred to as women doctors and women lawyers. Linguistically, they are still the marked gender. The expression male nurse is one of the
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few exceptions and will probably remain so, since the number of female occupational terms without a male variant is negligible.

Occupational terms formed with the feminine agential suffixes -ess and -ette are in decline, partly as a result of feminist initiatives to change the biased representation of women in language. Feminist linguists have pointed out that in some languages, these suffixes are also used to form diminutives, (e.g. kitchenette, cigarette in English) and therefore tend to have a trivialising effect (Pauwels, 1998:109-110). A general forecast for gender-specific occupational terms is that they will gradually disappear, as women become more common in formerly male-dominated professions, and as a result of a raised awareness of sexism in language.

The semantic development known as "moralisation of status words" (a term coined by C.S. Lewis in Studies in Words, 1960) is evident in many terms for men and women. Originally neutral terms incorporate values and attitudes attached to their referents and so gradually either ameliorate or deteriorate. Poverty, sickness, extreme youth and old age are all conditions of weakness that breed contempt in western society (Bolinger, 1980:89-90). So, traditionally, is (was?) the female gender. Many scholars have commented on the fact that female terms tend to become derogatory, while the opposite is true for male terms (e.g. Kleparski, G., 1990).

Terms for women easily acquire sexual overtones. Girl, woman, madam, are some central female terms that can also be used in the sense of 'prostitute'. The corresponding male terms seldom have such second senses.

1.2. The project "Male and female terms in English"

Although many comments have been made and investigations carried out on specific areas within the field of male and female terms, a comprehensive study from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective has been lacking. In 1991 a project with the

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3 For a more detailed discussion about this concept see G. Hughes, 1988:44-8.
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Title "Male and female terms in English. A diachronic study of a semantic field." was started as a joint enterprise between the English departments of Uppsala and Umeå. It was directed by Professor Mats Rydén in Uppsala and Professor Gunnar Persson in Umeå and comprised paid researchers as well as several graduate students. Its aim was to investigate the paradigm 'man/woman' in its social and situational contexts from Old English to Current English. The present study forms a part of this project. It is also part of a wider research programme “ELIXIR” (English Lexical Research) which is directed by Gunnar Persson (now based in Luleå).

1.3. Aim and scope

My task has been to study terms for men and women in 18th century novels from a sociolinguistic perspective. I wanted to find out

• what terms were used;
• what sense developments have occurred in these terms over the years;
• roughly to what extent they were used;
• what the prototypes for various terms looked like and whether they were different from the present ones;
• whether there were differences in usage between male and female writers;
• how much terms for human beings used in 18th novels can reveal about gender roles, concepts and attitudes in that century.

1.4. Material and methods

1.4.1. Primary sources

It can be argued that since the novel is an art form, where the writer uses language in a conscious manner in order to achieve specific aims, its language is not characteristic of ordinary usage. As regards the 18th century novel in general, this consideration is probably not of paramount importance. Most of the novelists were interested mainly in the mores and problems in society and, with some important exceptions, less occupied with stylistic matters. Since it is not possible to study the spoken language of the time, nor to collect a comprehensive sample of texts written in social and regional dialects, or
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indeed to perform any informant tests, a collection of novels that reflect the values and attitudes in society and present a large gallery of characters, is probably one of the better archives available. The 18th century novel was, however, a middle-class product, written by middle-class writers, discussing mainly middle-class problems and ideas and read by middle class readers. It is therefore primarily the language use of the middle section in society that is covered by this study.

Several factors influenced the choice of novels. My aim has been to cover as much of the 18th century as possible; to achieve a balance between male and female authors; to study novels that reflected male and female roles in society, and to be able to have my own copy of the books in which to make notes. This last, practical consideration limited the choice considerably, as only a small selection of 18th century titles are still in print.

Since a century is an arbitrary period in time, I have chosen to regard the middle decades as the "prototype", as being most representative. This viewpoint is supported by G.M. Trevelyan (1944:354) among others: "It is only in the years that followed (1740-80) that we find a generation of men [sic!] wholly characteristic of the eighteenth-century ethos, a society with a mental outlook of its own, self-poised, self-judged, and self-approved, freed from the disturbing passions of the past, and not yet troubled with anxieties about a very different future which was soon to be brought upon the scene by the Industrial and the French Revolutions." The middle part of the century is also the time when the novel was flourishing. Innumerable entertaining and educational stories, written by female as well as male writers, were published and read by an increasingly literate middle class. Most of my texts are taken from this period.

Texts
Addison, J. and Steele, R., *The Tatler and The Spectator* (1709-12)
Defoe, D., *Moll Flanders* (1722)
Richardson, S., *Pamela* (1740)

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4 For a more detailed treatment of the social and cultural background, see Ch. 2.
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Fielding, S., *The Governess* (1749)
Haywood, E., *Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) *
Lennox, C., *The Female Quixote* (1752) *
Johnson, S., *Rasselas* (1759)
Sterne, L., *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67)
Burney, F., *Evelina* (1778) *
Wollstonecraft, M., *Mary* (1788) and *Maria* (1798) *

*=female author

*The Tatler* and *The Spectator*

It may seem strange that a list of novels starts with the titles of two periodicals. The reason lies in my aim to cover the whole century. This proved difficult since the novel proper did not appear until about twenty years into the century. A collection from *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* was therefore chosen to represent the earlier decades. These periodicals are often regarded as forerunners of the novel. They use the fiction of a club, where the members, representing various sections of society, talk about the manners, ideas, literature and politics of the day, much in the same way as many of the later "educational" 18th century novels do. Since several of the essays included in the collection discuss the roles played by men and women in society, it seemed a suitable substitute.

*Moll Flanders*

The fictional autobiography of Moll Flanders, a prostitute and thief who ends up in prison where she eventually repents, is a story in the Christian tradition of moral decline followed by conversion, repentance and a new life. But it is also an attempt to create a realistic picture of a poor girl's struggle for survival without parents or relatives to protect her. As Defoe also tries to imitate a lower-class idiom, this novel was chosen as an example of usage at the lower end of the social ladder.
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Pamela
Pamela is the story of social advancement due to virtue and strength of character. The maidservant Pamela fiercely resists her young master's attempts to deprive her of her virginity – a young woman's main asset in the 18th century. After numerous unsuccessful attempts he realises that he has to gain her in the socially accepted way and ends by marrying her. Written as a collection of letters, mainly between the servant Pamela and her poor parents, the language is vivid and immediate, supposedly reflecting lower middle class usage.

The Governess or, Little Female Academy
This is the first English novel written for young people. It is also the first in the long line of girls' school stories, its setting being a small boarding school for girls between seven and fourteen. It is a progressive school where the girls are encouraged to become self-sufficient individuals, although within the framework of marriage. Attitudes and behaviour are illustrated and discussed in an entertaining manner and on a level adjusted to the proposed age-group. As it gives an insight into the education of girls at the time, it is of general interest to this study.

The Female Quixote
One of the themes in this satiric story is the clash between the old French romances that used to be the favourite literature of the middle classes and the new, "realistic" English novel. Underneath the comedy a concern for women's lack of power to control their own lives is discernible. The setting is upper middle class.

The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless
This is another story about a woman's struggle to gain control of her life. It traces the "thoughtless" Betsy's development towards greater maturity and acceptance of marriage based on personal commitment. Topics like sex, marriage and divorce are treated in an outspoken way, unusual for its time. The setting is middle class and the style is witty
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and humorous.

*The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*

Two reasons lie behind the choice of Samuel Johnson's Rasselas. Firstly, the many female heroines needed to be balanced by a male central character. Secondly, it seemed proper to have an example of what was regarded as the best educated English of the time. Although its foreign setting could be a drawback in a sociolinguistic study, it is probably of little importance in this case. It is a didactic story about the human condition and the eastern setting plays a minor part. The style is clear and elevated, suited to the subject matter.

*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*

The three main characters in this unique novel about writing a novel are male, which, again, was one of the reasons for my choice. This bawdy, burlesque and witty story, or rather collection of anecdotes, is in many ways the opposite of Rasselas. It is written in a great variety of styles, some mock-learned, some imitating spoken language from different layers of society, some foreboding the modern "stream-of-consciousness" device.

*Evelina*

This is another epistolary novel which traces the social education of a young girl. From a simple and secluded upbringing in the country the seventeen-year-old Evelina steps out into the wider society of urban life and meets with the "way of the world". Under the guidance of two high-minded gentlemen her judgment and manners are improved and she acquires the important feminine virtue of prudence. The mix of vulgar and noble characters, of urban and country settings and of comic and tragic social episodes, creates a vivid and varied picture of 18th century society.
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Mary and Maria

These two short autobiographical novels by Mary Wollstonecraft had to be combined to make up the required number of pages. The author is a representative of the intellectual avant-garde that appeared during the last decades of the century and therefore not very typical of 18th century society. Her ideas about women's rights to a career and to sex without marriage were far too radical to be acceptable. Still, since her writings have been so seminal to later developments in society, I thought it proper to include her in a sociolinguistic study of male and female terms.

1.4.2. Corpus

Male, female and epicene (that is, 'gender-neutral') terms for human beings were collected from 100 pages in each book. Collective nouns (e.g. People, gentry) were not included since they were judged as irrelevant to the purpose of the study. Terms denoting nationality were left out for the same reason. Pronouns were also regarded as being outside the scope of this investigation.

Titles when used as terms of address or in combination with a name (e.g. Sir, Madame, Captain Mirvan, Lady Louisa) were regarded as filling the same function as proper names and therefore excluded, as were relational terms together with a name (e.g. Uncle Toby, Cousin Henry). One reason for this exclusion was that the statistical results would otherwise have been biased; another was shortage of time. Recording all instances of that kind would have been too time-consuming for its yield. Since the use of titles reveal much about social attitudes and social structure, this will hopefully be the object of a more limited study in the future.

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5 My corpus was collected manually in 1990-91 before the appearance of searchable electronic texts from the 18th century. A similar study made today would undoubtedly benefit (both in time and in accuracy) from the great increase in electronic resources now available.

6 The use of the term epicene for gender-neutral terms in socio-linguistic contexts was first introduced by G. Persson in a pilot study of nouns defined as either male or female in English dictionaries (Persson, 1992:15).
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The total number of records is 9,951, which averages about 1,000 records per book. In reality the number varied considerably between books, due to such factors as number of words per page, proportion dialogue – narrative (dialogues tend to have more titles and proper names than referring nouns) and subject matter. There is also some discrepancy between records with male and female writers (male: 5250 records; female: 4701 records) and also between records with male and female reference (male: 4680; female: 4113).

Each token of a term was classified according to the following variables: source, gender of writer, gender and social class (when clear) of referent, gender and social class of speaker and person addressed (in dialogue), term of address or reference, gender of term (specific or preferred), axiological meaning of term (positive, negative, patronising or neutral), collocation with prenominal adjectives, and term-type. As not all of these variables are discrete, a number of difficulties arose during the classification.

One of the problems involved social class. The border-line cases were numerous. Should servants, for example, be categorised as lower or middle class? There were great social differences between a butler and a cook-maid. And what about characters like Pamela, who rose from being a waiting-maid to becoming the mistress of the house, or Moll Flanders, who was sometimes a respectable middle-class housewife and other times a destitute thief? Since I failed to define clearly the criteria for social class before starting my collection of data, the problems arising became insurmountable and the intention to use social class as a statistical variable had to be abandoned.

The classification of terms according to type was largely borrowed from B. Odenstedt’s study of male and female terms in Old English (Odenstedt, 1995:133). The following categories were used: central (e.g. man, girl), relational (daughter, partner), characterising (beauty, genius), occupational (farmer, cook), agent (fighter, bearer), patient (victim, captive), experiencer, recipient and positioner (beholder, owner,
Terms that can belong to more than one of these types were categorised according to their function in each record. A case in point is *child* which can be used either as a central, age-related term or as a family relational term. In some instances both interpretations were possible, which led to a certain arbitrariness in the classification.

When trying to establish whether or not the sense or usage of a term has changed since the 18th century, I have used the *OED* as my main source of reference. Although it is for the moment undergoing a thorough revision, especially as far as etymologies and quotations are concerned, it is still the most comprehensive and authoritative diachronic dictionary of English.

### 1.4.3. The use of statistics

Opinions vary among scholars as to the value of statistics in linguistic research. Pure "word-counting" without analysis of contextual factors, extra-linguistic and linguistic, can undoubtedly yield superficial and misleading results. The other extreme, a detailed semantic analysis of individual lexemes without any indication of the extent to which they are being used, is in my opinion of minor interest in a sociolinguistic study.

The method adopted in this investigation may be described as a mixture of these two approaches. A simple word-count turned out to be an efficient and, thanks to the computer, quick guide to areas of special interest. Observations of numbers of occurrences led to some hypotheses that were later discussed against the background of contextual factors.

Quantitative data were also used in other ways: as an indicator of prototypes for epicene terms; in the study of collocations; as an identifier of differences in male and female usage and as a reflection of the various roles played by men and women in 18th century society. They proved to be less useful in identifying usages related to social class. This was mainly due to the difficulties involved in placing referents along a social parameter.
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Although it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions from the statistics because of the uncertainties involved, I still consider the quantitative data important enough to report. Possible sources of distortion are discussed in the analyses of the different terms in order to avoid misinterpretations.

1.5. A "bird's eye" view of gender roles

A chart of the overall distribution of term types according to gender in the corpus presents a snap-shot of the roles played by men and women in 18th century society and may serve as an introduction to the more detailed study of specific terms.

Fig. 1. Term type and gender. The columns show the proportions of records with male and female referents within each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term type</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>central</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>characterising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exp./rec./pos.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphorical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of male and female referents is well balanced as regards central, characterising and relational terms. The occupational category, however, exhibits a conspicuous male dominance. Nearly 75 per cent of the records have male referents.
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The situation is similar as regards agent nouns. The reverse, although to a lesser degree, is true for patient and metaphorical terms, where the female referents dominate.

This chart suggests that men were the "doers" in this society. They had many different roles to play. Women were more restricted. They were defined by what they were, not by what they did.
STABILITY AND CHANGE – ENGLAND IN THE 18TH CENTURY

2.1. Introduction

Few generalisations about a century are equally true for its first and its last decades as well as for the long period in between. Opinions and values expressed in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* at the start of the 18th century may still have been embraced by a large part of the public in its last decade. Certain ideas and attitudes exhibited by Mary Wollstonecraft in the nineties, however, would most likely have been unacceptable to the contemporaries of Addison and Steele. In spite of the obvious risks involved in treating such a long period as an entity, I shall attempt to give a general picture of what life in Britain was like in the 18th century.

Paradoxical though it may seem, the key words that appear again and again in writings about this period are *stability* and *change*. *Stability* usually refers to the domestic political situation, whilst *change* stands for developments that took place in agriculture, industry and demography as well as in philosophy and science.

2.2. Political and intellectual climate

2.2.1. Political background

The political stability that reigned in England during the 18th century had its roots in the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688. It was a bloodless revolt which led to the abolishment of the monarch’s hereditary rights and the creation of a parliamentary monarchy in which parliament’s sovereignty over the crown was established. This new political system was based on John Locke’s ideas about governing by consent. According to Locke, the governing of a country should be based on a contract between

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7 The information in 2.2.1. and 2.2.2 is taken mainly from James Sambrook *The 18th century: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1700-1789* (1986).
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the ruler and the ruled. The main purpose of the government should be to safeguard property. Although not a democracy in the modern sense of one person – one vote, it was a power-sharing system which allowed political battles to be fought with words in the parliament and in the press instead of with weapons. Few questioned the fact that political rights (seats in parliament and the right to vote) were more or less restricted to the nobility and other landowners. It was argued that only people who owned land would feel the proper responsibility for the country to be able to make the right decisions about its future. This state of affairs was not to be seriously disputed until about a century later, when the beginnings of the industrial revolution had created a new class of men of property who wanted political power, and the French and American revolutions had spread more genuinely democratic ideas.

2.2.2. Science, philosophy, religion

Similarly, the view of the world that was prevailing among the educated public had its roots in the “scientific revolution” of the seventeenth century. In 1687 Sir Isaac Newton had formulated the laws that regulate motions in the universe as well as physical phenomena on earth (Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica). His discoveries reached a wide audience. They were discussed not only in such exclusive fora as the Royal Society but also in periodicals like The Spectator. Radically and permanently they changed mankind’s view of the physical world and of its own place in it. The universe was now seen as a well-organised system, or machine, where everything from the planets down to the smallest plants was part of a great hierarchy and governed by laws. These laws could be discovered and studied, but not as yet questioned. Analogously, the idea of society as a well-structured system, where the roles of men and women as well as of different classes were laid down by natural laws, was not far-fetched.

The belief that it was within the scope of the human mind to discover the laws of nature by observation, experimentation and analysis led to confidence and optimism. If
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it is possible for human beings to understand the rules behind the workings of the
world, progress in technology, agriculture, medicine and many other areas is within
reach. Metaphysical explanations and superstitious beliefs become superfluous. If every
event has a natural cause that can be discovered, the need for “witches” disappears.8

The new scientific discoveries about the structure and nature of the universe did not
do away with the notion of God. A supreme being who had organised the whole
hierarchical structure and set it in motion was still needed at the top. Newton saw the
whole, beautifully designed system as a proof and glorification of God’s power and
superior intellect, and so did most 18th century people.

The views of how religious knowledge can be gained had changed, however. In
1690 John Locke had published his thoughts about the human mind as a *tabula rasa*
where nothing is innate. According to Locke, knowledge of God could only be reached
through reasoning and demonstration. Christian beliefs should be based on the Bible
and on the study of nature.

This kind of reasoning religion, as opposed to a religion based on revelations and
innate beliefs, was well suited to the pragmatic 18th century mind. It was placed firmly
in the ordinary world. A good Christian should not withdraw from society, but express
his faith through good morals and charitable actions. It also resulted in more tolerant
attitudes towards people of dissenting beliefs.

Perhaps it was inevitable that such a scientific attitude towards religion would
eventually produce more radical critics. In the latter half of the 18th century David
Hume, among others, argued for religious scepticism, claiming that religious beliefs
could never be proved by the scientific methods of observation, experimentation and
deduction. The door to agnosticism and atheism was opened.

Developments in the opposite direction were also brought about by this “sensible”
religion. Reason alone could not satisfy the emotional and spiritual needs of the great

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8 The last legal burning of a witch took place in 1712 while this practice was continued until
much later on the Continent.

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mass of people, especially not the needs of those who lacked both education and material comforts. A reaction came with John Wesley, whose message of salvation and emotional methods of preaching appealed to the poor and the labouring classes in particular. Although himself thoroughly authoritarian, preaching subordination and obedience and remaining loyal to the Church of England, Wesley sowed the seeds of political radicalism by installing self-confidence and self-respect in his followers (Porter, 1990:176-178).

2.3. Economy and demography

2.3.1. Agriculture

Land was of overwhelming importance in 18th century Britain. Even at the end of the century about 3/4 of the population of nearly 9 million were still dependent on land as their main means of income, either as owners or as tenants (Reed, 1983:27).

Social rank, as well as political influence, was closely linked to the ownership of land. This meant that those who were successful in other areas such as business, banking and manufacturing often used their fortunes to buy land in order to increase their status.

The ownership of land was not, however, restricted to the top class in society. Beneath the lords (who owned about 15-20% of the land in 1700) were the gentry, ranging from baronets to squires and differing widely in wealth and income. They were "gentlemen farmers", owners who did not themselves do any manual work on the farm. They were prominent figures in the parish, handling both civil and ecclesiastical matters as members of the vestry.

Under the gentry, the rural hierarchy branched out into yeomen and husbandmen, who owned their land and cultivated it with their own hands, and tenant farmers, who

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9 The information in 2.3. and 2.4. is based mainly on Roy Porter's *English Society in the 18th century* (1990).
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did not possess the land they farmed. At the bottom of the ladder were the farm labourers, who were often young and unmarried and lived-in with the employer.

One of today's most characteristic features of the English countryside, namely the countless number of hedgerows and stone walls that line the fields and the country roads, stems from the development in farming called "enclosure", the main part of which was carried out during the second half of the 18th century. It put an end to the earlier common open-field system, in which a peasant's property consisted of strips of land scattered about in big open fields surrounding a town or village. Meadows and wastes were used as communal grazing-grounds for the livestock. In order to increase the yield from farming, Parliament now allowed and encouraged the redistribution of the land, so that the holdings of each farmer were brought together and enclosed, thereby making it easier to introduce new, more efficient farming methods.

Enclosure changed the social structure of the countryside. It benefited the large land-owners and other more well-to-do farmers who could afford the costly process of enclosure and had money to invest in new agricultural techniques. The tenant farmers on the big estates also benefited since they did not have to bear the cost of investments but gained from the results. The losers were the small farmers and the husbandmen who could not afford the investments needed for enclosing their holdings. They were often forced to sell their lots to the big landowners, in some cases becoming tenant farmers, in others part of the landless labouring class.

But the group that suffered most were the poor. The cottagers, who were scraping a living from temporary wage-labour on farms in combination with small cottage industries like nail-making and spinning, had by custom been allowed to keep a cow, a pig and some hens on the common. The enclosure of the commons put an end to this, thereby depriving them of the means to feed themselves when out of work. Many of them found factory work in the growing towns; others became partially dependent on poor relief. From 1700 to 1800 the amount paid out by the parishes in poor relief

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increased sixfold. Another group that was even worse hit were the squatters who lived in shacks on the commons. Since they had no rights to the commons, they were often thrown out from the parish and became part of a rural proletariat. Enclosure also had certain negative effects for women in particular. Among cottagers, husbandmen and other small farmers there used to exist, not equality, but at least a working partnership between husband and wife. The wife gained a certain status and self-esteem from sharing the work on the farm with her husband and so contributing to the sustenance of the family. The development of bigger farms often turned the farmers into gentry, where the wife was not supposed to take part in the work and instead became a sort of parasite with too much free time on her hand. Although it allowed them to become "gentlewomen", it also made them more dispensable and dependent on their husbands. Life also became more restricted for the farm labourers' wives who were confined to housework and child-rearing after the loss of their cottage plots on the commons.

Enclosure led to progress within agriculture and resulted in increased output and low food prices in spite of a growing population. But it also led to a polarisation in rural society, between rich and poor, between men and women.

2.3.2. Industry and demography

Parallel to enclosure, another development which was to be of paramount importance was beginning to take off in England – the industrial revolution. Although it would not reach its peak until the following century, it saw its beginnings in the 18th. Just as enclosure had changed the social structure in the country and the rural landscape, so industrialisation was beginning to change the social structure in towns and the urban landscape.

Traditionally the manufacture of goods took place either in small workshops, or was put out to cottagers around the country. As in agriculture, the new technology that was now being introduced in manufacturing demanded bigger units to make the necessary investments possible. The work had to be centralised around the expensive machines
and the workers had to come to the work-place instead of the other way around.

The bigger units created in this way increased the distance between employer and employed. Although some work in the new factories demanded great engineering skills, most of it was repetitive, low-paid work with no career prospects. The traditional progression from apprentice to master that existed in the small workshops was now only possible for the lucky few. More people spent all their lives as labourers without any chance of improvement.

The cottagers, who found it increasingly difficult to sustain themselves in the country, became a popular part of the work force in the new factories. The women were especially welcome, since they were only paid two thirds of a man’s wage. In addition, they were already trained workers from having eeked out their living with cottage industry. But in contrast to cottage industry, factory work was difficult to combine with household and children, at least as long as the children were toddlers and not yet employable themselves. The result was that most of the women in factory work were young and unmarried (Hill, 1984:7-8). It was seldom a long-term employment and not a type of work which would lead to any advancement in society.

Another effect of industrialisation was a geographical redistribution of the population. In the early part of the century less than a quarter of the population (estimated to be at that time between six and seven million) lived in towns. Apart from London, Norwich and Bristol, the towns were extremely small and should probably be regarded as villages according to 20th century standards. There was no clear dichotomy between town and country. The towns were market places which served the surrounding countryside and townspeople supplemented their livelihood with a bit of farming, often keeping a few animals on the commons and growing their own supply of vegetables in their gardens.

10 Child labour, although widespread even before industrialisation and common from the age of 5-6, took on a particularly grim face when carried out in the dirty and unhealthy factories or in the dark mines.
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The first census in Britain, carried out in 1801, tells us of the changes that had taken place during the 18th century. Although two thirds of the population still lived in the countryside, the number of big towns had increased significantly, mainly in the North and the West, where the raw materials for the industries were found. In these new centres, the traditional, “organic” links between town and country were much weakened. Big housing estates sprang up in the close vicinity of the factories, since the workers had no other way of transport than walking. Gardens, if existing at all, were usually too small for growing vegetables, and the commons had disappeared.

Another polarisation, between town and country, was beginning to develop in the wake of industrialisation.

2.4. The social order

English society in the 18th century had a pyramidal structure, small in numbers at the top, a big and growing middle section, and a wide base. It was not a society based on caste, as in many other European countries at the time. “Blood” was, generally speaking, less important than money. This fact was conducive to social mobility – there was no absolute, innate barrier to advancement in society. For descriptive purposes a traditional three-layered categorization of the population may still prove useful, although the borders between the layers are fuzzy and the categorization in itself somewhat arbitrary.

The small cone at the top consisted of the landed nobility, the dukes and the earls, and comprised less than 200 individuals with families. Because of primogeniture (the eldest son inheriting the whole estate and the title) they stayed small in number. These “grandees” did not mix much with other groups – although the odd marriage with millionaires’ daughters did occur – but they exercised great influence in many areas of society, especially on the national level. Not only did they occupy inherited seats in Parliament, they also held top positions at court, in church, at the universities. Nor did
they despise being involved in money matters, but had vested interests in banks, in the big trade companies and the new industries. They were an extremely powerful elite who floated above the town-country division, having a town house in London where they spent the “season”, as well as their country estate. The top class as regards wealth also included about a hundred great land-owning families who were not part of the aristocracy. Although their influence was great – and increasing – they were still one peg down on the social ladder.

The middle classes were a much more heterogeneous group. They were growing fast in numbers as well as in prosperity and influence. It was within this group that most of the social climbing occurred. Although the differences between the rungs of the social ladder mattered greatly to the people involved, the distances between neighbouring rungs were short. To climb from one step to the next was often feasible; mobility in the other direction was always a threatening prospect.

In the towns most middle-class men were involved in business, in manufacturing and trade. One of the nation’s characteristics was indeed its great number of shopkeepers. There were vast differences in wealth and standing between the men at the top and the bottom in the middle ranks, but they had one goal in common – to make money. Their success can be measured by the increase in number of those who managed to live on capital, thus becoming “gentlefolk”.

Most middle-class professions were unregulated. Apart from the holy orders, law and medicine, they were still learnt by apprenticeship. Civil servants, teachers, apothecaries, engineers, dentists and many other professionals had no formal training or qualification and their status was low. Their financial rewards were increasing, however, although there was great variation between different practitioners.

New occupations emerged during the course of the century. The developments in farming, industry and transport created a demand for agricultural and technical experts, some of whom were making a living from industrial design, others from the writing of
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handbooks. During its last few decades a kind of intellectual avant-garde appeared, debating, teaching and criticizing the ills in society. They managed to support themselves by journalism, publishing, lecturing and other intellectual and communicative activities.

Single middle-class women who needed to earn their own living had few opportunities for "genteel" employment. They could become governesses, teachers or nurses – all badly paid jobs. If they had the necessary capital, they could set up some business for themselves, often within the clothing trade. But the main goal for women in the middle ranks was to marry "men of quality" and become "gentlewomen", content with gaining their status in society from their husbands.

The base of the social pyramid was made up by self-employed artisans, by wage labourers who worked long hours for little financial reward, and by those who could not manage to survive without help. Their prospects of social advancement were poor, and, if they had the choice, they often preferred leisure to doing extra work, earning too little money to make saving worthwhile. Those in employment were often treated like children by their masters, being subjected to physical punishments as well as to surveillance of their moral conduct.

Women often worked alongside men, doing similar jobs but for lower wages. They were employed in mines and in factories, in cotton, wool and lace manufacture in particular. They worked in shops, as street-traders, as prostitutes. They also, of course, raised children and did the household work.

But the largest occupational group consisted of domestic servants (Hill, 1987: 8-10). As the middle classes expanded and aspired to gentility, the demand for servants increased. Servants were necessary not only to carry out the menial work in a middle-class home but also to increase the status of the family. Since the social status of a house partly depended on the appearance and manners of its servants, there were often fringe benefits connected with service. Masters and mistresses in bigger houses took
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care to dress their servants nicely, sometimes even to educate them.

Just as in society as a whole there was a social hierarchy among the servants. Domestic service was one of the few areas where there was room for young people from the lower classes to "better" themselves. It was quite possible for an ambitious girl to start as kitchen maid in a big house, advance to cook or housekeeper and end up as the mistress' confidante, or even as the mistress of the house.

There were drawbacks, of course. The pay was usually low. Servants had very little personal life, being on call more or less around the clock. They were often treated as a kind of property which could be used or abused according to the employer's wishes. Sometimes they were not even allowed to keep their own names but were given more suitable servants' names. Countless young girls were made pregnant by their masters or by the sons in the house and then dismissed from their work as well as dishonoured in the eyes of the world. A large proportion of the increasing number of prostitutes in London consisted of former maid-servants and of maids temporarily out of work. The borderline between the two main areas of employment for poor, young girls – service and prostitution – was often blurred and possible to cross in both directions. As in domestic service, there was a social hierarchy in the world of prostitution with kept mistresses at the top and street prostitutes at the bottom. Downward mobility was probably far more common than mobility upwards on this social ladder.

2.5. The family

The 18th century was a transition period between two family types, the old hierarchical family that was prevalent during the middle ages and our modern nuclear family. In earlier times when people lived in small communities and often stayed in the same place all their lives, kinship ties and the community itself played important roles. The

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emphasis was on the group rather than on the individual. Since marriages were often arranged by the parents, the relationship between husband and wife tended to be rather distant and formal. Parent–child relationships were also more detached. In a society where one out of three children died before the age of fifteen, these relationships may have been regarded as too temporary for individuals to invest much emotion in them. As life expectancy fluctuated between thirty and forty years, the average life span of a 17th century marriage was in fact about the same as it is now, when a high percentage of marriages end in divorce. Remarriages, single parents and step-parents were common features of family life also in those days, although their causes were different.

The modern concept of a family as a nucleus, characterised by strong emotional ties between the spouses and also between parents and children and by distance towards the world around, developed mainly during the 18th century. One of its causes was the increasing emphasis on the individual. Greater social and geographical mobility also contributed to the weakening of kinship and community ties. A decrease in child mortality in the second half of the century made it less risky to invest emotionally in one’s children. Finally, the great swell of the middle classes with enough education and leisure to cultivate emotional relationships created the right environment for the new “affective” family to evolve.

The higher up the social ladder, the greater was the importance attached to property, landed property in particular. At the top level of society, marriage was seen primarily as a means of solidifying and advancing the wealth and status of the clan and was therefore too important to be left to the young people themselves. Hence most marriages for heirs and heiresses continued to be arranged by parents. Since they were regarded more as financial and social contracts than as unions built on affection, adultery was common – and accepted – among both men and women. The partners often led separate and independent lives. The relationship between parents and children was equally remote and formal, the children being brought up by servants in the country
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home, while the parents were involved in the social and political life in London.

As the century evolved and attitudes in society in general changed, it was becoming
difficult also for parents at the top level of society to remain unaffected. At the end of
the 18th century, there were probably few left who would not allow their children at
least a veto in the choice of marriage partner.

At the other extreme, where there was no property to take into consideration, young
people were given much more freedom when choosing their partners. Since children of
poor parents left home in their early teens, most commonly to work as live-in servants
in middle class households, they had already lived independently for several years when
it was time to marry. It was therefore less likely that they would conform to parental
wishes.

The 18th century saw a substantial increase in premarital sexual relationships and
pregnancies among the lower classes. Virginity did not have much value as a bargaining
asset in the expanding proletariat, since there was no property for which it could be
exchanged. Pressure to conform to traditional sexual patterns was also weakened by the
greater geographical mobility and by the declining influence of the church.

Although both husband and wife were breadwinners in the lower classes, this does
not seem to have contributed towards greater equality between them. The wife was still
subordinate to her husband and could be beaten, deserted or even "sold" if not behaving
properly. Nor did their greater freedom in choosing partners appear to have led to
more affectionate relationships between man and wife. Instead, family life among the
poor was often harsh and brutal. The burdens of poverty, illness, alcoholism (especially
during the "gin era") and too many child births, probably made it more difficult for the
new concept of a closely-knit, affectionate family to gain ground among poor people.

12 The practice of "wife-sale" functioned as a "common-law" divorce which, in spite of being
formally illegal, had something of the force of law among the general public (Stone,
1979:35-36). Although it was not very common, it does give an indication of how women were
regarded in this society.
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Young children were often regarded as financial burdens until they became breadwinners themselves and obtained a certain status as such. They were of temporary value, however, because of the risk of their dying young or, if surviving, their disappearing into service at an early age.

The new type of family first appeared among the upper middle classes. Marriage should now be based on love and affection and married life should be characterized by closeness between husband and wife. Parental consent for marriage was still sought but was supposed to be given on emotional rather than authoritarian grounds.

Marriage based on attraction rather than property led to greater importance being attached to looks, especially as regards women. The ideal woman in the 18th century was pale, languid and slim. In order to achieve this goal, girls were submitted to various sorts of physical restraint. They were often underfed, laced and corsetted, forced to wear iron collars and back boards to acquire a good posture and prevented from running and other sorts of physical exercise that could spoil their pale and languid looks. This regime was not very beneficial to health and fitness and explains the frequent fainting fits that befall the heroines in 18th century novels. It did, however, agree with the concept of a lady, since ladies were not supposed to carry out any work that required physical strength. Rosy cheeks might arouse the suspicion that their owner was not a proper gentle-woman.

The decreasing distance between husband and wife was reflected in their way of addressing each other. Whereas the normal mode of address within a middle-class marriage used to be Sir and Madam, it now became more common to use first names and endearments. To some extent the new affectionate marriage also entailed a shift of power towards more equality between man and wife. If love was to be sustained in the marriage, the husband could not totally ignore his wife's wishes when it came to decision-making. Legally, however, the hierarchy within the family was still unquestioned. Everything a wife acquired, even the children, was the property of the
husband, unless protected by specifically drawn up marriage settlements.

The middle-class household consisted of husband and wife, children and servants. It was not the custom, as in many other societies, for several generations to live together. Young people preferred to postpone their marriage until they could afford to set up a home of their own. Also, there were not so many grandparents around, since not many people survived till old age.

When servants carried out the household duties and "ladies" were not supposed to do any physical work, women were left with few obvious tasks to perform. While husbands spent most of their time away from home, at work or in coffee-houses discussing the topics of the day, women spent much of their time visiting and receiving friends and acquaintances. When at home they kept themselves busy perfecting "suitable" accomplishments like painting, music and embroidery. In contrast to contemporary France, where men and women shared a social and intellectual life in fashionable salons, in England they seemed to have few interests in common. At dinner parties, for example, the ladies withdrew immediately after they had finished eating, leaving the men to indulge in bawdy conversation and excessive drinking. Living up to the ideals of "married bliss" in a society where husband and wife shared so little must have met with difficulties.

One interest that was shared by husband and wife was their offspring. In the new affectionate family, and especially in the life of the mother, children came to occupy a central position. The traditional view of children as born sinful had been questioned by John Locke's tabula rasa and was gradually being replaced by a much more positive view, at least in middle class society. Children were now being seen as individuals who needed love and guidance for their development, not flogging and disciplining. A less authoritarian, more permissive attitude was spreading and manifested itself in various ways. Swaddling of babies all but disappeared; wet-nursing became unfashionable

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13 Women married around 24 and men around 28 years of age towards the end of the century.
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during the second half of the century; children's books with the sole purpose to amuse appeared; more children were being educated at home in order to avoid the flogging that still went on in most schools; mothers spent more time with their children, creating strong emotional bonds between them. According to some contemporary critics, this new way of child-rearing had severe drawbacks. They claimed that permissiveness went so far that children were now intolerably spoilt, ordering their parents about instead of the other way around; that children demanded and were allowed to be at the centre of attention at social gatherings; that boys became effeminate by being exposed to too much maternal love and were badly prepared for the demands of manhood. Husbands complained in "letters to the editor" about being neglected by wives who spent most of their time in the nursery. It is difficult to know how much of this criticism was valid, but it does indicate that some change was taking place.

The new closeness in parent-child relationships developed first in the professional classes and the gentry and gradually spread to the lower middle classes. Among the poor, children continued to be seen as sinful creatures whose will must be broken and who must be taught obedience. The "golden age of childhood" had little effect on the life of child labourers in factories and mine-pits.

2.6. Education

2.6.1. Background

There was as yet no compulsory or state-run education in England. Most learning took place in the home. Formal learning at the beginning of the century took place in grammar schools, in private boarding schools and at Oxford and Cambridge. These old institutions left a great deal to be desired when it came to meeting new and varying needs arising from the developments in society. There was growing criticism of the content of their teaching as well as of their methods. It was claimed that the grammar

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14 The section on education is based mainly on R. Porter (1990).
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schools concentrated on teaching the classics, showing little interest in the demands of ordinary life; that the old public schools’ main concern was to teach the boys from better off families how to become gentlemen, including such “skills” as hunting, gambling, drinking and fighting; that life in these institutions was brutalizing the boys, flogging being their favoured teaching method.

The old universities were in a state of decay (Trevelyan, 1967:380-81). There was very little proper teaching of undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge and few examinations for a degree. Only Anglican students were admitted. All the tutors were celibate, most of them clergymen, and they were able to hold their fellowships for life without doing any serious work. Serious scholars did not go to Oxbridge in the 18th century but to universities on the Continent or to the Dissenting Academies that were being set up for non-Anglican boys. These new establishments were better adjusted to the modern world, delivering practical knowledge as well as classical, and applying more humane and rational teaching methods.

In 1693 John Locke’s *Some thoughts upon education* had been published. It was widely read and discussed and the ideas expressed in this treatise lay behind much of the criticism of the old type of education. Locke claimed that character development was a more important task for education than mere memorizing of established knowledge. As soon as a child is able to reason for itself, the rod should be abandoned for “the carrot” as an incentive for learning, psychological manipulation being more effective than corporal punishment as a teaching tool. He also argued for the education of children at home in order to avoid the brutality and vulgarity that characterized many of the existing educational establishments.

The criticism of traditional education resulted in several new developments during the century. Since education was not, however, supposed to even out social and gender differences as is its pronounced aim nowadays, but rather to reinforce them, it varied according to class and gender.

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2.6.2. The upper class

The children of the elite were usually brought up and educated by nurses and masters until the age of seven, their parents being too occupied by social and political matters to pay much attention to their offspring. The boys were then sent off to either of the famous old schools, Eton or Westminster, to get a proper gentleman’s education and find their place in the future “old boys’ network” which was already playing an important role in the administration of the country. Many of these boys hardly saw their parents again until they were adults. About half of them then went on to higher education at Oxford or Cambridge, often taking their own private tutors with them to make up for the poor teaching on offer, or at the Inns of Court. Few of them finished by taking a degree. Their education was instead rounded off with the Grand Tour, a round trip of the Continent which often lasted a year or two. The aim was to turn the young men into “men of the world”, sophisticated connoisseurs who knew foreign languages and cultures and had the right manners to allow them to mix with the elite of other countries.

Girls often continued their education at home with the help of governesses, dancing-masters, singing-masters and other private tutors. Some of them spent a period at one of the more refined girls’ schools, where they were trained for their future roles in high society, learning French, arts, religion, manners, card-games and other social accomplishments. The classical training, regarded as a necessity for the boys, was never part of the curriculum. The aim of these schools was not intellectual education but rather instruction in social graces and skills.

As in so many other areas, the new trends and ideas in education did not have much impact on the top layer of society. If there was any change in the education of the children of the elite during the century, it was rather in the direction of more segregation from the rest of society. There was an increase in the number of children and adolescents educated at home, but this was not against a background of a closer
parent-child relationship. One reason was the general decline of Oxford and Cambridge which made a university education less attractive. Another, and perhaps more important reason, was a wish to avoid the risk of social "contamination" from pupils and fellow-students belonging to inferior social groups.

2.6.3. The middle ranks
It was in the rapidly growing middle classes that the need for new kinds of education was most pressing. Many parents of the upper middle class followed Locke's advice and educated their children at home with the help of tutors. Other liberal-minded families sent their sons to Dissenting Academies, which, unbound by any charters, could offer a more flexible curriculum than the Anglican grammar schools and universities. In addition they often provided good quality teaching, using more modern Lockian teaching methods.

Commercial schools, providing more down-to-earth education for the sons - and sometimes daughters - of craftsmen, shopkeepers and other tradespeople, mushroomed in this era of free-enterprise education. They provided useful skills and knowledge in areas such as bookkeeping, accounting, commercial law and technical drawings, as well as in the basic three "R"s. They were relatively cheap and therefore accessible also to the children from less well-off families.

Other new phenomena in the area of public education were popular lectures and evening courses. A wide range of subjects was covered, both practical and more "general interest" knowledge as, for example, natural history. A necessary background for their popularity was the rising literacy among the population. Towards the end of the century almost all middle-class men and about half of the working-class men were literate, the women somewhat less so.

The basic belief underlying the education of girls - among women as well as men - was that women's intellect was different from and inferior to men's. Since the roles they were supposed to play in society were mainly limited to those of mothers and
wives, their educational needs were also different and more limited. Too much learning was generally seen as unwomanly, making a girl unsuitable for her future role in life. The education of girls was therefore traditionally a mixture of acquiring practical skills like sewing and house-keeping and more ornamental accomplishments like drawing, music, dancing. Learning to read was seen as useful, but the ability to write was often regarded as less important.

During the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, the education of girls had become more geared towards instruction in being "ladies" at the expense of the teaching of practical subjects. In the expanding middle classes where upwards mobility was of major importance, knowing how to be a lady was, without doubt, useful and valuable for a girl who wanted to attract the right sort of husband. Whether acquired at home or at boarding school, the instruction of girls during the first decades of the 18th century was mainly decorative and superficial, lacking in intellectual as well as in practically useful content and so turning the young girls into artificial and rather useless creatures.

Voices criticising this state of affairs were eventually raised. Most arguments for a more academic education of girls were, ironically enough, based on the belief that if would be beneficial to the men. A properly educated woman would make a better companion to her husband in the new type of affectionate marriage where the partners were supposed to spend more time at home in each other's company. John Locke had provided arguments for change in this as in so many other areas, claiming that women needed more academic training to be able to educate their young children at home.

During the century there was a great increase in the number of schools for girls. Most of them were still mainly interested in teaching the traditional female graces and skills, but eventually many schools broadened their curriculum to include more academic subjects. They avoided the trap of just copying the boys' academic education with its over-emphasis on Latin and Greek. Instead they offered a more varied and modern range of subjects, incorporating such new areas as "current affairs". Towards
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the end of the century it was even claimed that upper middle class women were better educated than men, many of whom were still subjected to the old grammar schools’ teaching of a mainly classical curriculum. This new type of education probably succeeded in turning the women into more interesting wives and companions. For unmarried women who needed to make their own living, it was less useful. It cultivated their minds but taught them no practical skills nor prepared them for a profession.

2.6.4. The lower orders

Opinions varied as to whether education for the poor was a good thing or not. Many people argued that knowledge might induce them to think for themselves, to question their station in life and become oppositional. Others claimed that schools could teach them godliness, cleanliness, manual skills and, above all, discipline. The latter gradually gained ground, especially during the philanthropic second half of the century, and charitable schools for the poor sprung up all over England, financed by religious bodies or by private persons.

The charity schools attracted a great number of poor children, in spite of many parents’ reluctance to having to do without their labour during school hours. The fact that the schools often provided free meals and uniforms may have contributed to their popularity. Girls and boys were often taught together and the favoured teaching method was repetitive drilling. Reading and religious instruction were the core subjects. Teaching discipline and proper deference to superiors was seen as the main task.

2.7. Literature and language

2.7.1. Background

The printed word experienced a virtual boom during the Georgian era. Several factors contributed to its rapid expansion and ever-increasing importance.

In 1695 the Licensing Act had been withdrawn, thereby ending the censorship that had been exerted by State and Church (Porter, 1990:254). From now on Englishmen
had the right to print freely and publish anything they wanted, although they could afterwards be tried by jury for libel and sedition.

The rapid expansion of the literate middle classes, and of literacy also among the lower ranks, led to an increased demand for reading matter. Genteel, relatively well-educated women in particular needed something to occupy their minds and time. It has even been claimed that the birth of the novel was a result of these gentlewomen having too much leisure on their hands.

New publishing companies were springing up everywhere, competing for their shares of the free enterprise market and so bringing down prices to levels where most people could afford to buy newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and ballads. The price of books remained high, but publishers increased their sales by publishing books in serial form which spread the cost for the customer. Better communications made possible the creation of book clubs and circulating libraries. For a modest annual price, books were now becoming accessible to a growing number of subscribers across the country (Porter, 1990:235).

Under the Tudors and the Stuarts, cultural life had centred mainly around the Court. The Georges, however, although interested in art, had little taste for theatre and literature. Instead, the country seats of the aristocracy became increasingly important as cultural centres. Many of them had excellent libraries and small stages where plays were performed, either by travelling companies or by friends and family. Putting on plays was also a popular pastime among the educated middle classes, which created a great demand for printed play texts.

Theatre in London was also being de-centralized. It became more commercial and geared towards the general public instead of towards the Court. New playhouses were built, some of them holding audiences of several thousands.

2.7.2 The age of prose

The great increase in size and the new make-up of the reading and theatre-going public
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had considerable impact on both form and content of 18th century literature. The spirit of the age was practical, logical, moralizing and orderly. The middle-classes that made up the greater part of the new audience were not very interested in philosophical or ideological pursuits. Excessive imagination and religious fanaticism made them suspicious. They had a positive outlook on life and believed in progress. All these features contributed to making prose the most favoured literary form.

The century saw a virtual explosion in the newspaper market (Porter, 1990:234-235). In 1700 there were no daily newspapers and the newspapers that did exist were all printed in London. In 1799 there were fourteen daily morning papers in London alone; there were evening papers and Sunday papers, and provincial newspapers were being published in nearly every district in England. Magazines that catered for special interests and sections of society appeared periodically and multiplied. There were ladies’ journals, fashion magazines, political, religious and pornographic journals and many others, bringing the total up to 250 periodicals in 1800.

Two periodicals published in the early part of the century had a lasting effect on the development of English prose as well as being highly influential in contemporary society. Richard Steele’s and Joseph Addison’s collaboration in *The Tatler* (1709-11) and its successor *The Spectator* (1711-1712) aimed at entertaining the readers as well as instructing and influencing them. In both journals, members of a fictional club, representing different sections of society, discussed the social, moral, political, religious and literary issues of the day. One of the club-members in *The Spectator*, the slightly ridiculous but also lovable country squire Sir Roger de Coverly, was a highly successful literary creation who has been seen as one of the forerunners of the heroes of the realistic novel. Their literary style, Addison’s prose in particular, was characterized by simplicity, clarity and wit. It set the standards for English didactic and informative essay-writing adhered to ever since.

But the main literary achievement of the 18th century lay in the development of the
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novel. The roots of the English novel are to be found in various literary forms that were popular at the time; in journalism, in travel accounts, in letter-writing, in diaries, in the French romances, in the Spanish picaresque tales. Since imagination was something dubious during the age of reason, many of the early novels aimed at persuading the reader that they were documentaries rather than works of fiction. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) claims to be a diary written after a ship-wreck, its close attention to detail contributing towards making it convincing. His *Moll Flanders* (1722) is supposed to be the autobiography of a “fallen” woman and is attempting an idiom suitable for such a character. Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747) are both written in the form of letters.

Richardson’s novels were the first in the long tradition of novels of character, in which the thoughts and emotions of the protagonists play a major part. Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) – a parody of *Pamela* – and his masterpiece *Tom Jones* (1749) both adhere to the picaresque tradition, but add to it an interest in the development of the characters.

Lawrence Sterne’s, *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), on the other hand, seems to have few roots in traditional literature. Its preoccupation with form and structure and also with the book as a physical object rather points ahead to the experimental novels of the twentieth century. The lack of a coherent plot, the absence of proper heroes and heroines and the abundance of bizarre and bawdy events, turn the novel into a comical satire of the literary conventions and ambitions of the time. Lawrence Sterne was a highly original writer, not typical of his age.

After the success of *Pamela*, the literary market was soon flooded with novels of varying quality, written by women as well as by men. There were novels of action and novels of character and novels that combined the two. Just as the moral periodicals, the novels aimed at being educational as well as entertaining. The life of ordinary people, not the life of the aristocracy, as often was the case in earlier literature, was now being
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depicted, sometimes with humour and wit, sometimes with prejudice and sentimentality. The characters were mostly middle-class people and the morality behind the stories was based on middle-class values. Domesticity was celebrated and virtue was rewarded by "upwards mobility".

The last decade saw the appearance of an intellectual and radical feminist writer, Mary Wollstonecraft. In *Vindication of The Rights of Woman* (1792) she refuted the traditional views of women, arguing for free love and for women's right to combine the role of mother with a career outside the home. Her autobiographical novels *Mary* (1788) and *Maria* (1798) bear witness to the dilemmas she had to face when trying to form her personal life along these lines. 18th century society was far from ready to accept such revolutionary ideas and actions.

For a considerable part of the century one highly prolific writer dominated the literary scene with his impressive output and strong personality – Dr Samuel Johnson. During his long career he tried his hand and clear intellect at all possible kinds of writing; poetry, drama, novels, essays, translations, biographies, literary criticism, lexicography. His fame as a writer and scholar rests mainly on his edition of Shakespeare's plays; on his literary criticism, especially *The Lives of the Poets* (1779-81), and above all on his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). In this two-volume work, he single-handedly tried to give precise definitions and also to standardize the pronunciation and spelling of 40,000 English words. In addition he supplied quotations illustrating usage and attempted etymologies of many of the words, though not always successfully. This was the first comprehensive dictionary of the English language, comparable to works of whole academies in other countries, and it has been of great value for all later lexicographers.

2.7.3. Language

Since geographical as well as social mobility was considerable, people were used to hearing several varieties of spoken English. London in particular was turning into a
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linguistic melting-pot due to the great influx of people from all over the country. But as
regional dialects were becoming less important for group identification in urban areas,
social dialects were gaining ground (Strang, 1970:105). Language was becoming one of
the main features that separate different classes in the social structure.

Before the middle of the 18th century there was neither a proper grammar codifying
the English language nor a comprehensive dictionary of its vocabulary. While the
pronunciation of words varied according to dialect, spelling often varied from
individual to individual. This state of affairs did not agree with the general spirit of the
age which demanded order, correctness, reason and authority (Baugh, 1978:253-293).
When there were no proper rules for the use of the language, even a well-educated man
was left in doubt as to whether his language was correct or not. This confusion was
becoming increasingly precarious as the social importance of language increased.

As in so many other periods, many people were concerned about the state of the
language. There was a widespread belief that the English language was in decline.
There were articles in the periodicals about growing linguistic corruption, about “ugly”
words, about too many monosyllables, about foreign loans that threatened the purity of
the language. There were demands for rules defining correct usage, for the removal of
imperfections and for the fixing of the language in a permanent form. For a long time
there had been a debate going on as to whether England needed an academy like France
and Italy with the purpose of preserving the purity of the language and deciding on
linguistic issues. Prominent writers like Dryden, Swift and Defoe advocated such an
institution. Samuel Johnson, among others, opposed the plans, arguing that Englishmen
are too individualistic and freedom-loving to accept any infringements on their use of
language. It was also pointed out that it was a mistake to believe an academy could stop
a language from changing. After the publication of Johnson’s Dictionary in 1755, the
need for an academy seemed less urgent and eventually the debate died out.

In the sixties, several grammars of the English language appeared. They were
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mostly prescriptive, formulating rules for "correct" usage, deciding which of conflicting usages was the correct one, and clamping down on "errors" with great zeal. They based their judgments on "reason" (mainly the use of analogy and logic), etymology and to some extent the example of classical languages.\(^{15}\) This was the time, for example, when the ancient use of the so-called double negative was declared incorrect, since it broke the rules of logic.

Despite many defects, Johnson's *Dictionary* and the work of the grammarians did provide a standard for written English that writers and printers could turn to when in doubt. A long time before this, individual printers had tried to use consistent spellings in their publications. Since there was no common standard for them to adhere to, the outcome had still been somewhat varied. Texts from the second half of the 18th century, on the other hand, are nearly as uniform in their spelling and printing conventions as are those from our own century. For example, in the novels used in the present investigation, capitalisation of nouns occurs in four out of the six novels published before 1755, while it has been abandoned in all four published thereafter. Variation in the spelling of individual words is also virtually non-existent in the later novels. There was, however, for quite some time yet a discrepancy between the printed word and manuscripts. The need to apply a common standard in private writings was not obvious to 18th century men and women. A standardised form for printed texts seemed reasonable and desirable, but individuals still retained the right to choose their favourite spellings in letters and private documents.

By the end of the Georgian era the written form of English looked very similar to the one used today. No major syntactic developments have taken place since, nor have

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\(^{15}\) Joseph Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761) was an exception. He was the first to insist on the importance of usage as the sole arbiter of correctness, a doctrine that was surprisingly liberal and modern at the time.
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there been any spelling reforms to change the look of the printed page.\textsuperscript{16} Since pronunciation is of little consequence to English spelling, changes that have taken place in spoken English have had no impact. As regards vocabulary, the main difference is the great increase in the number of new words that have appeared during the last two centuries. Some words have become obsolete, but not so many as to make understanding difficult. Since the meaning of individual words sometimes changes with time as they reflect the state of the society in which they are used, the printed page can, however, be deceptive in its familiarity. One of the aims of the present study is to increase the understanding of some of these words.

2.8. Summary

Politically, 18th century England was a relatively stable society. However, the beginnings of the industrial revolution and the enclosure within agriculture led to changes in demography and living conditions. The middle ranks were expanding, but the landless proletariat was also growing. Agricultural output increased, manufacturing and business prospered, urban population was growing and communications were improving.

Society had a pyramidal, multi-layered structure, but upward mobility was possible. The family was changing in the direction of greater closeness between its members and more humane methods were introduced in child-rearing. Middle-class women were left with few tasks since they were not supposed to do menial work. The legal position of married women was still the same as for under-age children.

Traditional education was in a state of decline, but there was a great expansion in private schools that used modern curricula and teaching methods. The education of girls

\textsuperscript{16} Syntactic differences that do exist between 18th century English and present usage seem to be mainly a matter of frequency in the use of different variants (Rydén, 1981:4-5). One exception is the progressive passive ("The house is being built") that first appeared in the last years of the 18th century.
improved. Charity schools were being set up for the poor. Literacy was increasing among the population as a whole.

The spirit of the age was rational and practical and this was reflected in the literature. The novel was born and became widely popular. Newspapers and periodicals multiplied. The English language became regulated and standardized into its present form with the appearance of grammars and Dr Johnson’s Dictionary.
3

CENTRAL EPICENE TERMS

3.1. Definition and categorisation

By "central epicene terms" I mean basic terms used to refer to human beings as such, including terms that define them according to age but excluding those that define them according to gender.

The basis for my classification of a term is its function in each instance. A term is classified as "central" when it does not fit into any of the other categories, i.e. a) it is not used metaphorically; b) it is not used as a relational term; c) it is not an occupational term; d) it does not primarily function as a characterising term (physically or mentally), and e) it does not denote a temporary state or activity. Sometimes it is a matter of opinion whether a certain term should be classified as central or not. Since the categories mainly serve a practical, organisational purpose, I do not regard this subjectivity as a major problem.

3.2. Description of terms and tokens

Terms that are not age-related (number of tokens in the corpus)

- being (30), body (8), character (7), creature (123), figure (2), individual (4), person (232), personage (2), soul (13)

Non-adult terms

- babe (8), baby (1), bantling (1), brat (1), child (118), infant (7), youngster (1)

3.2.1. Not age-related terms

- being (30)
  Fem. ref.: 6
  Male ref.: 8
  Epicene ref.: 16

All the records of being with human referents come from books written in the second
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half of the century. The first recorded example of this usage in the *OED* dates from 1751, which suggests that it started around that time. However, Dr Johnson records as his 3rd definition of the term "the person existing" which may be taken as a sign that this was already an established usage. As the first record in the *OED* in fact comes from one of Johnson's *Rambler* essays and may therefore be a usage introduced by him, the evidence must be regarded as inconclusive.

There are nine examples of the collocation *human being*. Other prenominal adjectives are *exalted, god-like, happy* (3), *superior, insulated, lonely, rough, unfortunate* (3). According to the *OED* the use of *being* with human reference is "sometimes contemptuous; sometimes idealistic". Both usages are exemplified by collocations in my data.

...when not lost to hope I found pleasure in the society of *rough beings*; (Wollstonecraft, p.36)

Rasselas listened to him with the veneration due to the instructions of a *superior being*, (Johnson, p.47)

*body* (8)
Fem. ref.: 5  
Male ref.: 2  
Epicene ref.: 1

All the instances with female reference occur in books by male writers, while the two instances with male reference have a female author.

According to the *OED*, this term when used about a human being was “formerly, as still dialectally .... exactly equivalent to the current ‘person’; but now only as a term of familiarity, with a tinge of compassion, and generally with adjectives implying this.”

My data suggest that “formerly” was earlier than the 18th century. All but one of the adjectives collocating with *body* contain “a tinge of compassion”: *unhappy, young* (3), *poor, innocent* (2), *helpless, worthless, sick*. The referents in all these cases are
female. The context of the only positive collocation, *wise body*, suggests that the attribute is in fact used ironically:

There are two sorts of people...that there is no contending with, that is a *wise body* and a fool...(Defoe, p.95)

The two instances with male reference both occur in something like a standard phrase, used to express mock-subservience, in the speech of one character:

...pray, if a *body* may be so bold, how much a night may you give at present to keep the undertakers aloof? (Burney, p.392)

*character* (8)
Fem. ref.: 1
Male ref.: 2
Epicene ref.: 5

Since 6 out of the 8 instances of this term come from Mary Wollstonecraft, the term may be part of her idiolect and not much used otherwise in the 18th century. The first quotation in the *OED* where the term is used in the sense of ‘person’ dates from 1749.

The prenominal adjectives in the corpus (*shining, sparkling, eccentric, new, uncommon*) underline the basic, literal sense of the term, a ‘distinctive mark’. When used about a person he/she is “regarded in the abstract as the possessor of specified qualities” (*OED*).

I longed to see new *characters*, to break the tedious monotony of my life
(Wollstonecraft, p.98)

*creature* (123)
Fem.ref.: 86
Male ref.: 14
Epicene ref.: 23

The epicene term *creature* displays a striking difference as regards gender of referent, 70% female referents as compared to 11% male. The term is somewhat more popular with male writers than with female writers (58% of the records have male writers, 42%
Chapter 3

female writers).

Not only are female creatures much more frequent than male ones, they can also be described in more favourable terms. A study of the prenominal adjectives shows that only two records of the positive collocations have male reference (Table 1). In one of these the referent is a little midget (a non-typical male) and in the other the adjective good is used in a contemptuous rather than in a positive way ("...now, do, there's a good creature"). The remaining 21 positive records have female reference. All but one of the neutral and patronising collocations have female or the little midget as referents. Four out of five collocations with prototypical male referents are negative, whereas the corresponding proportions for female reference is less than one third. Poor creature is the most common collocation with 21 tokens.

...she had been married, against her inclination, to a rich old man, extremely jealous (no wonder, for she was a charming creature); (Wollstonecraft, p.70)

"O Sir," said I, "...don't offer to tempt a poor creature, whose will would be yours, if my virtue would permit." (Richardson, p.70)
Chapter 3

Table 1. Prenominal adjectives collocating with *creature* (no of tokens, F=female ref., M=male ref., *ref.=midget)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beautiful 2F</td>
<td>little 4M*</td>
<td>abandoned 1F</td>
<td>amphibious 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charming 4F</td>
<td>young 6F</td>
<td>disconsolate 1F</td>
<td>black 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dear 3F</td>
<td></td>
<td>droll 1M</td>
<td>commanding 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divine 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>giddy 1F</td>
<td>erring 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiastic 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>harmless 1F</td>
<td>foolish 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellent 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>miserable 1F</td>
<td>impudent 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gentle 1M*</td>
<td></td>
<td>poor 17F/4M*</td>
<td>infamous 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good 2F/1M</td>
<td></td>
<td>romantic 1F</td>
<td>perfidious 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>sad 2F</td>
<td>provoking 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innocent 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>undone 1F</td>
<td>ridiculous 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrious 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>unfortunate 2F</td>
<td>selfish 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motherly 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>unhappy 1F</td>
<td>strange 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reasonable 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>weak 2F</td>
<td>stupid 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sincere 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>thankless 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worthy 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>thoughtless 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unaccountable 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ungrateful 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unworthy 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vain 2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vile 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wicked 2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms: 15</td>
<td>terms: 2</td>
<td>terms: 13</td>
<td>terms: 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokens: 23</td>
<td>tokens: 10</td>
<td>tokens: 36</td>
<td>tokens: 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*figure* (2)

Fem. ref.: 1
Epicene ref.: 1

55
Chapter 3

Whereas *character* when used about a person refers to abstract qualities, *figure* is often used for “a person considered with regard to visible form or appearance”, according to the *OED*. The examples found in the 18th century corpus reflect this aspect of the term:

... the petrified *figures* she had encountered, the only human forms she was doomed to observe, haunting her dreams... (Wollstonecraft, p.68)

...her eyes were wan and eager, her dress thin and tawdry... This strange *figure* gave me much anguish of heart, and to avoid being seen with her I went away... (Steele, p.267)

The fact that both these instances are rather negative may be coincidental. There are both positive and negative examples among the quotations in the *OED*.

*individual* (4)
Fem. ref.: 1
Epicene ref.: 3

The term *individual* is mainly used in abstract contexts in its sense of “a single human being, as opposed to Society, the Family etc.”(*OED*). It first came into use with human reference during the 18th century. All four tokens come from the second half of the century.

...the right of society to the labour of *individuals*... (Johnson, p.55)

“Every *individual* has its own peculiar trials;...” (Wollstonecraft, p.44)

*person* (232)17
Fem.ref.: 56
Male ref.: 105
Epicene ref.: 71

This term is more than twice as frequent in female as in male writers in the corpus: 168

17 When the term *person* referred to looks and appearance and not to the individual as such (a usage common in the 18th century) it was not recorded.
tokens have female authors, only 64 male authors. Another conspicuous pattern in the use of person regards the gender of the referents, nearly twice as many male as female. There is no correlation with the gender of the writer in this respect.

In comparison with creature, person attracts few collocating adjectives (100 tokens for creature, only 22 for person). Person collocates with both positive, patronising and negative adjectives and there are examples of both male and female referents in each category. While there are twice as many male as female referents for the term, less than half of the collocations occur with males (8/22 tokens). A closer look at the data reveals different qualifying structures for males and females. When person has a male referent, the prototypical qualifier is post- instead of prenominal, taking the following form: a person of... (quality, distinction, learning etc.). There are 17 examples of this pattern, 14 of which refer to males. Whereas the prenominal adjectives mainly indicate personal qualities, the postnominal structures typically refer to social position.

Table 2. Prenominal adjectives collocating with person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>admirable 3F</td>
<td>young 1F</td>
<td>distressed 1F</td>
<td>disaffected 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeable 1F</td>
<td>common 1M</td>
<td>needy 1M</td>
<td>guilty 2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>oppressed 1F</td>
<td>indolent 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extraordinary 3M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generous 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illustrious 1M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innocent 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proper 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms: 9</td>
<td>terms: 2</td>
<td>terms: 3</td>
<td>terms: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokens: 13</td>
<td>tokens: 2</td>
<td>tokens: 3</td>
<td>tokens: 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3

personage (2)
Male ref.: 1
Epicene ref: 1

Both instances appear in *The Female Quixote* where the term is used in the sense of "person of distinction" (*OED*). The prenominal adjectives are *illustrious* and *great*. Although there are no examples with female reference in the data, this does not mean that the term was used with male reference exclusively, as Dr Johnson gives the following definition: "a considerable person; man or woman of eminence".

...she remained...confirmed in the Opinion, that he was some great *Personage*, whom her Beauty had forced to assume an Appearance unworthy of himself: (Lennox, p.25)

soul (13)
Fem. ref.: 3
Male ref.: 10
Epicene ref.:1

The gender distribution of referents for *soul* could imply that the prototype is male. This may be a risky conclusion, however, as eight of the instances occur in *Tristram Shandy*, where they function mainly as a somewhat patronising term of endearment (*dear soul! honest soul! poor soul!* ) and where there are considerably fewer female than male referents (474 as compared to 690). Still, remembering that the ratio female/male for the term *body* was 5/2, it does give some food for thought.

...had it pleased God...the honest *soul* had never been taken out of his warm bed, and dragged to the inquisition... (Sterne, p.575)

3.2.2. Non-adult terms

babe (8), baby (1)
Fem. ref.: 8
Male ref.: 1
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The term *baby*, now the most common word for “an infant in arms”, is in fact a diminutive or pet-name for *babe* which was the more common term in earlier days. It is difficult to say when *baby* became more popular but my data suggest that in the 18th century the original term *babe* still prevailed. The female bias among the referents may be due to one and the same referent appearing in six of the records. The current use of both terms for girls or young women (often in the sense of ‘girl-friend’) is a later phenomenon.

The *OED* gives a quotation from Fenning’s *English Dictionary* (1771) which suggests that the two terms refer to different age-groups: “Baby, a young child, distinguished from ‘babe’, because that is applied to children who can both walk and speak, but this to those who can do neither”. This difference is not shown in my data since there are examples of both terms being applied to very young children. It may still be true, of course, that *babe* covered a wider age-range.

In due time she brought forth a son, a feeble *babe*; (Wollstonecraft, p.7)

The woman...left Berry Hill entirely, with her *baby*, who was but six weeks older than myself. (Burney, p.373)

*bantling*

Fem. ref: 1

*Bantling* has the general sense of ‘young child’ in current English. The term has a depreciative added sense, however, which reflects an earlier use when one of its attributes was ‘illegitimate’. This earlier usage supports the theory of its origin as being a corruption of German *bänkling*, “a child begotten on a bench and not in the marriage-bed” (*OED*).

My only record of the term is derogatory but since its referent was born inside marriage, it is difficult to tell whether or not it has the attribute value of illegitimacy:

---

18 Compare the endearing or diminutive nicknames for personal names, *e.g.* *Thomas/Tommy, Deborah/Debbie* which are formed according to the same pattern.
Chapter 3

...not all that either of you can do for her, will prevent her being eternally stigmatized, as the bantling of Dame Green, wash-woman and wet nurse of Berry Hill" (Burney, p.378)

brat
Epicene ref.: 1

Although a contemptuous term for a child, brat does not contain the concept of illegitimacy. Still, my only record of brat does refer to a child begotten outside marriage.

The term is probably of Celtic origin, the same as Old Irish brat which meant 'swaddling-clothes'. According to the OED it was sometimes used without contempt in the 16th and 17th centuries. The wider context of my record from the 18th century suggests that the term is indeed used in contempt, although it is not immediately clear from the quotation.

...he told me that he should speak to his friend, a parish-officer, to get a nurse for the brat I laid to him... (Wollstonecraft, p.84)

child (104)
Fem.ref.: 54
Male ref.: 2
Epicene ref.: 48

The two main senses of child are 1) 'a young human being' 2) 'the offspring of human beings'. Only records of type 1 are included in this analysis, as type 2 falls into the category "relational terms".

When child has a gender-specific referent, it is female in 54 out of 56 cases. In 29 of these it is used as a term of address. The age of the referents varies from very young

---

19 The same discrepancy between the genders was found for child used as a relational term: 99 records have a female referent, only 4 male. The OED points out that child as a relational term is used by parents more often and for longer both about and to girls than boys, which agrees well with my data.
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to about 17 years. When the referents belong to the upper end of the age-range, it is mainly used as a term of address.

According to the OED child was originally used only in relation to the mother, as "the fruit of the womb", its origin being the Old Teutonic root *kil, related to the Gothic kildher, meaning ‘womb’ and the word kull (‘litter’). Eventually it came to be used about young humans also without the relational aspect. The first sense in Johnsons’s DEL is “an infant, or very young person”, which indicates that this was by now an established usage. The OED says that child is now used for both boys and girls below the age of puberty. It also records the use of child in contemptuous or affectionate address even to persons who are not so young.

Both dictionaries also mention that there is a specific sense of ‘girl-baby’ or ‘female infant’ in certain dialects. Since this usage seems to be restricted to newborns, it can hardly explain the overwhelming dominance of female referents. A purely contextual aspect may account for some of the bias as there are fewer young male than young female characters in the texts.²⁰

The great majority of the prenominal adjectives collocating with child are positive, a few are patronising and only one slightly negative (Table 3).

²⁰ This aspect will be dealt with in more detail in the discussion of terms for non-adult males (pp.94-95).
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Table 3. Prenominal adjectives collocating with *child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beloved 2F</td>
<td>little 1F</td>
<td>deluded 1F</td>
<td>foolish 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cherished 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comely 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dear 6F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favourite 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good 1M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virtuous 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 8</td>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 1</td>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 2</td>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 14</td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 1</td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 3</td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*infant* (7)

Fem.ref.: 6  
Epicene ref.: 1

The term *infant* from Latin *in-fans* (literal meaning ‘unable to speak’) originally referred to a small child in arms but was later extended to include children up to the age of seven (*OED*). My records do not indicate that any change has taken place since the 18th century, as they include examples of both usages.

Her *infant’s* image was continually floating on Maria’s sight, and the first smile of intelligence remembered... (Wollstonecraft, p.61)

...the poor *Infant*, not yet five Years old, was with her wretched Mother become a Vagabond... (Fielding, p.66)

*youngster* (1)

Male ref.: 1
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The first definition of *youngster* in the *OED* is "A young person, esp. a young man, and, formerly, a lively or vigorous young fellow". My only record of the term is a good example of this former usage:

Sir Roger was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege, fought a Duel upon his first coming to Town, and kicked Bully Dawson in a publick Coffee-house for calling him *Youngster*. (Steele, p.201)

3.3. Discussion

The three epicene terms that are frequent enough to warrant a tentative conclusion, *child*, *creature*, and *person*, all show prototypical specialisation as regards gender of referent. The term *child* is used about (or to) females 52 times, only twice about males. *Creature* has 86 female referents and 14 male, while *person* shows the opposite bias, 105 males as compared to 56 females. How can such differences between these supposedly gender neutral terms be explained?

My suggestion is that they spring from a conceptual system among the language users which mirrors the hierarchical structure of 18th century society (see Ch.2). The conceptual model of the world in 18th century England looked something like the one shown in Fig. 2.

The important variables in this structure are "power/dependency" and "spirit/matter". At the top there is God who is pure spirit and who has the whole creation in his power. At the next level is man, a mixture of spirit and matter, dependent on the creator but with power over animals and physical objects. But *man* in the generic sense includes women and children. Although these sub-categories are also a mixture of spirit and matter, or soul and body, the emphasis is shifted towards the physical side of the axis. Animals, possessing life but not soul, are still more physical and dependent on the will of human beings. Lifeless, physical objects are at the bottom of the power-structure.
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Figure 2. 18th century conceptual model of the world

Semantic frames, as used by Barsalou (1992:30-40), Persson (1994) and others, proved a useful tool in the analysis of gender bias in epicene terms. Barsalou sees frames as flexible structures in which attributes and values of attributes vary according to their importance in a specific context. A combination of prototypical attribute values for a term makes up the prototype. In the present context, social, mental and physical status together with age and gender seem to be relevant frame attributes. But values of frame attributes are often inter-dependent (Barsalou, 1992:37). If, for example, the attribute 'age' of a term for a living being has the value 'young', the value for the attribute 'physical status' tends to be 'small' rather than 'big'. Sets of such co-occurring values also evoke prototypical responses which can be traced through the adjectives that
Chapter 3

precede the terms. The attribute 'response' has therefore been introduced to highlight this particular causal relationship within the frames.

3.3.1. child

Figure 3 presents a semantic frame for 'child' which should be compared with the frames for 'male' and 'female' in Figure 4.

**Figure 3. Semantic frame for ‘child’. Ovals represent concepts and attributes of concepts. Circles represent prototypical values of attributes.**

The set of values that make up the prototype for 'child' are 'young', 'dependent', 'ignorant', and 'small'. As *child* in the sense of 'offspring' is not included in this context, the prototypical value for 'age' is 'young'. Since children have to rely on adults for their material and spiritual needs and cannot act in their own right in legal matters, the value for 'social status' is 'dependent'. Their intellects are not yet fully developed and their education not completed and therefore their mental status can be described as 'ignorant'. Their physical status is 'small' in comparison with adults. Beings that are young, small, ignorant and dependent on you for their existence (be they pets, children or women) are usually regarded with a certain tenderness, which explains why most of the adjectives
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collocating with child are positive. The negative side of the coin is that dependency also
tends to meet with condescending or patronising attitudes.

The attribute values that applied to 'child' were also true for the concept of 'female'
in 18th century society. Materially, most women were dependent on parents or
husbands. Legally, they were in the same position as under-age children. Spiritually,
they relied on men, who were the sole interpreters of God's will. Their intellects were
regarded as different and less suited to abstract reasoning.\textsuperscript{21} Since women in general are
of a smaller size than men and their voices high-pitched, there are also physical
similarities between women and children (Bolinger, 1980:100). Although there were
undoubtedly many men who were dependent, ignorant, small and weak, these values
were – and still are – non-prototypical for the concept of 'male'.

Prototypical specialisation as regards gender seems to emerge when a set of
c-occurring attribute values of a term matches a corresponding set for either 'male' or
'female'. In the case of child, the prototypical values for three central attributes ('social',
'mental' and 'physical status') correspond to those for 'female' in 18th century society.
These conditions made possible the appearance of an alternative value of 'young adult'
for the attribute 'age' when the referent was female.

\textsuperscript{21} That this view is still held in some quarters is evident from the following quotation about the
English Princess Anne in The Observer: "'Anne has got a man's brain' is how one courtier
admiringly described her, putting a heavy emphasis on the word 'man'" (9.6.1996).
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Figure 4. Semantic frames for ‘male’ and ‘female’ in 18th century society. Rectangles represent potential but non-prototypical values.

So far I have not carried out a similar study of current usage, but my hypothesis is that the female bias in the usage of child has weakened as women's position in the social structure has changed. Although the value for the attribute 'physical status' largely remains unchanged, the old prototypical values for social and mental status ('dependent' and 'ignorant') are now alternative rather than prototypical. Women are no longer dependent on men in the way children are on adults when it comes to economic, 

---

22 Even the physical attribute values for 'female' have become more similar to those for 'male', according to current research. Women are getting taller and wider-waisted, while men are getting thinner and more "effete" (Business Today, August 1996).
social, intellectual or spiritual matters. If my model is correct, this change in attribute values for the concept 'female' should also have led to new values for the response attribute. 'Respect' and 'fear' should now be possible alternative values.

That there are still “fossils [that] rise and dance at night” is only too apparent, however, from a recent quotation from the BBC's Today programme:

It was not only the adults that were out – women and children were out as well. (Radio 4, 7.9.1995)

3.3.2. person

The term person has undergone an interesting semantic development over the last few centuries (Ordoubadian, 1986). Since it first appeared in the English language in the early part of the 13th century, referents have been both male and female as Ordoubadian's examples show. In the middle of the 19th century, however, the term was redefined by Parliament and the law courts as referring only to the male gender. This was a deliberate, prescriptive definition for political purposes. When women began to claim their rights to enter certain schools and professions, such as medicine and law, they based their argument on the fact that the statutes setting down the rules for who was eligible used the term person which is gender-neutral. Since up till then it was taken for granted that only men would apply, an explicit specification such as "male person" was not needed. Long law-suits followed and time after time women were declared to be "non-persons". Not until 1929 did women once again become 'persons' in the eyes of the law by a new ruling in the House of Lords.

My data suggest, however, that the 19th century interpretation of person as meaning 'male human being' was not quite as unexpected or illogical as it may seem today. A century earlier, although in principle a "person" could be either male or female, there was already a male bias in the usage of the term. Again, the reasons for this prototypicality can be clarified with the help of a frame model. If we consider the wide semantic field of 'creation', person is one of three co-hyponyms, the others being animal.
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and thing. Relevant frame attributes should therefore be those where the values serve to differentiate person from the other two.

**Figure 5. Semantic frame for 'person', Stage I.**

![Semantic frame for 'person', Stage I.](image)

Although the attribute values for person serve to distinguish both the male and the female gender from the other categories in the creation, in 18th century society they were the prototypical values for 'male' but not for 'female'. A male prototypicality had already entered the term (Figure 6, Stage II). Therefore, when in the 19th century it was decided for political reasons that the sole attribute value for person was to be 'male,' it was not totally surprising (Figure 6, Stage III). As women eventually won the battle for their legal right to the term, and as the values for 'female' gradually changed along with women's changing status (spiritual, mental and social), person returned to its original, gender-neutral position (Figure 6, Stage IV).

However, the history of person still seems to be in the making. As it has become the politically correct term to use in order to avoid the gender bias in terms like chairman and the sensitive choice between terms like girl, woman and lady, it seems as if it has more and more come to refer to women. Stage V, where the prototypical value for 'sex' is female, is still only hypothetical, but it may be a possible future development.
In my corpus the term *person* is used twice as often in female as in male writing. Since the term seems to have had a rather elevated position in 18th century usage, this is to be expected. In general, women tend to use more overtly prestigious or polite terms than men (See Ch.1, p.8).
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3.3.3. *creature*

In 18th century usage, as well as along the "spiritual-physical" axis, *creature* occupied a lower position than *person*. It was also used more by male than by female authors. The following quotation from Richardson's *Clarissa* illustrates the different levels of the terms:

> Be a person's attainments ever so great, he should always remember that he is God's *creature*.

Dr Johnson gives the following definitions of the term:

1. A being, not self-existent, but created by the supreme power.
2. Anything created.
3. An animal not human.
4. A term of contempt for a human being,
5. A word of petty tenderness.
6. A person who owed his rise or his fortune to another.

Johnson's main definitions of *creature* form a hyponymy system, which may be compared to the 18th century conceptual structure of the world (Fig. 7).

At the top of this structure is God, the creator, in relation to whom everything is a "creature", both living beings and inanimate objects. (*cf.* Johnson's definitions 1 and 2 = the widest extension of the term) At this level of definition perfect equality exists; humans, animals and objects – they are all "things created", owing their existence to God. If the scope is narrowed down to living beings, human or non-human, the equality is still there; in relation to God there is nothing negative in being a "creature".
But once human beings and animals have been split up into separate categories, interesting effects begin to appear. Now the term *creature* appears to have lost some of its sense of being related to the creator, indicating instead positions in a social structure (def. 4-6). The positions in question evoke the responses of contempt and petty tenderness or emphasize the aspect of dependency. Again, a semantic frame analysis of the term at the animate level may be used to illustrate what aspects made it a better fit for female than for male referents in the 18th century (Fig.8).
Although *creature* often had human referents, the prototypical creature was probably non-human. Johnson gives as his third sense "an animal not human", which indicates that the term was used to designate animals as distinct from men. The *OED* also gives an example of this usage from 1733.

*Go, from the creatures thy instructions take* (Pope, Essay on Man, iii, 172)

The prototypical values for the spiritual and mental aspects of the term must therefore be 'soulless' and 'ignorant' and for the social aspect 'dependent'. Again, the combined set of prototypical values agreed better with the concept of 'female' than with that of 'male'. The response to such values being 'tenderness' and 'condescension', this also explains why the term often attracted favourable attributes when the reference was female. Whereas a female creature adhered to the conceptual norm, a male creature broke it, implying disapproval, and therefore often came with negative attributes (Persson, 1992:111). This frame analysis also explains why *poor creature* was such a
popular collocation (25 records), 'condescension' being an appropriate response to the prototypical attribute values.

In current British usage creature as a term of human reference seems to have lost ground (Persson, 1992:112). Just as in Swedish, where kreatur nowadays is used mainly about animals,\(^{23}\) it has come down in the social hierarchy. When the term is still used about humans, either with generic or specific reference, it is often indicating something not quite human (e.g. strange creatures). The female bias seems to have disappeared, however. In fact, the LOB contains fewer examples of creature with female than with male references (Persson, 1992:105). This most probably reflects the fact that women have risen to a higher level in the social structure. They have ceased being "property", dependent on men for their needs. The prototypical values for 'female' as regards the spiritual, mental and social attributes are now by and large the same as for 'male'. The new position of women further up on the "spiritual-physical" axis, has increased the distance to the animals. Some equality between men and women has been achieved, at least as far as the term creature is concerned.\(^{24}\)

3.3.4. The "spiritual-physical" dimension

When plotting the epicene, not age-related terms along the "spiritual-physical" axis with predominantly male referents on the left side and predominantly female referents on the right, the following picture emerged (Fig.9).

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\(^{23}\) When used about humans, the Sw. kreatur has relatively recently acquired the secondary derogatory sense of "being a mere tool for another's wishes", e.g. dikaturens kreatur ('the instrument of dictatorship').

\(^{24}\) A ghost from the past appeared, however, in a recent issue of The Sunday Telegraph. In an article about a love affair between a Labour MP and an aspiring Labour MP (18.2.1997), one of them was referred to as "a delectable creature". Even if the name had not been mentioned, I do not think any reader would have been in the dark as regards the gender of the referent.
On the whole, the further down on the axis the more female referents; the further up the more male referents. Although the records of the terms within brackets were far too few for any conclusions to be drawn, the pattern formed was interesting enough to inspire me to look at the other terms in my corpus in this particular aspect.

Another pattern that seems to emerge from this study is a shift in emphasis from more "physical" to more "spiritual" terms from the 18th century onwards. The terms being, character and individual all came into use with human reference during the 18th century, according to their first recorded usage in the *OED*. Body and creature, still acceptable terms for humans at that time, have now more or less disappeared.\(^{25}\) Being, character and individual were used to refer to human beings, whereas body and creature were used to refer to non-human animals. However, the term hardbody is now used by men to denote a sexually attractive woman with a good figure (Persson, oral communication).
Chapter 3

which lacks the value of dependency inherent in *creature*, has now become a more common term for basic human reference in the collocation *human being*. It is possible to see these developments as a reflection of the "stability and change" that characterized 18th century England (see Ch. 2). The world was still a hierarchy where people, although living at different levels, were "things created" and ultimately dependent on the "supreme being". At the same time, partly as a result of new scientific discoveries, it saw the beginning of a new individualism which emphasised the independent nature of human beings. Mankind as such was moving upwards on the physical–spiritual scale.
CENTRAL MALE AND FEMALE TERMS

4.1. Definition and categorisation

The category “Central male and female terms” contains basic terms for human beings that are gender specific. As in chapter 3, my classification is based on the function of a term in each record. This means that the terms maiden and virgin, for example, which sometimes fall into the categories “occupational terms” and “characterising terms”, are classified as “central” when used in the sense of ‘girl’ or ‘young woman’, as in the following records:

A youth and maiden meeting by chance...exchange glances... go home, and dream of one another. (Johnson, p.69)

As they advanced, they heard the sound of musick, and saw youths and virgins dancing in the grove; (Johnson, p.50)

The terms lady, gentleman and gentlewoman, although prototypically non-lower class, have also been treated as central terms.

4.2. Terms and tokens

General terms

Female terms: dame (1), female (13), gentlewoman (55), lady (324), woman (357)
Male terms: fellow (65), gentleman (236), male (1), man (687)

Non-adult terms

Female terms: dams (6), girl (172), lass (2), maiden (4), maiden (15), miss (2), virgin (4), wench (15)
Male terms: boy (14), lad (3), youth (12), swain (1)

4.3. General terms

In his book Meanings, models and metaphors G. Persson (1990:50-71) presents the results of an investigation of the current usage of the terms man, woman, lady,
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*gentleman, girl and boy*. His study is based on data from *The LOB Corpus (Br.Eng.)* and the *Brown Corpus (Am.Eng.)*. Some of his results have been used as a point of reference for the analysis of the present data. It has to be borne in mind, however, that the results are not altogether comparable, since the present corpus is taken solely from fiction, whereas the other two are collected from a wider variety of sources.

### 4.3.1. Frequency in usage

A comparison between the numbers of records of *man, gentleman, woman* and *lady* in the LOB and in my corpus shows that some considerable changes have taken place. The numbers in themselves are not comparable since the two corpora are of different sizes, but the differences in proportions are still valid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>terms</th>
<th>LOB</th>
<th>18th century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gentleman</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lady</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest difference is found between *man* and *gentleman*, where there has been a great shift from the use of the latter term to the former. In the 18th century corpus the ratio between the two terms is about 3/1, while in the LOB the same ratio is about 28/1. A decline can also be seen (albeit on a smaller scale) for the term *lady*, which is somewhat more common than *woman* in the older corpus. In the LOB the ratio *woman/lady* has changed to nearly 3/1. These differences are partly due to context, since there are most probably more non-lower class referents in 18th century novels

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26 These numbers also include instances where the terms fall into other categories than central in order to make them more comparable to the LOB. Also, the term *man* here includes instances with generic references (69 records, as compared to 130 in the LOB).
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than in a variety of modern texts. The difference in usage between the male terms seems too large, however, to be accounted for by purely contextual factors. Also, there has not been a sufficient increase in the use of woman to explain the decline of the term lady. Since it is not likely that women have become more invisible, there must also be other explanations.

4.3.2. Gentleman and lady

By the beginning of the 18th century the term gentleman had already moved away from the requirement for being of gentle birth. In The Tatler, Steele advocates that the term gentleman “is never to be affixed to a man’s circumstances, but to his behaviour in them” (OED). It had undergone the process known as moralisation of status words and was now also used to refer to a man’s manners and behaviour, regardless of social origins. Or, as Dr Johnson defines it in the DEL, “a man raised above the vulgar by his character or post”. But it seems as if once the term had been separated from its sense of ‘being of noble extraction’ and become more democratic, its decline started. In the DEL it is also described as “a term of complaisance”, and as such it could refer to almost anyone. Since it was more frequently used in this deferential way by the lower classes, the upper layers of society began to avoid the term. In the following century, it had become so “common” that books on etiquette recommended the use of ladies and men instead of ladies and gentlemen (Phillipps, 1984:8).

The adjectives collocating with gentleman also indicate that the term was not unambiguously positive even in the 18th century (Table 5). Although most gentlemen were still fine, honest or good, it was also possible to be a base, treacherous and wicked gentleman.

“... there is so much merit in beauty, that I make no doubt such a fine gentleman would have wanted no inducement to be kind to it.” (Richardson, p.38)

Base, wicked, treacherous gentleman, as he is! (Richardson, p.73)
The suspicion that the popularity of the term *gentleman* was already receding is supported by the imbalance in frequency between *gentleman* and *lady* (see Table 4). Although these two terms are often regarded as parallel, they were not so as regards usage in the 18th century. Judging from the adjectives collocating with the term, *lady* seems to have had a more positive meaning (Table 6).

Whereas about 1/3 of the tokens of adjectives preceding *gentleman* are negative, only 1/10 of those preceding *lady* belong to that category. Furthermore, they are only slightly derogatory, often describing a temporary condition (*e.g.* *incensed, over-offended*). The more permanent condition of ladies seems to have been positive both as regards looks and behaviour (*beautiful, fair, fine, good and well-behaved*). Although, just as was the case with *gentleman, lady* was also used as a term of complaisance (*DEL*), the latter seems to have retained more of its positive meanings in

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### Table 5. Prenominal adjectives collocating with *gentleman*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Patronising</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fine (7)</td>
<td>old (2)</td>
<td>poor (2)</td>
<td>base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gay</td>
<td>young (7)</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>choleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intriguing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>naughty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>treacherous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wicked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sober</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet-tempered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-bred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-dressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms: 10</th>
<th>Terms: 2</th>
<th>Terms: 2</th>
<th>Terms: 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokens: 19</td>
<td>Tokens: 9</td>
<td>Tokens: 3</td>
<td>Tokens: 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The suspicious
Chapter 4

the 18th century.

"I wonder Tom could speak in such a rude manner; the woman, as he called her, is a very fine lady, I am sure, though she has no hoop nor stays on..." (Haywood, p.531)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accomplished</td>
<td>departed</td>
<td>poor (4)</td>
<td>antiquated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
<td>old (21)</td>
<td>unfortunate</td>
<td>incensed (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>young (51)</td>
<td></td>
<td>over-offended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaste</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>un-wieldy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dear (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fine (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good (24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handsome</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illustrious (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-behaved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms: 15</td>
<td>terms: 3</td>
<td>terms: 2</td>
<td>terms: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokens: 51</td>
<td>tokens: 73</td>
<td>tokens: 5</td>
<td>tokens: 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being a lady was still of great importance for many women. Becoming a lady was in fact the only advancement open to many women. The fact that so few women had a career outside the home is probably another reason for the discrepancy in numbers between lady and gentleman. In several contexts where an occupational term is used for
male referents, *lady* would be the female counterpart.

In many cases the term *lady* is used in its original sense of 'mistress in relation to servants’ (114 out of the 447 instances). The male equivalent was *master*, not *gentleman*.

...for just now, as I was folding up this letter in my late *lady’s* dressing-room, in comes my young *master* (Richardson, p.2)

Jane Mills writes in *Womanwords* (1989:133) that the term *lady* was obsolete in this sense by the middle of the 18th century. Since all the instances in my corpus come from *Pamela* (1740) this may be true, although for a term to pass from being used to being obsolete over a decade seems unusually quick. In domestic employment today the term has been transferred from the employer to the employee. The *char-woman* has become the *cleaning-lady* and there are *dinner-ladies* running the school canteen.

Another use of *lady* which is more or less obsolete nowadays (or at least considered vulgar) is as a substitute for *wife*. There are seven cases of this usage in the corpus.

He was so pleas’d with it, that he would call his *Lady*, and his two Daughters to hear it, and it made Mirth enough among them, you may be sure. (Defoe, p.49)

The modern phrase *ladies and gentlemen* was not yet established in the 18th century. In three out of the four instances where the two terms go together, *gentleman* comes first, an order that reflects the existing hierarchy. According to the *OED*, the reason for the modern usage is not politeness shown to women, but the fact that *lady* as a title is the feminine analogue to *lord*. It is therefore of a higher rank than *gentleman* and must come first.

*Gentlemen and Ladies*, I’ll tell you what; (Burney, p.292)

4.3.3. Male and female usage

There is a difference in usage between male and female writers as regards the terms *lady* and *gentleman*. (Figure 10).
Figure 10. Male and female usage of woman, lady, man and gentleman.

In female writing the proportions between lady/woman are 59:41 and in male writing 45:55. The corresponding proportions for gentleman/man are 33:67 (writer=female) and 24:76 (writer=male). In other words, female writers use lady more often than woman, while male writers use the term woman more frequently than lady. Both male and female writers use man more often than gentleman, but there is a greater preference for man among male writers.

The same differences are found between male and female characters in recorded speech. The proportions for lady/woman in female speech are 56:44 and in male speech 43:57; for gentleman/man, 25:75 in female speech, 17:83 in male speech.

A quotation from a Victorian book of etiquette shows that these differences between male and female language were still to be found a century later: “In common parlance a man is always a man to a man and never a gentleman; to a woman he is occasionally a man and occasionally a gentleman; but a man would far oftener term a woman ‘a woman’ than he would term her ‘a lady’” (Phillipps, 1984:8).

The tendency among female speakers to opt for the more prestigious term when there is a choice of variants that exists in current usage, therefore seems to be of long
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standing. Whether this female preference for more “polite” terms was more pronounced in the 18th century than nowadays is impossible to tell from comparisons with the LOB, since the gender of the writer/speaker is not recorded in the latter corpus. My guess is that that may well have been the case, since social status was of such importance, especially for middle-class women who had few other outlets for their ambitions.

4.3.4. Gentlewoman

But the term lady was not the only female counterpart to gentleman in the 18th century. Its analogue gentlewoman was still used in much the same sense as lady, that is for “a woman well descended” (DEL) or as a term of civility. Just as was the case with lady it could also be used about behaviour regardless of birth. The fact that all the 55 instances of gentlewoman come from the first half of the century may indicate that the term was going out of fashion. The latest example in the OED dates from 1890 and although the term still exists, it must now be regarded as archaic.

'I tell you I will make a gentlewoman of you, if you be obliging, and don’t stand in your own light;' (Richardson, p.12)

4.3.5. Dame

A third term for a woman of good birth, dame, had already come down on the social ladder and was now used for women in general (DEL). Although it had started out as a term for a high-ranking female ruler, the “ruling” had gradually become restricted to the domestic sphere, and was later replaced in this sense by housewife. In the 17th century it was applied humourously to an elderly housewife (Mills, 1989:62). According to Dr Johnson, it was used as a term for “a mistress of a low family”.

My only record of dame reflects added axiological meanings of both elderliness and lowliness.

... Lady Howard, who had appeared a chearful and respectable old lady, now seemed in the common John Trot style of other aged dames ...

(Burney, p.334)
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4.3.6. Man and woman

In G. Persson’s study of collocations *man* and *girl* come out as “plus-words”, *woman* and *boy* as “minus-words”, that is, the latter have more negative adjectives attached to them. The data in my 18th century corpus show a different picture (Table 7).

As shown in Table 7, the list of negative attributes for *man* is nearly as long as the list of positive ones. Persson uses the three traditional categories – *positive, neutral and negative* – whereas I have added a fourth one – *patronising* – to my collocation tables. My patronising adjectives would be counted as negative in Persson’s study, which would bring my negative column to the same length as the positive one.

The proportion of negative tokens is also relatively high, while the number of tokens of patronising adjectives is low. The most common “plus” attribute is *great* (20 tokens). The collocation *great man* was used in two different ways in the 18th century. It could either denote a man who held an important position in society or it could refer to a man of superior personal qualities, as it does now. In nearly all the instances in my corpus, the collocation was used in the first sense.

Most of the adjectives refer to personal qualities (*brave, wise*), position (*rich*) or manners (*agreeable, unprincipled*). Only two, *handsome* and *rough-bearded*, refer to looks.

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27 The reason is that it seemed too crude to define adjectives like *poor, unhappy, unfortunate* (adjectives that often collocate with female terms) as “negative”.

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Table 7. Prenominal adjectives collocating with *man*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agreeable</td>
<td>common</td>
<td>ill-used</td>
<td>artful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
<td>dumb</td>
<td>mistaken</td>
<td>bad (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brave (3)</td>
<td>grave</td>
<td>poor (14)*</td>
<td>base (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bright</td>
<td>healthy (3)</td>
<td>unhappy (2)</td>
<td>cunning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>careful</td>
<td>inward</td>
<td>deceitful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courteous</td>
<td>learned (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diligent</td>
<td>literary (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>disloyal (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>married (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>double</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortunate</td>
<td>medical</td>
<td>extravagant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gallant</td>
<td>military</td>
<td>false</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gay</td>
<td>old (29)</td>
<td>idle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generous</td>
<td>philosophic</td>
<td></td>
<td>impious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good (16)</td>
<td>plain</td>
<td>importunate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good-humoured (2)</td>
<td>sick (2)</td>
<td>insolent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good-natured (2)</td>
<td>silent (2)</td>
<td>libidinous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>great (20)</td>
<td>solitary</td>
<td>presumptuous (2)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>handsome</td>
<td>wounded</td>
<td>rough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy (3)</td>
<td>young (21)</td>
<td>rough-bearded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>savage</td>
<td></td>
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<td>honest-hearted</td>
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<td>terrible</td>
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<tr>
<td>immortal</td>
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<td>thoughtless</td>
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<td>unprincipled</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>prudent</td>
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<td>unworthy (3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>real (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>vicious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rich (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>weak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensible (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>wicked (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sober</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venerable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-bred (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wise (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worthy (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms: 32</td>
<td>terms: 18</td>
<td>terms: 4</td>
<td>terms: 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokens: 94</td>
<td>tokens: 74</td>
<td>tokens: 18</td>
<td>tokens: 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 12/15 tokens come from *Pamela* and refer to her father who is a "poor but honest" old man.

The term *woman* was a "minus-word" in Persson's collocation study. Again, the
data from the 18th century corpus yield a different result. (Table 8).

**Table 8. Prenominal adjectives collocating with woman.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agreeable</td>
<td>little</td>
<td>ill-fated</td>
<td>barbarous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
<td>married (2)</td>
<td>poor (20)</td>
<td>fatiguing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audacious</td>
<td>middle-aged (2)</td>
<td>unfortunate (2)</td>
<td>naughty (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beautiful (2)</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>unhappy (3)</td>
<td>perverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheerful</td>
<td>modest (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>pitiless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clever</td>
<td>new-married</td>
<td></td>
<td>silly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extraordinary</td>
<td>old (24)</td>
<td></td>
<td>unfaithful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashionable</td>
<td>ordinary</td>
<td></td>
<td>wicked (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favourite</td>
<td>religious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fine (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good (15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good-humoured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handsome (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lovely (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prudent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reasonable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sober</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virtuous (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-dressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms: 26</td>
<td>terms: 11</td>
<td>terms: 4</td>
<td>terms: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokens: 53</td>
<td>tokens: 54</td>
<td>tokens: 26</td>
<td>tokens: 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list of positive adjectives by far outnumbers the list of negative ones (more than
three times as long). In the contemporary study the two lists were roughly equal. Even if the patronising adjectives are added to the negative list, the positive one is still twice as long. The proportion of negative tokens is low (the ratio of negative/positive tokens is 1/5 as compared to 1/2.3 for *man*). There are 26 tokens of patronising attributes, more than twice as many as the negative ones (the opposite situation to that of *man*). The most popular collocation is *poor woman* with 20 records. The positive attributes refer to looks, manners, temperament and mind, but not to position in society. And, as is the case with *lady*, most of the negative ones are not markedly negative.

Against the background of women's subordinate position in society and in the family in the 18th century, the results of this study of collocations seem rather curious. Was *woman* really a more positive term two centuries ago than it is now, when the status of women is so much higher?

One reason is most certainly contextual. The 18th century novel is often educational and much concerned with manners, marriage and social class. It is not surprising, therefore, if it sometimes depicts role models rather than "real" persons. An ideal woman in the 18th century was virtuous, beautiful, submissive, pious, agreeable, prudent etc. Those who were not did not often figure in middle-class novels.

Another explanation may be found in women's lack of power. An adult whose legal position is the same as that of under-age children is not very threatening. She may be patronised and pitied or complimented for her good qualities, but there is no need to paint her in darker colours. Men, on the other hand, were powerful and therefore potentially dangerous. They sometimes required more negative attributes (cf. the prototypical responses in the frame analysis of 'male' and 'female', p.67).

But there is also another possible explanation, linked to the age-span covered by the term *woman* (Fig. 11.)

---

28 *Cf.* the common collocation *poor creature*, which has an overwhelming majority of female referents in the corpus (see Ch.3, p.55).
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Fig. 11. Contemporary and 18th century use of age-related terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contemporary usage (Persson 1990)</th>
<th>18th century usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘young’</strong></td>
<td><strong>‘middle-aged’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child’ and adolescent’</td>
<td>‘adult’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘young’</strong></td>
<td><strong>‘middle-aged’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child’ and adolescent’</td>
<td>‘adult’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure on the left is copied from Persson (1990:65). It shows how the central terms woman, girl, man and boy are related to age, or rather to the concepts ‘young’, ‘middle-aged’ and ‘old’. X symbolises the age when adulthood starts (at about 18). The space between X and Y is the period during which a female person can be referred to as both a girl and a woman. In other words, the terms girl and woman overlap in present-day English. They have become partial synonyms. The use of girl has spread upwards in the age dimension and, in Persson’s words, girl “encroaches on the semantic domain of woman”. This is especially true in contexts where the concept ‘youth’ is important (sports, fashion, sex etc.). It is now quite common to hear middle-aged women referred to as girls, girl being the term which has more positive added meanings. There has also been a reaction against this usage among women who feel belittled by the term girl. What long-term effects this protest will have remains to be seen.

The figure on the right in Fig. 11, shows the corresponding relationships according to the 18th century data. The main difference is that the age-span for girl is much shorter than in present-day English. The age-span for woman seems to be much the
Chapter 4

same as for man. Although it is not always possible to ascertain the exact age of a character in a novel, probably very few, if any, of the referents of girl could have been over twenty. Instead, female characters in their later teens were frequently termed woman or lady, often with the adjective young attached (there are 50 tokens of young collocating with lady, 17 with woman). This means that girl and woman were partial synonyms also in the 18th century, but for a much shorter period (16-20?). Therefore, a third reason for the fact that the term woman is endowed with more positive attributes in the 18th century corpus might be that it is not used mainly about middle-aged and older women. Most of the female characters referred to by this term in the novels are within the age-range 16-25, an age that is often seen as more innocent and positive where women are concerned. They are girls in modern terminology.

4.3.7. Male and female

On the surface the two basic terms male and female are perfectly symmetrical antonyms. Only one aspect, gender, is of importance and there are no alternative values. Dr Johnson defines them laconically as “a he” and “a she”. However, when it comes to usage the symmetry ends. In my corpus there are thirteen examples of female (used as a noun) and only one of male. The latter appears in combination with female and there is an emphasis on the sexual distinction: “...and males and females met helter-skelter” (Steele, p.271). Female, on the other hand, is often used as an alternative to woman.

Henry’s eyes followed her while the females very freely animadverted on her strange behaviour. (Wollstonecraft, p.23)

I have an insuperable aversion to strength, either of body or mind, in a female. (Burney, p.361)

Replace female by male in these sentences and the result is somewhat strange-looking (and not only because of the context). The imbalance between the terms is even more evident in the following sentence:

Three fashionable females, and two gentlemen; the one a brother of the
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eldest of the young ladies, and the other an invalid, who came, like
themselves, for the benefit of the air. (Wollstonecraft, p.20).

The reason for this difference in usage may once again be found in the conceptual
structure of the 18th century world. Since these terms are more commonly used with
non-human than with human reference, they are probably tinged by the animal
prototype (see the discussion of creature pp. 71-74). Women, being closer to the animal
level in the hierarchy, could more easily be labelled females than the more remote men
as males. In the spiritual-physical dimension (see Fig. 9, p.75) the terms must be
considered to occupy a position near the physical, lower end, since the only aspect
involved is the gender of the individual. To refer to a man by a term that defined him
solely according to gender was not suitable. The imbalance therefore supports my
earlier hypothesis that there are more female referents towards the physical end of the
axis, more male towards the spiritual end.

My impression is that the term female has a negative axiological meaning in current
English due to its emphasis on a physical aspect only. It still seems to be more common
as a substitute for woman than male is as a substitute for man.

4.3.8. fellow

In present-day English the term fellow seems rather positive. Collocations like nice
fellow, good fellow, even charming fellow are commonly heard. The adjectives
preceding fellow in the 18th century corpus present a very different image (Table 9).
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Table 9. Adjectives collocating with fellow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good-natured</td>
<td>little</td>
<td>miserable</td>
<td>abusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest</td>
<td>old (3)</td>
<td>poor (6)</td>
<td>careless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>officious*</td>
<td>young (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>choleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretty</td>
<td></td>
<td>designing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>foolish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>idle (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ignorant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lusty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>odd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ragged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>saucy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>silly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>smokey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>surly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unaccountable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vulgar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>worthless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms: 4</td>
<td>terms: 3</td>
<td>terms: 2</td>
<td>terms: 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokens: 4</td>
<td>tokens:10</td>
<td>tokens: 7</td>
<td>tokens: 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The adjective officious, which is fairly negative in current English ('being unduly forward'), was still positive in the 18th century ('doing kind offices' or 'dutiful') (OED).

The picture that emerges from this table is far from positive (abusive, idle, ignorant,
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worthless...). Also, the number of both terms and tokens (27 and 40) is surprisingly high, considering that there are only 65 records of fellow in the corpus. It means that in nearly two thirds of the instances, fellow is preceded by an adjective. The corresponding proportion for man is about one third. This is probably another indication that fellow in itself is a loaded term. The difference in axiological meaning between fellow and man is demonstrated in the following quotation from a satirical piece in The Spectator. The general subject is the art of modern criticism and the topic under discussion is pub names:

A surly cholerick fellow generally makes choice of a Bear; as men of milder dispositions frequently live at the Lamb. (Addison, p.285)

In the Victorian age, fellow was a term best avoided by women (Phillipps,1984:46). In the 18th century corpus also, it is more frequent in male than in female writing (only 20 of the 65 records have female authors). Again, this is probably connected with the female tendency to choose more prestigious terms. Although in the 19th century fellow could be used among male members of the upper classes, reflecting a “casual comradeship”, it was more commonly used for persons towards the lower end of the social hierarchy (Phillipps, p.47). Most of the records in my corpus fall into the latter category.

The term fellow may be another example of moralisation of status words. The original meaning of the OE feolaga was something like ‘business-partner’, literally ‘someone who lays down money’. But suspicions often arise where money is involved. Business partners are not always trustworthy and so negative attribute values sneaked into the term. Another, more speculative explanation, is linked to the social hierarchy. A fellow was a person on the same rung of the social ladder, a ‘mate’ or ‘peer’. In the socially ambitious 18th century, where the aim was to ‘better oneself’, equality was not a very popular concept. In our more democratically-minded society, its value has risen and the term has consequently become more positive.
4.4. Non-adult terms

4.4.1. Boy and girl

The origins of both boy and girl are uncertain, as is the case with several terms for non-adults, in English as well as in the Scandinavian languages (cf. Sw. gosse, flicka, tös). According to the OED this category of words may have started out as jocular uses of terms with completely different meanings. Both terms appeared in English around the beginning of the 14th century. Girl was used for children of either gender until the end of the 15th century, but from then onwards the two terms have been antonyms.

The most striking feature of these two terms in the corpus is the overwhelming predominance of girl, 173 tokens as compared to 14 for boy. The terms boy and girl were also included in G. Persson’s study of contemporary usage, where the corresponding numbers were 458 and 334 (Persson, 1990:50). The girls dominated there too, but not by far to the same extent. What possible explanations can be found for the great imbalance in the older corpus?

Again, the two terms probably cover slightly different age-spans (see Fig. 11, p.89). In Dr Johnson’s DEL the following definitions are given to the term boy: 1. A male child; not a girl. 2. One in the state of adolescence; older than an infant, yet not arrived at puberty. 3. A word of contempt for a young man.

There are two instances of boy where the referents are 15 and 16 years old and may not yet have reached puberty. As there are no examples of boys between 17-20, it is possible that boy covered a shorter period than girl.

Ann went [sic] sent for to console her, not on account of the departure of her new relation, a boy she seldom took any notice of, but to reconcile her to her fate; (Wollstonecraft, p.15)

For when he was a Boy of Sixteen, he was put into the Army under the Care of Chloe’s Father, who treated him with the greatest Tenderness; (Fielding, p.45)
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If the term boy covered a shorter period, there ought to be other terms filling the gap. The other non-adult male terms in the corpus are lad, youngster and youth. Youth is the most common with 13 records, lad appears 3 times and youngster only once. Out of these terms lad has the more positive collocations (honest, light-hearted, open, cheery-hearted). Since the ME ladde meant 'serving-man' or 'man of low birth or position' this seems to be an example of amelioration, a development more common in male than in female terms. In current English the term is still positive, used also about adult males in the sense of "a man of vigour and strength" (OED). Lately it has also been revived in the phrase the new lad, which refers to men reacting against the demand for a 'new man'. The 'new lad' claims his right to traditional male pursuits like football, beer and women (cf. the expression a bit of a lad), rejecting the demands that he should share the responsibilities for home and children (The Sunday Observer, 20.10.1996). That the term has become another explosive item in the present minefield of male and female terms, is reflected in the following description heard on BBC Radio 4:

Laddism is a culture of violence (6.11.1996)

Youth, in contrast to lad, collocates with several negative and patronising adjectives (sullen, ungracious, a frighted, unhappy).

I find, that, during my Nonage, I had the Reputation of a very sullen Youth, but was always a Favourite of my School-Master, who used to say, that my parts were solid and would wear well. (Steele, p.198)

Two possible explanations for the low number of boy remain. One is that the male equivalent of girl for the age group 17-20 was none of the terms discussed so far, but man. The prototype for 'male' in the 18th century according to the frame analysis in Ch. 3 (p.67) was made up by the values 'independent', 'intelligent', 'big' and 'strong' and led to the response 'respect' or 'fear'. Since these values were not prototypical for the non-adult male terms, the latter probably had a lower status. They were lacking in aspects that were of importance for the male concept. So, in the choice between man...
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and boy as a label for a male person in his teens, man would be the term of preference. This would to some extent account for the high frequency of man in the corpus. The prototypical values for girl, on the other hand, were in accordance with those for the general concept of 'female' and therefore more suitable.

The other explanation again has to do with context. In the 18th century, young males were not very interesting until they had reached a position in society. The focus of the young heroine's attention in 18th century novels is normally an established man in his late twenties or thirties. 'Youth' was not an asset for males, as it was for females. The following quotation from The Spectator summarises the situation:

...we frequently observe a man's life is half spent before he is taken notice of, and a woman in the prime of her years is out of fashion and neglected. (Steele, p.256).

In comparison with boy, girl is without doubt the more popular term. But how does it compare with woman? In Persson's study of collocations, girl was a plus-word, woman a minus-word. It has already been shown that in the 18th century corpus, woman is definitely a plus-word, with several times as many positive as negative attributes. A collocation study of girl gave the following result (Table 10).

Although frequently used, girl is not a very positive term in this corpus. If the patronising attributes are added on to the negative list in order to make the results more comparable to Persson's, the negative one outnumbers the positive, especially as regards tokens. And again, the most popular adjective is poor, an adjective that does not figure at all in combination with girl in the study. Still, the negative attributes are not terribly negative. They often reflect responses of condescension rather than fear or disgust (foolish, silly, ignorant etc).
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Table 10. Prenominal adjectives collocating with girl

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>charming (2)</td>
<td>little (8)</td>
<td>blushing</td>
<td>cruel (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dear (13)</td>
<td>tall</td>
<td>comical</td>
<td>false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>young (5)</td>
<td>desolate</td>
<td>foolish (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashionable</td>
<td></td>
<td>plain (2)</td>
<td>idle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fine</td>
<td></td>
<td>poor (32)</td>
<td>ignorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genteel (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>unfortunate</td>
<td>insidious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gentle</td>
<td></td>
<td>weak (2)</td>
<td>naughty (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>raw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handsome</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>silly (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innocent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strange (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretty (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unfeeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unthinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wicked (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet-faced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-looking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>terms: 16</td>
<td>terms: 7</td>
<td>terms: 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tokens: 38</td>
<td>tokens: 40</td>
<td>tokens: 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason behind this comparatively negative image of girl is probably the same as the reason for the positive image of woman; it is linked to the age-span covered by the term. If the preferred terms for female persons from 17 upwards are woman and lady, the referents left for girl are comparatively young and immature. They are often patronised, sometimes doted on, at other times scolded, but seldom admired or feared.
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4.4.2 Other non-adult female terms

The study of alternative non-adult female terms yielded more interesting results than did the corresponding study of male terms, the main interest of the latter being the scarcity of both terms and tokens (Table 11).

Table 11. Other non-adult female terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>terms</th>
<th>female writer</th>
<th>male writer</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>damsel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lass</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maiden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miss</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virgin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wench</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, there are many more female alternatives than male. Also, most terms have a secondary meaning which includes a sexual concept (either innocence – maid, maiden, virgin – or its opposite – miss, wench). These terms are more frequently used by male than by female writers.

The list of collocations, although short, seems to divide the terms into plus-terms and minus-terms (Table 12). The "terms of innocence" all appear on the positive side.

---

29 The development of miss is an example of moral amelioration which is rare in female terms (Kleparski (1997:259). It entered English (17th c.) with the sense of 'immoral woman' which later changed into 'girl, young woman'. In both records, miss is used in the latter sense.
Table 12. Prenominal adjectives collocating with non-adult female terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>terms</th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>patronising</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maid(en), virgin</td>
<td>charming</td>
<td>young</td>
<td>poor (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>good (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>simple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>honest</td>
<td></td>
<td>unfortunate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pretty (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sweet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>virtuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>damsel</td>
<td>fair (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>hapless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neat</td>
<td></td>
<td>poor (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td></td>
<td>unhappy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lass</td>
<td></td>
<td>little</td>
<td>prim</td>
<td>cruel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wench</td>
<td>pretty (2)</td>
<td>black</td>
<td></td>
<td>cruel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>foolish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>obstinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>peevish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ungrateful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>weak-souled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the beginning *maiden* (and its shortened form *maid*) and *virgin* were used either to refer to girls and young women as such or to refer specifically to their chastity.\(^\text{30}\) Since sexual purity was expected in unmarried women, it is not surprising that these terms could be used as synonyms of *girl*. Even when used as such, the concept of 'virginity' was probably still present. As chastity before marriage was of paramount importance among the 18th century middle classes (a woman's main asset in marriage negotiations), it is not surprising that these terms come with positive

\(^{30}\) The presence of more than one sense in female terms for 'virgin' can sometimes have major and long-lasting consequences. In *Jesus the Jew*, G. Vermes argues that the Christian myth of the virgin birth may well be a result of a too narrow translation of a Hebrew term for 'virgin' in the Greek version of the Bible (Vermes, 1973:218-222).
collocations. If, on the other hand, the concept of sexual innocence is lacking in the term, there seems to be a strong tendency for it to acquire an alternative sense of 'prostitute' or at least 'promiscuity'. Woman, lady and girl are all terms that at one time or another have had this alternative use. Dr Johnson gives 'strumpet' as his third definition of wench. That may explain why the collocations suddenly switch to the negative side when wench appears in Table 12.

_Damsel_ and _lass_ seem to be exceptions, since they have not acquired any pejorative second senses\(^{31}\), in spite of lacking the concept of sexual innocence. _Damsel_, originally used about a young unmarried person of gentle birth, had already declined socially in the 18th century and was now used about any unmarried girl. The _DEL_ gives as a third definition "a country lass", a sense which seems applicable to the following record:

...if he can stoop to like such a poor girl as me, as perhaps he may (for I have read of things almost as strange, from great men to poor _damsels_),...

(Richardson, p.29)

According to Dr. Johnson, _lass_ was “used now only of mean girls” and judging from the scarcity of records (2), nor frequently used. Its sense was (and still is) ‘girl’ or ‘unmarried young woman’. It is now used mainly in northern dialects, where it is still the ordinary term for ‘girl’.

...and pray which is the little _lass_ that intends to be a Gentlewoman?

(Defoe, p.49)

The female “terms of innocence” have no male counter parts, which explains why the list of male central terms is comparatively short. This gap in the vocabulary is an indication of what little importance is attached to the concept of 'chastity' in a man. The near-disappearance also of the female “virginal” terms in modern usage, at least as substitutes for _girl_, reflects the great change in attitude towards female chastity that has come about during our century.

\(^{31}\)However, _damsel_ does have a transferred sense of ‘a hot iron for warming a bed’, which first appeared in the early 18th century (OED).
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4.5. Concluding remarks

The results of this study of central terms paint a picture of a society where the concepts of 'male' and 'female' have very different values. Pairs of terms that on the surface are perfect antonyms—man and woman, male and female, gentleman and lady, boy and girl—all show up imbalances as regards usage and axiological meanings. Gaps in the vocabulary within certain domains and a scarcity of tokens of some terms add to the imbalance, as does the difference in usage between male and female writers.

The dimension "power-dependency" is relevant in the analysis of collocations. The attitude towards females is loving or patronising, towards males respectful or fearful. The more negative image of woman found in current English could be a result not only of girl taking over the positive part of womanhood but also of the changing power structure. Powerful women may well attract more negative adjectives. The tendency among female 18th century writers to opt for the more prestigious variants and avoid certain "common" terms can also be seen as a result of women's lower position along the power-dependency axis.

The "spiritual-physical" dimension is also relevant as regards collocations. Just as more female than male terms include a physical aspect, so do their collocating adjectives. This is to be expected in a society where, at least among the middle and upper classes, women were judged mainly for what they were (appearance and personal qualities) and men for what they did.

In a wider historical/evolutionary perspective, the emphasis on the physical side of females can be explained by its being of significance for the survival of the race (New Scientist, 1996). The shape of the female body is of importance for its capacity of giving birth without problems and therefore physical aspects are vital to attract males. Males, on the other hand, attract females if they are good "doers" (hunters, fighters) so they can procure for and defend the offspring. Against this background it is tempting to
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speculate about what will happen within the spiritual-physical dimension of male and female terms in our new society, still at an early stage of development, where both males and females are doers/providers and where medical and technical advances make up for any physical shortcomings as regards childbirth. Although it is difficult to find any decrease in the interest in female looks, there are definite signs of an increasing interest in the physical side of men (bodybuilding, fashion, perfumes etc.)! Still, certain female terms with physical attribute values that were once common, are now out of fashion (e.g. maiden, virgin) and some epicene terms have become more equal as regards gender of reference (creature, person). My impression is that there are also more male terms with physical or sexual attribute values entering the English language (e.g. hunk, stud, toyboy). Perhaps one day the male and female terms will meet somewhere in the middle along the spiritual-physical axis!
CHARACTERISING TERMS : METAPHORS

5.1. Introduction. Definitions and categorisation

Although metaphorical and characterising terms were split up into separate categories in the database, they share some basic characteristics. Metaphors with human reference usually make a statement about a person's mental, physical or behavioural characteristics, albeit in an indirect way. They also have "fuzzy" edges, which makes the attribution of terms to one or the other of the two categories somewhat random. I have therefore chosen to regard metaphors as one of two categories under the main heading of "characterising terms", the other one consisting of terms that describe a person's mental, physical or social characteristics in a more direct way. The latter category will be discussed in Ch. 6.

When Aristotle more than 2000 years ago gave the rhetorical figure called "metaphor" two senses, one broad and one narrow, he laid the foundation for a debate about its nature and function that is still going on. His broader definition included metonyms, similes, hyperboles and other figures of speech that include comparison and resemblances. These are nowadays often referred to as "metaphorical" as opposed to literal, but not usually as real metaphors. His narrow sense is the "metaphor proper" in current usage, *i.e.* referring to one thing by a term that belongs to a different semantic field. Mrs. Jervis calling Pamela "my dear lamb" (*Pamela*, p.50) is an example of what is now usually referred to by the term metaphor. There is, however, an abundance of examples that are far from clear cut.

One problematic group of terms is exemplified by Sterne's evocative enumeration of invectives in *Tristram Shandy*:

...shall I be called as many blockheads, numskuls, doddypoles, dunderheads, ninnihammers, goosecaps, joltheads, nicompoops, sh-t-a-beds - and other unsavoury apppellations... (p. 602)
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Some of these compounds are mixtures of metonyms and metaphors (e.g. *blockhead*). But what about a similar but fanciful formation like *ni[n]compoop*? Although they are all tropes or figurative expressions, in this study they will be discussed under the sub-heading “mental, physical and social terms”. The label “metaphor” will be restricted to examples of the Aristotelian “narrow” sense.

The problem of how to regard conventional or “dead” metaphors is often debated by specialists in the field. The term *baggage* is a case in point. One of its present senses is “a good-for-nothing or immoral woman” and another “an artful or saucy young woman” (*OED*). Early in its history the term developed a secondary sense of ‘rubbish’ in addition to the original one of ‘portable luggage’. In this sense it was used as a term for ‘dregs’ or ‘worthless people’. As such it acquired a female bias and eventually became still another word for ‘strumpet’. In the 17th century it was also used about an army’s portable property. The two senses combined and the term came to be applied to female camp followers or prostitutes (Mills, 1989:17). To decide when exactly this term “died” as a metaphor for ‘woman’ is not easy. Or is it dead at all? The term still has a patronising meaning reflecting the aspect value of ‘property’ and ‘impediment’ in its original sense. Some linguists claim that such “dead” metaphors should not be regarded as metaphors at all but as cases of polysemy (Black, 1979:19-43). Others prefer to call them “established metaphors”, arguing that the metaphorical power is still potent as long as the term cannot be replaced by another term without loss of semantic content (Cooper, 1986:130.)

The important part that metaphors play in language was early commented upon by Friedrich Nietzsche. He regarded the metaphor as the basic principle of language and so called literal talk as only “a kind of frozen sediment of metaphor” (Cooper, 1986:2). The last few decades have seen an upsurge of investigations into the importance of such frozen sediments. From an experientialist viewpoint, Lakoff and Johnson discuss the role and pervasiveness of metaphors in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The authors
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show that metaphorical expressions are often systematic and generative in nature. They form patterns which bear witness to the metaphorical nature of our conceptual system, of how we experience reality. Expressions like spend time, save time, borrowed time, reflect a concept of time as money and a limited resource. Such metaphorical concepts are culture specific and therefore an important source of information about attitudes and belief systems in a society (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:7-9). In that perspective the exact position of a metaphor on the scale “original – dead” loses its importance. Instead, patterns in the usage of metaphorical expressions become the focus of attention.

Two major theories about the workings of metaphors are commonly referred to as “the comparison view” and “the interaction view”. The comparison view goes back to Aristotle’s belief that metaphors are implicit comparisons. The interaction view is more recent in origin. Although thoughts along similar lines had been expressed before, the theory was first developed and articulated by Max Black (1962). The central concept of the interaction theory is that a metaphor can actually create similarities, thereby changing the beliefs about its referent. Many learned arguments have taken place between the proponents of these two theories. For the purpose of this sociolinguistic study, it may suffice to say that since the basic concept of both is ‘similarity’, the question whether it is created or inherent is of lesser importance.

The truth of a metaphor is impossible to ascertain. Just as “beauty lies in the eye of the beholder”, so similarities between a metaphorical term and its referent exist in the mind of its creator or user. “Metaphorical meaning is always speaker’s utterance meaning” (Searle, 1979:93). Although such perceived similarities may have little or no objective or scientific truth value, they form a conceivable basis of metaphor - a revised version of the comparison theory (Persson, 1990:180). When a metaphor survives and eventually turns into a second sense of a term, this is most likely an indication that it

32 According to Cooper (1986:130), this is one of the main reasons why conventional metaphors cannot be regarded as simple polysemes.

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reflects attitudes and beliefs that are not only the speaker's but are widespread. Although some of these beliefs may have been created at one point by a new metaphor, it is probably more common that metaphors strengthen and confirm already existing beliefs, be they true or false.

5.2. Overview

Sixty-one records have been classified as metaphors. This relative scarcity of metaphors may be due to a general preference for a plain and concise style of writing that had its origin in the scientific movement of the 17th century. A suspicious attitude towards an ornamental style was widespread, and metaphors in particular were regarded as an evil to be avoided. Although this anti-rhetorical attitude was most pronounced with regard to scientific and factual prose, it was congenial with the practical and sensible 18th century spirit and influenced most areas of writing (Barber, 1997:93-97).

The majority of the metaphors are placed towards the conventional end of an "original – conventional" spectrum. Since this study is concerned with social attitudes as reflected in language usage and not in the originality of the writers, this is not a disadvantage.

The metaphors have been classified according to which of the following semantic domain they come from – the metaphysical, the animal, the plant or the inanimate domain (Table 13).
### Table 13. Metaphors according to semantic domain, gender of referent and gender of writer (F=female writer, M=male writer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphysical terms</th>
<th>Animal terms</th>
<th>Plant terms</th>
<th>Inanimate terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ref=M</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ref=F</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ref=M</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ref=F</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angel 1M</td>
<td>angel 1M 10F</td>
<td>beast 1M</td>
<td>buck 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goddess 1M</td>
<td>bird 1M</td>
<td>jade 2M</td>
<td>flower 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brute 1M 2F</td>
<td>lamb 2M</td>
<td></td>
<td>fortune 3M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cock 1M</td>
<td>tabby 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>image 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cur 1M</td>
<td>warbler 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>machine 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog 2M</td>
<td></td>
<td>nought 1F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puppy 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>object 2M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vermin 1M</td>
<td></td>
<td>piece 1M 1F</td>
<td>statue 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statue 1M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>thing 8M 4F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 1</td>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 2</td>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 8</td>
<td><strong>terms:</strong> 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 1</td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 12</td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 11</td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>tokens:</strong> 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.3. Metaphysical domain

**angel** (1 male, 11 female referents)

*O this angel of a master* (Richardson, p.10)

"I have obeyed you, Madam!" cried he, with a deep sigh; "you are all angel – be all angel still!" (Haywood, p.571)

The first or basic sense of *angel* is ‘divine messenger’. To define divine messengers
according to gender is not an easy task. The names given to angels in the Bible indicate that they were male rather than female (Gabriel, Michael). The original angels were awe-inspiring creatures, rather different from the sweet and loving angels of later days. When used figuratively about human beings (first recorded usage in the OED is from 1592), the term seems to be prototypically female. Its figurative senses are (a) ‘a lovely, bright, innocent, or gracious being’; (b) ‘a minister of loving offices’ (OED). These characteristics were more in line with the concept of ‘female’ than that of ‘male’ in the 18th century. Also in current usage the term angel has a “potential” female prototype, according to an informant study by I. Bergquist and G. Persson (1996:77).

In 9 out of the 11 instances with female referents, angel is used as a term of address by male speakers. However, in all these records the writer is female. Could it be that this is a case of wishful thinking on the part of female writers? Angel as a metaphor is possibly more part of a female idiom than of a male one and these women writers may have given lines to male characters that are not typical of male speech. Middle-class female authors in the 18th century were probably rather ignorant about the character of male discourse, at least when unhampered by the rules of polite society.

goddess

...for whenever it so falls out...that an earthly goddess is so much this, and that, and t’other, that I cannot eat my breakfast for her - and that she careth not three half-pence whether I eat my breakfast or no - (Sterne, p.525)

The only record of the term goddess comes from Tristram Shandy. Since words are often twisted and turned in Sterne’s inimitable idiom, caution in interpreting is required. The goddess in this case is not a soulful, lofty being but an earthly goddess who “careth not three half-pence”. The term is less a description of the woman in question than of the man’s attitude to her.

As in so many other cases of gender pairs, god and goddess are not parallel when it comes to usage. A man may call his woman “my goddess” but a woman would hardly call her man “my god”. Historically, the reason may lie in the monotheistic and
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patriarchal nature of Christianity. The male term has been monopolised by the one and only God. To use God metaphorically as a term of address for a human being would be blasphemy. Goddesses, on the other hand, are only found in other religions, and therefore the female term is not sacrosanct in our western society. If the male term is preceded by an article and an attribute as in “He looked like a young god”, it is acceptable. The association is then to some heathen religion with more than one god.

5.4. Animal domain

Since none of the animal terms have both male and female referents, they will be discussed under two separate headings.

5.4.1. Male reference

beast

You are a stubborn Beast; is this your Gratitude for my giving you Mony?

(Addison, p.257)

Although the sense of the term beast when first entering the English language from French also included ‘man’, it soon came to refer to animals as distinct from man. From early on it was used figuratively for “a human being under the sway of animal propensities” (OED). This is an example of a “dead” metaphor that has shown its worth by surviving for at least five centuries. The fact that the referent is male in this record is in line with modern usage, where beast has a “confirmed” male prototype (Bergquist & Persson, 1996:73). The concepts of ‘brutality’ and ‘insensitivity’ inherent in the term are probably more in line with the concept of ‘male’ than of ‘female’ in our society as well as in the 18th century.

bird

Hence Child, says she, many a Newgate Bird becomes a great Man,

(Defoe, p.134)

This term of unknown origin at first referred only to the young of birds and in ME
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also to the young of other animals. Eventually it replaced fowl as the general term for feathered animals, first only for the smaller species but later on it was applied to all kinds. Dr Johnson still makes this distinction: “In common talk fowl is used for the larger, and bird for the smaller kind of feathered animal” (OED).

Bird has found many and varied figurative uses in idioms and proverbs (e.g. birds of a feather, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush) as well as in single-term metaphors. In our own century it is frequently used as a slang term for a young woman, with the attribute value of being light and flighty. The use of bird with female reference is no recent invention, however. It dates back to the ME period, when it first acquired the meaning ‘maiden’ or ‘girl’ (Kleparsky, 1990:126). The original reason was not necessarily a perceived similarity between girls and birds. The phonological likeness to ME burde (‘maiden’) as well as to bryd>bride may have led to confusion, in the latter case through metathesis (OED). A jocular usage of the term due to this similarity has also been suggested (Persson, oral communication).

In the current record the sense is different; the allusion is to the confinement of cage-birds. From the beginning of the 17th century, jail-bird has been used to refer to prisoners or habitual criminals. Newgate being the most notorious prison in London during the 18th and 19th centuries, a Newgate bird was often used as a substitute for jail-bird.

brute

“‘pon honour,” said Mr.Lovel...”that fellow is the greatest brute in nature! he ought not to be admitted into a civilized society.” (Burney, p.402)

Brute first entered the language from French as an adjective, in the sense of ‘wanting in reason or understanding’ and was used about animals, the brute beasts. Soon it was also turned into a noun, designating "the lower animals as distinguished from man” (OED) and was used in a way similar to beast. A man lacking in intelligence and sensibility had attribute values similar to brute, and so this term also became an
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early metaphor for a cruel or stupid man.

cock

Sir Andrew is grown the Cock of the Club since he left us, (Addison, p.244)

The social aspect of the first sense of cock ('the male of the domestic fowl') is reflected in this trope. Just as the cock is the leader or head of the henhouse, the human cock is the leader or head of a social group (the cock of the school, the cock of the walk). There is, however, a prominent tinge of ridicule in the term, reflecting the air of self-importance emanating from a strutting cock.

The old game of cock-fighting in which the winner was called the cock of the game has probably also contributed to this figurative use. The first record of cock with human reference in the OED dates back to the 16th century.

cur, dog, puppy

I have heard her, in her Wrath, call a Substantial Tradesman a Lousie Cur (Addison, p.251)

I have heard them [the men], turning about, fetch a deep Sigh, and cry what a Dog am I! (Defoe, p.110)

"I am by no means such a puppy as to tell you I am upon sure ground, however, perseverance." (Burney, p.346)

All terms for the canine domestic animal in the corpus are used with male reference. Cur, a contemptuous word for 'dog', may be formed on the Old Norse term kurr 'grumbling' and is, if so, related to the Swedish kurra. While in Swedish the term refers to the pleasant sound produced by happy cats, in English, where it first appeared in the 13th century, it may have been associated with the threatening sound coming from

33 For an illuminating semantic analysis of the idiom the cock of the walk see B. Odenstedt's article in Persson & Rydén (eds), 1996:140-143.
angry or scared dogs. When used figuratively with human reference it denotes ‘a surly, ill-bred, low, or cowardly fellow’ \( (OED) \).

Although sometimes used playfully (“You lucky dog!”), dog with human reference is most often used as a term of contempt. Both records in the corpus imply worthlessness and disdain. Terms for domestic animals are commonly used as pejorative metaphors or invectives, reflecting our tendency “to despise those that we are able to enslave” (Persson, 1996:163).

The term puppy comes from the French poupé (‘doll’), and its first sense (now obsolete) was “a small dog used as a lady’s pet or plaything; a toy dog” \( (OED) \). The additional attribute values of puppy in comparison with the other canine terms is ‘youth’ and ‘inexperience’, both values that clash with the male norm. It is used as a term of contempt for vain and empty-headed young men.

vermin

What makes this Generation of Vermin so very Prolifick, is the indefatigable diligence with which they apply themselves to their Business. (Addison, p.274)

The subject that makes Addison use such a negatively loaded metaphor is the fathering of illegitimate children, which seems to have been a widespread practice in London at the time. The basic sense of vermin is “an animal of a noxious or objectionable kind” \( (OED) \). The human response to such animals is repulsion and contempt; the former due to their tendency to spread rapidly and infest humans as well as other animals, and the latter due to their prototypical small size. In S. Ericsson’s (1984:22-23) study of animal metaphors, terms for insects and vermin nearly always refer to repulsive or insignificant persons.

5.4.2. Female reference

buck

“O, I promise you” cried he, “our Moll would never have wheedled me into this jaunt, if I’d known she was not here; for, to let you into the secret,
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I fully intended to have treated the old *buck* with another frolic.” (Burney, p.391)

It is somewhat surprising to find a term that denotes the male of several animals applied to a woman. When used figuratively with human reference its sense is “A gay, dashing fellow; a dandy, fop... “. In the 18th century, however, the word often referred to “spirit or gaiety of conduct” (*OED*). This seems to be the correct interpretation in this record. Still, the collocation *old buck* for a woman must be pejorative. Using a male animal term breaks the female norm and the adjective *old* is usually negative when applied to women. The use of *Moll* in the same quotation adds a sexual meaning, as that name was often used in the sense of ‘harlot’ in 18th century (cf. *Moll Flanders*).

It is possible that *buck* was more commonly used about women in the 18th century than it is nowadays. The first record of its figurative use in the *OED* comes from the *New Cant. Dict.*, 1725: “Buck, as, A bold Buck, is sometimes used to signify a forward daring Person of either Sex”.

*jade*

“...the *Jade* is so stout, she won’t Capitulate, nor yield upon any Terms, except such as I cannot effectually Grant:”’ (Defoe, p.94)

This term of unknown origin came into English in the 14th century, denoting an inferior or worn-out horse. Two centuries later it was applied figuratively to women as a term of reprobation (*OED*). Samuel Johnson described it as a word of contempt, “noting sometimes age, but generally vice” (1755). When used about a young woman, it can, however, have an attribute value of irony or playfulness. The two examples in this corpus reflect the latter usage.

*lamb*

“No,” said Mrs Jervis, “I will not stir, my dear *lamb*; I will not leave you.”

... “Are there not, “ said she, “enough wicked ones in the world, for your base purpose, but you must attempt such a *lamb* as this?” (Richardson, p.50)
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Although both records of lamb in the corpus refer to a young female, and in spite of its attribute values ('youth', 'innocence', 'meekness', 'dependence') being more similar to the concept of 'female' than to that of 'male', the figurative use of the term is not described as "esp. female" in modern dictionaries. Bergquist & Persson's informant study shows a female bias but not large enough to be significant (1996). The reason may be that the term is coloured by its usage in religious terminology (Christ as the Lamb; mankind as a flock of lamb in need of a shepherd etc.).

Terms for domestic animals are nearly always used in a derogatory manner (Ericsson, 1994:6). Lamb is one of the few positive exceptions – although often coloured by a patronising tinge.

*tabby*

"Why, to let you know," answered the Captain, "she hit my fancy mightily; I never took so much to an old tabby before." (Burney, p.393)

Although this term is commonly interpreted as the shortened form for tabby-cat, its origin might be different. It may instead be the diminutive form, Tabby, of an old female name Tabith (OED). However, since folk etymology connects it with the term for a striped cat or a she-cat (the female correlative to Tom-cat), it may still be regarded as a metaphor.

From the 18th century onwards tabby has been used as a half-humorous term for elderly maiden women. Sometimes there is an added meaning of 'ill-natured' or 'gossipy'. In the present record the first interpretation seems applicable.

*warbler*

She began with sympathy to pourtray herself another victim, when the lovely warbler flew, as it were, from the spray, and a torrent of unconnected exclamations and question burst from her... (Wollstonecraft, p.70)

Although the term warbler can have human as well as animal reference, the predicate flew makes it clear that in this record it is used metaphorically. In general,
Chapter 5

terms for birds are derogatory when used about human beings. *Cuckoo, ostrich, goose,* dodo are a few examples of invectives that denote stupidity or foolishness (Ericsson, 1994:17). Most of them are also used with female rather than male reference. The term *warbler* with its positive values, emphasized by the adjective *lovely,* is therefore a non-typical bird metaphor. The main attribute is the ability to sing, not the lack of intelligence often ascribed to birds (*e.g.* in *bird-brained*).

5.5 Plant domain

*blossom, flower*

"I, alone, by my active tenderness, could have saved," she would exclaim, "from an early blight, this sweet blossom;" (Wollstonecraft, p.65)

"Woman, fragile flower! why were you suffered to adorn a world exposed to the inroad of such stormy elements?" thought Maria (Wollstonecraft, p.70)

Both records have a female referent, a female author and a female speaker. They were both written just a few years before the turn of the century.

The association women – flowers dates back to the Renaissance when the practice of giving women names derived from plants first took off. In England a great number of new female flower names appeared during the early 19th century (*Daisy, Prunella, Heather* etc.), a development that has been interpreted as a reflection of the ideological change taking place around 1800 (Elert & Elert, 1989:60-62). For the Romantic poets and philosophers of that era, the bond between Nature and human beings was a major theme. The fact that the only two plant metaphors in the corpus stem from 1796-98 may be seen against this background. Just as many flower terms are used as personal names for women, they are also often used metaphorically with female reference (*an English rose, a shy violet*).

Two attributes of *flower* that make it a more suitable metaphor for females than for
males are ‘beauty’ and ‘frailty’, underlined in the current records by the adjectives  
*sweet* and *fragile*. A flower is pleasing to the eye, but it is also at the mercy of its  
surroundings and can be picked or trampled upon.

5.6. Inanimate domain

*baggage*

But the Knight being startled at so unexpected a Familiarity..., told her,  
She was a wanton *Baggage*, and bid her go about her Business. (Addison,  
p.247)

“See again!” said he: “could you believe this of the young *baggage*, if you  
had not heard it?” (Richardson, p.23)

In the first record, stemming from the earliest part of the 18th century, the term  
*baggage* is used for ‘strumpet’, a sense that was common in the 17th century. The  
second record reflects the slight amelioration that took place during the 18th century,  
when it was used more playfully about young women with an added meaning of  
‘flirtatiousness’ or ‘impudence’. This is also the current sense of *baggage* with female  
reference, although this usage seems somewhat dated. The concepts of ‘property’ and  
‘impediment’ that are implicit in the term, make it less popular in our gender-conscious  
society.

Four of the five records come with adjectives that are either patronising or negative  
(*wanton, ungrateful, silly, fusty, artful*). They all occur in reported speech by male  
speakers. The authors are also male. The figurative use of *baggage* seems to be part of  
the male 18th century idiom.

*dumpling*

Mrs Teachum kindly chucking the little *Dumpling* under the Chin, said,  
she had so good an Opinion of Miss Jenny, as to answer for her that she  
would read nothing to them but what was proper. (Fielding, p.64)

*Dumpling*, in its literal sense, refers to a round little pudding made of paste or
dough (cf. Sw. *klimp*). It has been used figuratively about small and chubby persons or animals since the early 17th century. All three examples in the corpus collocate with *little* and refer to a young girl in *The Governess*, Sarah Fielding’s educational novel for children.

**fortune**

Mrs Betty Arable, the great *fortune*, and the widow her mother... (Steele, p.279)

A wealthy man is often referred to as *a man of fortune* in 18th century texts, the fortune being an attribute of the man. A wealthy woman, or a woman with the prospect of a great dowry, is overshadowed by her fortune which passes from being merely an attribute to becoming the focus of attention. This is another example of the concept of ‘women as property’, which underlies many of the metaphorical terms with female reference. All three records have male authors.

**image, statue**

Says Lady Towers, “Can the pretty *image* speak, Mrs. Jervis?” (Richardson, p.40)

“Do you hear what I say to you, *statue*? Can you neither speak nor be thankful?” (Richardson, p.44)

Although the first record is put into the mouth of a female character, the author of both records is male. The term *image* emphasizes the looks of the referent who becomes one-dimensional, losing her soul and intelligence. In spite of the positive adjective, the collocation as a whole reflects a patronising attitude.

The term *statue* also deprives the person of soul and intelligence, although the main attribute is probably ‘coldness’, referring to a lack of emotion or response. My guess is that whereas *statue* could have either male or female reference, the prototypical referent of the term *image* in the 18th century would have been female.
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*machine, nought*

She was educated with the expectation of a large fortune, of course became a mere *machine*: the homage of her attendants made a great part of her puerile amusements, and she never imagined there were any relative duties for her to fulfil: (Wollstonecraft, p.5)

Many such *noughts* are there in the female world! yet she had a good opinion of her own merit, - truly, she said long prayers, - and sometimes read her Week’s Preparation: (Wollstonecraft, p.5)

In the opening pages of *Mary*, an upper middle-class woman who exhibits all the characteristics expected from her gender and class is referred to as a *machine* and a *nought*. The attributes of a machine that are alluded to in this context are probably its lack of soul and intelligence as well as its mechanical and repetitive movements, while the main attribute of a nought is its total lack of value. The emptiness and worthlessness of many of the accepted female pursuits, as perceived by the author, are summarized in these two metaphors. They signal a beginning of a change in attitude to the role of women exhibited here by Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the early female advocates of women’s rights to more meaningful occupations.

*object, piece, thing*

As I was musing on this Description, and comparing it with the *Object* before me, the Knight told me, that this very old Woman had the Reputation of a Witch all over the country, (Addison, p.237)

“As to little Louisa, ‘tis such a pretty *piece* of languor, that ‘tis almost cruel to speak rationally about her..” (Burney, p.343)

The Gentleman believed Will was talking to himself, when upon my looking with great Approbation at a young *thing* in a Box before us, he said ‘I’m quite of another Opinion: She has, I will allow, a very pleasing Aspect, but methinks that simplicity in her Countenance is rather childish than innocent.’ (Steele, p.208)

‘I was young, it was true, but appeared a knowing little *thing*, and might be
These three near-synonyms are all examples of the reification of women, in that they reduce their referents to basic, physical entities. In spite of this, the emphasis is on the aspect of function rather than of appearance. Things, pieces and objects are owned or handled; they cannot act on their own. The attitude of condescension reflected in these terms is further emphasized by such collocating adjectives as poor, slight, awkward, pretty, young, little. Other collocations are more negative as in the following line from Wollstonecraft.

"She is a broad, pursy, fat thing" (Wollstonecraft, p.97).

Eleven of the tokens were written by male writers, five by female.

5.7. Discussion

Our conceptual system is to a large extent metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphorical structures help us interpret one domain of experience in terms of another domain. Individual metaphors highlight some aspects of a concept while hiding or downplaying others. But, as seems to be the case in all types of linguistic categorization, the choice of metaphors and domains is not random. It may not be predictable, but is nevertheless motivated by similarities experienced by the language users (Persson, 1990:166-167). Such perceived similarities are culture specific and reflect basic values in a society. The semantic domains that metaphors for men and women are taken from in the corpus should therefore reveal something about attitudes and beliefs about the genders in 18th century society (Fig.11).

Three features of this histogram stand out. Firstly, there are more than four times as many female as male referents. Secondly, more than half of the tokens with female reference belong to the inanimate domain. Thirdly, all but one of the tokens with male reference belong to the animal domain, while there are none at all in the plant and in the
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inanimate domain. What made the latter such a fertile ground for metaphors referring to women but totally barren as regards metaphors for men? What aspects of the concepts of 'male' and 'female' did the 18th century authors highlight through their choice of metaphors?

**Figure 11. Correlation between semantic domain of metaphor and gender of referent. Numbers refer to tokens.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Female ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inanimate domain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant domain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal domain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysical domain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age-old concept of 'women-as-property' is embedded in many terms and usages in the English language and has often been commented on (e.g. Bolinger, 1980:92). Although the term *wife-sale* is now obsolete, the expression *to marry off a daughter* is still in use and the relatively new coinage *wife-swapping* reflects the same basic values. It is the wives that are swapped, not the husbands. The underlying assumption that a woman is a commodity, an object of transactions, makes it possible to choose terms from the inanimate domain as metaphors for women. This may be seen as a result of the 'domain-of-experience' principle for linguistic categorization as formulated by G. Lakoff: "If there is a basic domain of experience associated with A., then it is natural for entities in that domain to be in the same category as A" (1987:93).
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The most important conceptual component of the inanimate domain is by definition 'a lack of life'. On the spiritual – physical axis discussed earlier, terms within this domain appear at the bottom end. It is thus in line with the proposed general tendency for terms with female reference to be found towards the lower end of the axis.

An outline of some other aspects of the terms within the inanimate domain may throw some further light on the linkage between the concepts of 'female' and 'inanimate' and the improbability of such a linkage between 'male' and 'inanimate' (Fig. 12).

Figure 12. Some aspects of inanimate terms.

Several of the semantic properties of importance in the present context are interactional. The significance of such properties in categorization has been pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson among others. Although the physical shape of a dumpling probably is an important aspect in this case (its referent being a little school-girl), the purposive aspect 'to eat' is also present. It seems improbable that the term would be used to refer to a school-boy, even if his shape were similar. Although dumpling is the only example found in this corpus, there are many other metaphorical terms for women
that include the concept of ‘edible’ – sweetie-pie, dish, honey, tart etc. This food imagery may have a sexual basis, according to some writers; the purpose of a woman is to be consumed, sexually or orally (Mills, 1989:46).

Relational and functional aspects are important parts of several terms. A fortune is of financial value, while a baggage is an impediment. A machine is a tool to be used, while objects, pieces and things can be handled and owned. Images and statues are made to please the eye but do not respond to you. A nought is of no value to anyone.

In general, the inanimate world is in the power of the human race. Therefore, to use a term from the inanimate domain to refer to a man would have been a severe breach of the male norm in 18th century society. As women had little power, doubtful intelligence and a soul of less value, the distance between the female and the inanimate concepts was not long and a linkage more possible.

The other exclusively female category in the corpus of metaphors comes from the plant domain. As an important aspect of plants is beauty, and as physical aspects are more important in the concept of ‘female’ than in that of ‘male’ (see Ch. 6), this is not surprising. However, since there is undoubtedly such a thing as male beauty, the concept of ‘frailty’ probably also plays a part in the lack of plant metaphors for men in the language. ‘Frailty’ is not a prototypical attribute-value for ‘male’.34

The fact that metaphors, although based on perceived similarities, are not predictable is illustrated by the lack of terms from the domain of fungi. Why is it that mushrooms that are both edible and beautiful are not used as metaphors for women, at least not of the conventional type? Instead, mushrooms often have metaphorical names taken from the domain of human culture - penny-bun, parasol mushroom, slippery Jack,

34 The use of plant names (e.g. pansy, lily, lavender) as metaphors for male homosexuals in current English (see Bergquist in Persson-Rydén, 1996:33), is based on the same principle. Being gay is a severe breach of the male norm, which makes plant names suitable for this purpose.
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_ink cap etc._ 35 The only term from the domain of fungi that is used figuratively with human reference seems to be _mushroom_ itself. The usage highlights the sudden growth of mushrooms and is rather pejorative, its sense being 'an upstart'. The OED also records a now obsolete use of the term for 'a contemptible person', a usage that may reflect an earlier resistance among many people to use mushrooms as food.

Another difference between metaphors with male and female reference deserves some comment. Whereas more than a third of the tokens with female reference are positive, all but one of those with male reference are negative. The metaphors taken from the animal domain are all negative when referring to men. 'Cruelty', 'stupidity', 'lack of experience' are some concepts inherent in such terms as _beast, brute, vermin_ and _puppy_, the typical responses to them being 'fear' or 'contempt'. Animal metaphors for women, on the other hand, may well be positive (_lamb, warbler_). When negative, the response they evoke is 'contempt', not 'fear' (_jade, tabby_). This is in line with the finding that the central term creature is often positive or patronising when referring to women, but nearly always negative when the referent is male. The proximity between the female and the animal level in the 18th century conceptual structure of the world may be the underlying reason.

Finally, the question why there are so few metaphors with male reference needs an answer. There are probably several factors involved. Since metaphors are created by referring to something by a term that belongs to a different semantic domain, most metaphors for humans will come from either the animal or the inanimate domain. As they also spring from some kind of perceived similarity between term and referent, the attribute values of 'female' probably made women more likely referents for such metaphors than men. Using a term from the animal or the inanimate domain for a man was an insult and therefore avoided, unless intended as such.

Also, half of the texts studied have female authors. It is not surprising if women's

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35 For an analysis of naming principles for fungi, see Persson, 1997:63-83.
lower place in the social hierarchy made the tendency to avoid metaphors for men even more pronounced among women writers. If the prototypical responses to the concept of 'male' are 'respect' and 'fear', there is not a great variety of suitable metaphors to choose from by a person in a subordinate position. Terms from the inanimate domain seldom have these response values, while terms from the animal domain may be too negative to risk. Nor does the metaphysical domain have a large number of terms to offer. It may therefore have been a prudent strategy, conscious or unconscious, on the part of women to avoid metaphors when referring to men. The fact that only two tokens of metaphors with male reference stem from female authors supports this conclusion.
6

CHARACTERISING TERMS: MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL DOMAINS

6.1. Introduction

There are 152 different terms with gender specific reference classified as 'characterising' in the database. The number of records is 413. Most of the terms fall into one of the following semantic domains: 1) the mental or intellectual; 2) the physical; 3) the social and behavioural. Only terms belonging to categories that are judged as relevant to this study will be discussed.

One type of terms may require some explanation. In the 18th century adjectives were sometimes used as the head of a noun phrase, as in the following record:

...and at the time Arabella entered the church, his Eyes, which had wandered from one rural Fair to another, were in an Instant fixed upon her Face. (Lennox, p.8)

The distinction between the roles played by adjectives and nouns was not as clear as in current English (Strang 1970:138). The prop-word one, which fills what is now felt to be an empty noun-place in such constructions, had already come into use, but it was far from a necessary addition. Records of such terms have therefore been included in the discussion of characterising terms, even if they would not be classified as nouns in a corpus of current English.

Several of the characterising terms are metonyms (e.g. beauty, bold-face, blockhead). This is not surprising, as their aim is to focus on one particular aspect of a person, such as looks or intelligence – or more often on a lack of the latter.

Just as with metaphors, characterising terms are more popular with male writers. Out of the 413 records 236 stem from male writers, 177 from female writers. There is no such difference as regards gender of reference.

In order to get a general idea of the whole category, a league table for the most
frequent characterising terms is shown in Table 14.

**Table 14. League table for characterising terms. (Only terms with a minimum of 6 tokens are included)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Female ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wretch</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fool</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rogue</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beauty</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hussy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyrant</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bold-face</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>robber</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slut</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A basic feature of characterising terms is evident from this table; the overwhelming majority are negative. Only one, *beauty*, is positive, while most of the others may be regarded as invectives. A second feature is that 41% of all the tokens of characterising terms with female reference belong to this top category, as compared to only 27% of the tokens with male reference. In other words, there seems to be a tendency to use more standard terms or clichés about females than about males. The pattern is similar for the category as a whole; the proportion records/term is 2.8 with female reference, only 2.2 with male reference.

### 6.2. Mental and intellectual domain

This is the largest category with 72 records (Table 15). It includes neutral terms like *predestinarian* as well as positive terms (*e.g.* *genius*) and invectives like *goosecap*.

The mental and intellectual domain is predominantly male. Only 14 out of 83 records are written by female authors; only 10 out of 29 terms and 34 out of 83 records have
female reference. Furthermore, out of the 34 records with female reference, 21 are tokens of only one term, *fool*.

Some of the terms with male reference conform to the concept of ‘male’ and its mental attribute value of ‘intelligence’ (*genius, sage, thinker*); others break the male norm and are used as invectives (*fool, booby*). Several of the invectives come in the form of metonyms where derogatory attributes are applied to various terms for ‘head’. Examples of these are *blockhead, doddypole* (from *dotty* and *poll*), *dunderhead, goosecap, jolthead, numskul*.

The term *fool* when applied to females often comes with a patronising or even positive adjective that softens the impact (*little, pretty*), a type of collocation that is not found when the referent is male. *Fool* is not a severe breach of the female norm and the invective is therefore less harsh – sometimes the term can even be used as an endearment.

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36 The 8 terms coming from Sterne’s enumeration of invectives (see p.103) lie behind some of this imbalance since they all have the same male referent. However, the male bias still exists even if these terms are disregarded as being non-typical.
### Table 15. Mental domain. Terms and tokens according to gender of reference. (F = female writer, M = male writer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Female ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blank</td>
<td>2M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blockhead</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>booby</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>casuist</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connoisseur</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doddypole</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dunderhead</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fondling</td>
<td></td>
<td>1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fool</td>
<td>1F 13M</td>
<td>3F 18M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genius</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td>1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goosecap</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humourist</td>
<td>2M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jolthead</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logician</td>
<td>1F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madman</td>
<td>2F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maniac</td>
<td></td>
<td>2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nicompoop</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninnihammer</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>numskul</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oracle</td>
<td>1F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosopher</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predestinarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scholar</td>
<td>2M</td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sage</td>
<td>5M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinker</td>
<td>1F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wise</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wit</td>
<td>4M</td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>witch</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td>4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wizard</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Terms:** 25 10  
**Tokens:** 49 34

It may be arguable whether or not *witch* and *wizard* should belong to this domain.
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Since the last burning of witches took place in 1712, the idea that certain individuals had special mental powers to put spells on others was probably still widespread at least during the first part of the century.

..this very old Woman had the Reputation of a Witch all over the Country, that her Lips were observed to be always in motion, and that there was not a Switch about her House which her Neighbours did not believe had carried her several hundreds of Miles. (Steele, p.237)

The switch in the above quotation reflects the sexual aspect of witches. Witches were said to use switches or brooms, old pagan phallic symbols, to fly. Brooms were associated both with female masturbation and with sex outside marriage, as in the old saying “If a girl strides over a broom-handle, she will be a mother before she is a wife” (Mills 1989:22). Witches were seen as having special sexual powers to lure men, and as the old beliefs in the evil powers of witches gradually diminished, the term came to be used figuratively and acquired a more positive sense of ‘enticing’ or ‘alluring’. This later usage is exemplified in the following exasperated plea from the young master who has fallen in love with a young maid, Pamela, but fails to seduce her.

“‘Mrs. Jervis,’ said he, ‘take the little witch from me; I can neither bear nor forbear her!’” (Richardson, p.44)

Although the first written records of witch (9th century) refer to male practitioners of magic arts, the prototypical witch later became female. The only record of a male witch in the corpus is in fact used in the collocation white witch, i.e. a person who uses magical powers for beneficial purposes. The male counterpart to witch is wizard, which comes from the ME wise. While the female witch acquired a sexual second sense, the male wizard retained the sense of ‘wisdom’ (Mills, 1989:265).

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37 Also the favourite means of transport for the Sw. “Påskkärring” ('Easter witch').

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6.3. Physical domain

'Physical' is here interpreted in a broad sense, including such attributes as 'general appearance' (*slut*) and 'age' (*hag*) (Table 16).

Whereas the mental domain is predominantly male, the opposite is true for the physical domain. Only three terms have male reference (all referring to defects in the males) and only 5 out of 44 tokens.

Table 16. Physical domain. Terms and tokens according to gender of reference. (F= Female writer; M= Male writer.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Female ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dwarf 2F</td>
<td>amazon 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impotent 1M</td>
<td>beauty 1F, 11M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invalid 2F</td>
<td>fair (-one) 13F, 2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hag 2F, 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>invalid 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nymph 1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>slut 6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms: 3</td>
<td>Terms: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens: 5</td>
<td>Tokens: 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terms with female reference are also more varied; some include the concept of 'old age' and 'scruffiness', while others are more positive. *Hag*, from OE *haegtesse* was originally used about an evil female spirit and later as a synonym for *witch* (*cf.* Sw. *häxa*) but by the end of the 14th century it had also acquired the sense of "ugly, repulsive old woman" (*cf.* Sw. *hagga*). The first record from 1712 reflects the early sense of 'evil' while the second quotation from 1788 emphasizes the physical aspect of the term.
Chapter 6

This creature... was left in the first Month from her Dishonour, and exposed to pass through the Hands and discipline of one of those Hags of Hell whom we call Bawds. (Steele, p.267)

"... I looked like a little old woman, or a hag shrivelling into nothing." (Wollstonecraft, p.80)

Amazon includes the concept of ‘strength’, nymph the concepts of ‘youth’ and ‘beauty’. The usage of the term slut is not always clear. The first sense of the term is ‘dirty, untidy woman’. These aspects of appearance often signified low social status and the process of moralisation of status words came into play. The term acquired a second sense of ‘bold and impudent’ and soon it also denoted ‘loose sexual morals’. Some of the records reflect the sense of ‘impudent’, while in other cases the term may have been used playfully, without any negative aspects. As the exact meaning in each record is difficult to pin down, they have all been classified as belonging to the physical domain.

“I believe this little slut has the power of witchcraft, if ever there was a witch; for she enchants all that come near her.” (Richardson, p.36)

The most frequent terms are also the most positive, beauty and fair. Male writers seem to prefer the term beauty, while the choice of female writers is fair or fair-one. A possible reason could be that fair, in addition to the physical sense of being ‘pleasing to the eye’ has a slightly moral overtone of ‘purity’ that may make the term more appealing to female users.

6.4. Social domain

Since the social domain encompasses a variety of aspects relevant to this study, it has been split up into several sub-domains. While some of these have referents from both genders, others are predominantly male or female as regards reference.

6.4.1. Sexual behaviour

coquet (1F, 1M), harlot (1M), jilt (1F), strumpet (1F, 1M), virgin (3M), wanton (1F, 1M), whore (1F,2M)
All referents in this section are female as are the meanings of most of the terms. Five records come from female writers, nine from male writers.

*Coquet, jilt* and *wanton* are all derogatory terms for women who flirt without intent to enter into any more serious relationship, sexual or otherwise. The French origin of *coquet* is a diminutive form of *coq* and the allusion is to "the strutting gait and amorous characteristics of the cock" (*OED*). During the 18th century the term was undergoing a change. It was formerly applied to both males and females, but now the feminine form *coquette* appeared and the masculine form became obsolete. The two records in this corpus, however, still adhere to the old, masculine form.

"I knew the character of a *coquet* both silly and insignificant; yet did everything in my power to acquire it." (Haywood, p.519)

*Jilt* comes from derivatives of the personal names *Gillian* or *Julian*. The name *Jill* was often given to lower class girls in the Middle Ages and it acquired the sense of 'flirt' at an early stage (Mills, 1989:130). The noun *jilt* first appeared in the 17th century with the deteriorated sense of 'harlot' (now obsolete). In Dr Johnson's dictionary (1755) it is defined as "A woman who gives her lover hopes and deceives him." Although the verb *to jilt* can be used with both male and female subjects, the noun is only rarely used with male reference (*OED*).

*Wanton*, with the original sense of 'unrestrained', began to deteriorate in the 14th century and soon acquired negative senses of 'unruly' and 'sexually immodest', especially when applied to women, as shown in the following record.

...a loose *Wanton*, whose Verses breathed nothing but unchaste and irregular Fires... (Lennox, p.62)

It is not a straightforward matter to decide whether *harlot, strumpet* and *whore* belong to the category of characterising terms. Some records clearly fall into the relational category ("his *whore*") and others into the occupational category. However, the records treated here seem to refer to unchaste behaviour in general and are therefore
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counted as ‘characterising’, as in the following quotation:

“Cleopatra was a whore, was she not, Madam?” said he. (Lennox, p.105)

When harlot first entered the English language from French in the 13th century its sense was ‘vagabond’ or ‘rascal’ and it was used about males. Two centuries later it could also be used about women as a generally derogatory term. The original sense of ‘vagabondry’ may lie behind the later sense development of the term. Someone who is free to travel is not easily controlled and is therefore often suspected of loose morals. As far as men are concerned, this is not a grave offense. During the 16th and 17th centuries the term was used for male fornicators as a rather mild insult (Mills, 1989:114). For women, loose morals are a more serious matter and when used with female reference harlot acquired the sense of ‘prostitute’. It was frequently used in 16th century versions of the Bible, perhaps as a less offensive term than whore. The stylistic difference between the terms may be reflected in the different idioms of Pamela and Moll Flanders; the morally pure Pamela uses the term harlot while the loose-living Moll does not hesitate to take the term whore in her mouth. Even today harlot has a slightly biblical quality. The term strumpet, on the other hand, has always had the sense of ‘unchaste woman’ or ‘prostitute’. The first record in the OED stems from 1327, but its origin is unknown.

Although some records of virgin have the general sense of ‘young woman’ and fall into the category of central terms, there are three that refer more directly to sexual innocence and therefore qualify for this section. The following example is taken from Rasselas:

...he feigned to himself an orphan virgin robbed of her little portion by a treacherous lover, and crying after him for restitution and redress.
(Johnson, p.10)

38 Cf the American use of tramp (“That’s why the lady is a tramp”).

39 For a discussion of the lack of equivalent male terms, see Ch.4, p.100.
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6.4.2. Vanity

beau (3), coxcomb (3), fop (5)

The three terms that contain the concept of 'vanity' are all male and slightly derogatory. Whereas beauty is a positive term, beau is not. The term fop is related to the German foppen, meaning 'hoax' or 'trick'. The figurative expression coxcomb refers to the perceived conceited and showy behaviour of cocks. Also, 10 out of 11 tokens come from male writers.

And you have in Liveries Beaus, Fops, and Coxcombs, in as high Perfection, as among people that keep Equipages. (Steele, p.294)

The reason for the male bias may be that 'vanity' is an accepted attribute in females but not in males. Terms that include this concept therefore become negative, especially from a male point of view. Female equivalents of coxcomb, beau and fop are difficult to find.  

6.4.3. Financial domain

miser (1), profligate (1), spend-thrift (1)

Only three non-occupational terms and records belong to the area of finance. They are all pejorative, denoting deviations in two opposite directions from the norm. While the miser finds it difficult to part with money, the spend-thrift and the profligate spend it too easily. The term spend-thrift may look like a contradiction, as thrift usually refers to careful economic management. In this case, however, the sense of thrift is 'substance' or 'wealth' and the meaning of the whole term is 'someone who spends his wealth in a wasteful manner'. All the referents are male, possibly a reflection of a society where men had the financial power. A prototypical spend-thrift would not be

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40 G. Persson(1996:170-72) reports that the same is true in our modern society – all terms for vanity and fashion fixation used as invectives have male prototypes.

41 For an analysis of the function and content of invectives, see Persson, 1996:157-160.
female in a situation where women seldom had money of their own to waste.

... heedless *Spend-thrifts* that squander away their estates before they are Masters of them ... (Addison, p.273)

### 6.4.4. Power and defiance

Three of the terms in this domain imply power and six a questioning of power. A division of the terms and records according to gender of reference yields a pattern that seems to reflect the power structure in 18th century society (Table 17).

#### Table 17. Male and female reference of terms expressing power and defiance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power terms</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Fem.ref.</th>
<th>Defiance terms</th>
<th>Fem.ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>despot</td>
<td>1F</td>
<td>1F</td>
<td>bold-face</td>
<td>6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyrant</td>
<td>3F, 2M</td>
<td>2F</td>
<td>hussy</td>
<td>1F, 6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>victor</td>
<td>1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>insolent</td>
<td>2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pert</td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rebel</td>
<td>1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sauce-box</td>
<td>5M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>virago</td>
<td>2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas 7 out of 10 records of power terms have male reference, all 24 in the opposite section refer to females. At first glance this may look like an early feminist uprising, but the gender distribution of writers together with a cluster of terms and records in one book (*Pamela*) probably offers more plausible explanations. The defiant terms are mainly derogatory and in 21 out of the 24 cases, the writer is male (Richardson). What is reflected in these figures is more likely a resentful male attitude towards a female who does not show proper respect or obedience.

“If I have been a *Sauce-box*, a *Bold-face*, a *Pert*, and a Creature, as he calls me, have I not had reason?” (Richardson, p.28)

It may be argued that the term *hussy* (originally an abbreviation of ME *huswif*) does
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not fit into this category, since its general sense is something like 'worthless wench'. The deterioration from 'female manager of a household' to 'a sorry or bad woman' (DEL) reflects a development where the importance of the individual household as a productive unit had diminished as had the status of domestic labour (Mills, 1989:122). Soon hussy also acquired sexual attribute values together with a sense of 'impertinence'. The contexts where it is used in the corpus suggest that this latter attribute is intended. Most of the records come from Pamela, where they are uttered by the young master in response to Pamela's refusal to comply with his wishes.

I said, "I won't stay." - "You won't, huzzy!" said he: do you know whom you speak to?" (Richardson, p.12)

The term virago (from Lat. vir 'man') originally denoted a heroic woman or female warrior. Its later, deteriorated sense of 'impudent woman' and 'scold' probably results from the breach of the female norm. The concepts of 'strength' and 'heroism' did (does?) not agree with the concept of 'female'.

"...I was dismissed before my cure was completed, because I could not afford to have my linen washed to appear decently, as the virago of a nurse said, when the gentlemen [the surgeons] came." (Wollstonecraft, p.90)

6.4.5. Criminality, dishonesty, irresponsible behaviour

This is a negative domain, comprising terms that cover a wide range of reprehensible behaviour. At one end of the spectrum there are terms that are only slightly derogatory, such as hypocrite and glutton, assassin and thief are at the other extreme (Table 18).

This is a predominantly male domain. More than three times as many terms and four times as many tokens have male reference as compared to female. Both genders are represented at the two ends of spectrum; there are male and female hypocrites as well as thieves. Most of the terms still exist but there are a few archaic terms that may require some comment.
Table 18. Terms denoting criminality etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Female ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assassin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>betrayer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caitiff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coward</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criminal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defamer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissembler</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drunkard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drunker</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highwayman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypocrite</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impostor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>libertine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murderer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscreant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pickpocket</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pirate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plagiar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rake</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rascal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ravisher</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>robber</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rogue</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scamperer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scoundrel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scowrer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoplifter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thief</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tormentor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traitor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trifler</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>villain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms: 34 10
Tokens: 80 19

Caitiff and miscreant are both examples of moralisation of status words. The original sense of caitiff is ‘captive’ or ‘prisoner’. Persons who had lost their freedom.
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were objects of commiseration but also of contempt. Their status was low and their sorrowful situation often the result of some wickedness. A new sense of 'mean wretch' or 'villain' soon replaced the original one (Hughes, 1988:44-46). The term miscreant underwent a similar sense development. The original sense was 'misbeliever'. In an age when the church was powerful and authoritarian, unorthodox views were looked upon with moral disapproval and the term acquired the sense of 'rascal' or 'villain'.

Scamperer is probably old military slang, coming from a Dutch word schampen meaning 'decamp' (OED). It was a common term during the last decades of the 17th century and referred to vandals who ran away or decamped after causing damage. Similarly, the term scourer, from the verb scour, 'to run away', 'decamp' (a sense now obs.) meant someone who scoured the streets at night. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it referred to a member of bands that used to roister in the streets, beating up watchmen and vandalising.

..a very gay healthy old Man...who has been, he tells me, a Scowrer, a Scamperer, a Breaker of windows, and Invader of Constables... (Steele, p.271)

6.4.6. Social inferiority

bumpkin (1M), clown (3M), forester (1F), gipsy (2F), putt (1M), rustic (2F,1M), savage (3M), vagrant (1M)

All terms in this domain are examples of moralisation of status words. Two of the terms, gipsy and vagrant include the sense of 'persons of no fixed abode', a circumstance that makes them suspicious in the eyes of civilised society. In the two records of gipsy the term is used figuratively as an invective, whereas the record of vagrant actually refers to persons living on river-boats. The context suggests, however, that this term is also used as a term of abuse.

42 Only terms that are not also occupational terms are included in this section.
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“I tell you, she is a subtle, artful gipsey, and time will shew it you.” (Richardson, p. 17)

Sir Roger...told us, That if he were a Middlesex Justice, he would make such Vagrants know that her Majesty’s Subjects were no more to be abused by Water than by Land. (Addison, p.246)

All the other terms share the concepts of ‘rural’ and ‘uncivilised’. Bumpkin may possibly come from a Dutch word boomke ‘little tree’. It means “an awkward country fellow, a clown” (OED). Clown in the sense of ‘rustic’ is probably related to terms that appear in several Germanic languages with the general sense of ‘clumsy lout’ (e.g. Sw. kluns). Putt is 17th century slang of unknown origin, also meaning ‘bumpkin’. Forester is not an occupational term in this context but means ‘person living in the forest’. Although the first sense of savage is ‘a person living in a society untouched by civilisation’, its secondary sense is ‘ill-bred and ill-mannered person’ in general.

This is also a predominantly male domain; 6 terms and 9 tokens have male reference, while there are 3 terms and 5 tokens with female reference.

6.4.7. A special case-study: wretch

The term wretch, at the top of the league table with 47 records, falls between two stools as regards semantic domains and will therefore be treated in a section of its own.

Its origin is the OE wrecca, ‘an exile’. As the status of an exile during the Anglo-Saxon period was most precarious and often a result of some terrible action (Hughes, 1988:45), two secondary senses soon developed, a) ‘an unfortunate person, worthy of pity’; b) ‘a despicable, mean person, worthy of contempt’. In Modern English the original sense of ‘exile’ has disappeared, but the secondary senses survive. A closer study of the contexts of the records in the corpus reveals gender differences related to these two different senses (Table 19).
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Table 19. Distribution of two different senses of wretch according to gender of reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of ref.</th>
<th>‘Unfortunate person’</th>
<th>‘Despicable person’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas the great majority of the records with female reference fall into the sense category ‘unfortunate’, the majority of records with male reference fall into the category ‘despicable’. A study of prenominal adjectives collocating with wretch supports this interpretation (Table 20).

Table 20. Adjectives collocating with the term wretch according to gender of reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms of contempt</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Fem.</th>
<th>Terms of pity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Fem.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abject</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>little</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>solitary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black-hearted</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cruel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>veriest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiery-tempered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hardened</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heartless</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ill-looking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unprincipled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wicked</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All but one of the collocations with male referents are negative, while all but two with female referents are patronising. The pattern is similar to the one found for creature (see Ch.3, p.55). The collocations with creature are mainly patronising or
positive when the referent is female, but negative when the referent is male. This agrees with the frame analysis for 'male' and 'female' where a prototypical response to the attribute values is 'fear' in the first case and 'condescension' in the second. And, just as in the case of creature, the most popular collocating adjective with female reference is poor with 12 tokens.

6.5. Discussion
Admittedly, some of the semantic domains discussed have far too few records for any definite conclusions to be drawn. Still, the overall pattern that emerges (Fig. 13), seems to support the findings discussed in the chapters on central terms.

Figure 13. Number of tokens of characterising terms within specific semantic domains related to gender of reference.

Firstly, terms that belong to the mental or intellectual domain have a male bias as regards reference. Although most of the terms are negative, this suggests that males to a greater extent than females are judged by mental criteria. Women, in contrast, far
outweigh the men within the physical domain; they are judged by physical criteria that seem to be of little importance where males are concerned. The sexual domain, belonging to the social category but closely related to the physical, is exclusively female. As the sexual behaviour of men was not important or constricted in the same way as it was for women, no special male terms were needed. So, just as is the case with central terms, men dominate the spiritual end of the spiritual-physical dimension, while women are found mainly at the physical end.

Secondly, the gender imbalance within the social domain reflects the hierarchical structure of a society where men had the power and played many different parts, while women were dependents and mostly confined to the home. As may be expected, the few records in the financial category have male reference. It was men who earned money and owned property. Nor is it surprising that most of the records in the power category have male reference. The conclusion may seem far-fetched, however, when considering the subfields ‘social inferiority’ and ‘criminality etc.’ which show a majority of male referents. A possible explanation may be that since men were the “doers” in this society, they were judged more often than women by their actions. A closer study of the terms within the ‘criminality, dishonesty etc.’ group shows that more than a third of the records with female reference come from terms where ‘pretence’ or ‘falsity’ is the main concept (e.g. dissembler, hypocrite). The corresponding proportion for male reference is one eighth. ‘Pretence’ is a rather passive concept as compared to the more active ones inherent in many of the terms with exclusively male reference (e.g. assassin, scamperer).

Falsity or pretence may be a strategy used more by dependents than by those in power. Another strategy is defiance. All referents of “defiant” terms are female. However, the term defiance must here be understood figuratively, since it refers to terms that include the concepts of ‘disobedience’ or ‘impertinence’, but not ‘action’. Although bold-faces, perts and sauce-boxes may be irritating to their superiors, they do
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not pose a real threat to the existing social hierarchy.

The varying usage of *wretch*, the most frequent among the characterising terms, is also in line with the findings about the concepts of ‘male’ and ‘female’ reported in earlier chapters. Collocations and contexts show that whereas the prototypical response to a female *wretch* is ‘pity’ or ‘condescension’, the response to a male *wretch* is ‘fear’ or ‘hatred’.

Finally, characterising terms tend to be more loaded than terms from other categories. The many derogatory terms found in the corpus, as well as the expression *to call someone names*, indicate that they are more often negative than positive. Whether this is due to a general tendency among humans to denigrate rather than appreciate each other, or to different linguistic structures being used for abuse and approval, is difficult to tell. It is possible that approval is more commonly expressed by collocations with central terms (*e.g. a generous man, a man of quality*), while disapproval is a concept built into the term itself (*a miser, a fool*). This negative bias may be the reason behind the low frequency of records with male reference coming from female writers. Middle class women’s preference for more polite terms, in addition to (or due to?) their vulnerable position vis-a-vis men, probably made them somewhat reluctant to choose characterising terms, metaphorical or literal, when referring to a man.

Although characterising terms are used to about the same extent for women (201 tokens) as for men (212), the number of terms used is smaller (73 as compared to 101). In other words, there are 2.8 tokens per terms for females, only 2.0 for males. This may be seen against the background of the constricted female world. Since there were fewer occupational and status terms applicable to women, characterising terms may have been used instead. But since the roles played by women, at least among the middle classes in society, were quite clearly defined and confined, many “action” terms were unsuitable. If the scope for variation in female behaviour is limited, the vocabulary reflecting it also

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becomes limited. The result is a tendency to use standard collocations and clichés that in turn reinforce the existing attribute values for the concept of 'female' in society.
7.1. Introduction

Not unexpectedly, the category of occupational terms is to a large extent male dominated. The reasons for this have already been touched upon in the discussions of other categories. Firstly, large areas of work were closed to women at this time. Since women were barred from entering university, all professions that required a degree were out of bounds. Secondly, middle class women did not aspire towards paid employment, nor were they expected to, but concentrated their efforts on being 'ladies'. As the 18th century novel mainly reflects middle class life, some of the male bias is inherent in the source. These factors taken into account, the discrepancy in numbers between occupational terms with male and female reference still paints a striking picture of how narrow the boundaries were for women in comparison to men (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14. Male and female reference of occupational terms. Numbers of terms and tokens.
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7.2. Epicene and gender specific terms

Terms with female reference, being fewer and often linguistically marked for gender, are taken as a starting-point for the discussions. A large proportion (75%) are gender-specific, i.e. they cannot (or could not) have male reference. Only six out of 222 occupational terms appear with referents of both genders.43

The terms with female reference fall into three groups as regards word type: 1) epicene terms; 2) female terms morphologically unmarked for gender, and 3) female terms morphologically marked for gender.

7.2.1. Epicene terms with female reference

(*= the corpus also contains records with male ref.)


The term apprentice from the French apprendre 'to learn' had a variant prentice that is now obsolete. Whether this form resulted from aphesis (loss of an initial unstressed syllable as in (a)lone, (e)squire etc.) or from mistaking the a in apprentice for an indefinite article is difficult to know. During the 18th century both forms were in use, although the circumstance that the two records of prentice come from texts from the first decades while the two records of apprentice appear in Wollstonecraft's texts, may indicate that prentice was in the process of disappearing.

The existence of four records of the term with female reference and none with male can hardly be representative of the work scene in the 18th century. Apprenticeships for women were few and far between and mainly sought for female orphans in need of stable employment (Hufton, 1995:94). Although apprenticeship in general is less common and less regulated in our century, the term apprentice is still in use.

A little Prentice Girl of mine has been for some time applied to by an Irish Fellow, who dresses very fine, and struts in a laced Coat, and is the

43 Records where the gender of the referent is unconfirmed are not included in the count.
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Adoration of Semstresses who are under Age in Town. (Steele, p.263)

...he was therefore easily prevailed on to bind me apprentice to one of my step-mother’s friends, who kept a slop-shop\textsuperscript{44} in Wapping. (Wollstonecraft, p.81)

The term \textit{attendant}, from the French \textit{attendre}, ‘to wait’, can mean either an accompanying person in an inferior position or a servant. Most records in the corpus reflect the first sense and are classified as ‘relational’, but there are a few that are clearly ‘occupational’. The term is still used in both senses in modern English, although the terms \textit{escort}, \textit{accompanying person} and \textit{assistant} appear to have replaced \textit{attendant} in many contexts. In the following example the \textit{attendant} is a keeper in a mental institution:

It is so cheering to see a human face... that Maria anxiously expected the return of the \textit{attendant}, as of a gleam of light to break the gloom of idleness. (Wollstonecraft, p. 64)

Two of the terms, \textit{author} and \textit{milliner} also had marked female variants at this time – \textit{authoress} and \textit{millineress}. The lack of records of these terms may imply that they were on the way out, possibly because women writers as well as women milliners were becoming quite common. Women writers, a rarity at the beginning of the 18th century, had rapidly increased in number and status during the course of the century. The rise of the novel had supplied middle and upper class women not only with entertainment but also with a socially acceptable outlet for their creativity. It is possible that by the end of the century there was nothing remarkable about a woman writing novels. The term \textit{author} may always have been epicene, just as the term \textit{writer} never had a female variant.

\textit{Milliner} originally meant “a vendor of fancy wares and articles of apparel of the sort manufactured in Milan, \textit{e.g.} ‘Milan bonnets’, ribbons, gloves, cutlery” (\textit{OED}). In

\textsuperscript{44} A shop selling cheap, ready-made clothes.
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later usage (and already in the 18th c.) the term designates someone who makes or sells articles of female apparel in general. As the OED quotes only one record of the female variant millineress, it may never have been a frequent term. Presumably, the making of bonnets was always a female-dominated craft and the term milliner epicene from the beginning.

Cook started out as a masculine term. Both in Old English and in Middle English it referred to the man in charge of the preparation of food in great households and other institutions (OED). In this sense it has survived only in some specific areas, e.g. in colleges and on board ships. In large households, hotels and restaurants cook has been replaced by chef, especially when the referent is male.

The OED gives two records of the female variant cookess, the latest one from 1552. It did not survive and from the 16th century onwards, cook as an occupational term has been applied also to women employed to cook in private families. In the present corpus only one out of nine records has a confirmed male referent. It may not be too far fetched to suggest that when the term cook began to include women, its value declined. Cook was therefore often replaced by chef, a French term which carries higher social status, when referring to men in charge of cooking.

The current usage seems to be in a state of change. The prototypical chef is still male, but examples with female reference do exist and as more women reach top positions in restaurants, the male bias in the term will probably weaken. That language users, at least middle-aged ones, still regard the term as male became apparent in a current cookery programme on British television, Fruits of the Sea. The presenter, himself a famous chef, was giving a master-class to experienced chefs, both male and female, and began the lesson by addressing them in the following way.

“Good morning, chefs, and ladies too...” (BBC2, 14.1.1998)

Another reason behind the above quotation may be a tendency to emphasize the
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gender rather than the activity when referring to a woman.45

The term *drudge* is thought to be related to the OE *dreogan* ('to work'), but since there are no records of the term before 1500, this origin is not established. It refers to a servant of the lowest kind, someone who has to carry out mean or distasteful work as in the following example from *Moll Flanders*:

> I was able to do but very little Service where ever I was to go, except it was to run of Errands, and be a *Drudge* to some Cook-maid, and this they told me often, which put me into a great Fright; (Defoe, p.46)

If a *drudge* was to be found on the lowest rung on the domestic ladder, a *housekeeper* was probably situated on the highest. She could even have her own parlour, as the housekeeper in *Pamela*.

> I smiled, and went to the *housekeeper* 's parlour; there sat good Mrs. Jervis at work, making a shift: (Richardson, p.42)

In earlier centuries, *housekeeper* had three main senses. It could mean the same as *householder* (an owner of a house); it could refer to a person managing a place of business, or it could mean a woman in charge of a household. In the first two senses, the term was epicene and often had male reference. It is likely that both of these senses were obsolete even in the 18th century and the prototypical *housekeeper* then, as now, was female. The male counterpart was *steward* or *house-steward*, also obsolete in the sense of 'manager of affairs of a house' in current English. The housekeeper was responsible for the moral behaviour among the servants as well as for the practical arrangements in the house. It was one of the few employments suitable for widows and other not so young women from the middle classes, as it required experience, some education and "high" moral standards (Hufton 1995:85).

*Superior*, used as an occupational term, falls into the ecclesiastical domain and refers to the head of a monastery or a nunnery. To become a *superior*, or *Mother

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45 See also the discussion about *maid* as an occupational term (p. 154-155).
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Superior as a female occupant of the post is often called, was one of the few career moves of importance open to women. The only record in the corpus comes from Mary Wollstonecraft and reflects a view of religious life that must have been rather non-conformist at the time.

In short, when they could be neither wives nor mothers, they aimed at being superiors, and became the most selfish creatures in the world: the passions that were curbed gave strength to the appetites, or to those mean passions which only tend to provide for the gratification of them. (Wollstonecraft, p.25)

The epicene term with most records is servant, 33 with female reference and 44 with male. If records with unspecified reference are included, the total number is twice as high, 153. This is not surprising, since domestic servants formed the largest occupational group in 18th century England. Servant was the generic term used for all categories of employees in a household, from butlers and housekeepers down to milkmaids and drudges.

7.2.2. Female terms not marked by the suffix -ess

bawd, housewife, landlady, maid (+ compounds), matron, nun, nurse, whore, woman (+compounds)

When the term bawd (of uncertain origin) first appeared in the 14th century, it denoted a go-between in sexual affairs. It could be applied to both genders and in most passages referred to men (OED). Gradually it acquired the more specific sense of ‘procurer’ or ‘procuress’ and as its sense deteriorated, its reference got a female bias. By 1700 the prototypical bawd was female and Phillips gives the following definition of the term in his dictionary of 1706: “Bawd, a leud Woman that makes it her Business to debauch others for Gain; a Procuress”. In modern English the term is sometimes used in the general sense of ‘prostitute’.

The following record of bawd from 1712 is also a good example of how the central terms wench and woman often acquired negative sexual meanings.
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It must not be Thought a Digression from my intended Speculation, to talk of Bawds in a Discourse upon Wenches; for a Woman of the Town is not thoroughly and properly such, without having gone through the Education of one of these Houses;... (Steele, p.268)

The terms wench and woman of the town in the above quotation were some of the euphemisms used for the more negatively loaded whore. Although the Indo-European root of whore is the positive *ka-, the origin of Latin carus (‘dear’, ‘beloved’) and Sw. kär (‘dear’), it has developed into one of the most derogatory terms in the language. It has been used for prostitutes since the 11th century, but whereas it once was a straightforward occupational term, used even in polite society, it is now confined to coarse and abusive language. It has a long history of being used in a more general sense of ‘lewd woman’ and sometimes, especially in the possessive form (his whore) as a term for ‘mistress’ or ‘concubine’. In the following record it is used as an occupational term.

I do not design to fall upon Failures in general, with Relation to the Gift of Chastity, but at present only enter upon that large Field, and begin with the Consideration of poor and publick Whores. (Steele, p.266)

Although the term housewife is most commonly applied to a married woman who manages the household of her family, the term can also refer to a woman employed to run a household, as in the following quotation from Miss Betty Thoughtless.

...and it must be acknowledged that, considering the shortness of the time, she had sufficient [alacrity] to have employed the most able and experienced housewife. (Haywood, p.499)

The term landlady, as used in the records in this corpus, also belongs to the domestic sphere, since it refers to women letting rooms. Taking lodgers has long been an acceptable way for women to earn money, especially suitable for widows left with a house but no employment. It was regarded as a fitting female occupation also in the 18th century, since it did not require the woman to leave the home.
In the 18th century both *clergywoman* and *nun* were terms for women in religious orders or sisterhoods. In an age when most women lacked financial means of supporting themselves, entering a convent was not always the result of a religious vocation, but could also serve as an escape from spinsterhood or unwanted arranged marriages. The sense of the OE *nunne* (from Lat. *nonna*) was 'child's nurse' and the term probably came from baby-talk (cf. *nanny*).

During the late 18th century *nun* was also used as a slang term for a prostitute and *abbess* for a procuress (Mills, 1989:180-181). The origin of this usage is to be found in the classic 'virgin'/whore' dichotomy in society's attitude towards women. The term *nun* is no longer applied to prostitutes, but the concept of the unchaste nun is still being used in various erotic art forms.

The following record of *nun* is full of sexual innuendo, although it does not explicitly refer to a prostitute:

> I value this precious relic, with its stigmata and pricks, more than all the relics of the Romish church - always excepting...the pricks which entered the flesh of St Radagunda in the desert, which in your road from FESSE to CLUNY, the nuns of that name will shew you for love. (Sterne, pp.532-532)

From the 10th century onwards *nun* has been used as a general term for women in various kinds of religious orders. The sense of *clergywoman* has changed, however. When some churches opened up the ministry to women in the later half of the 19th century, the term was adopted to refer to female pastors. Nowadays it may also be used jokingly about a clergyman's wife. The sense of 'nun' is obsolete.

Wrapped up in themselves, the nuns only thought of inferior gratifications. (Wollstonecraft, p.25)

And whence, cried Slop, jeeringly, hast thou all this knowledge of woman, friend? By falling in love with a popish *clergywoman*, said Trim. (Sterne, p.563)
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The only record of the term *matron* refers to a woman in charge of the domestic arrangements in a mental hospital. This special sense of *matron* first appeared in the 16th century, when it became socially accepted for unmarried women of some standing to occupy this type of semi-charitable, semi-professional position.

I thought of making myself known to the lady-like *matron*; but her forbidding countenance prevented me. (Wollstonecraft, p.90)

*Matron* is still used as an occupational term for women in charge of the domestic arrangements in schools and other public institutions. In hospitals it is often replaced by *superintendent*, probably a result of more and more men occupying the post (Mills, 1989:152). Although it is quite possible for a woman to be called *patron* or even *patroness* (e.g. ‘of the arts’, ‘of a restaurant’), it is still unacceptable for men to be called by such an obvious female term as *matron*. The original sense is ‘married woman’ (from Lat. *mater*). When used in this sense, the term is nowadays slightly pejorative with the added sense of middle-aged stolidity.

Although a common sense of the term *nurse* in English is ‘a woman who is trained to wait upon the sick’, the first and still current sense is ‘one who suckles or tends to a child’ (from Lat. *nutrire*, ‘nourish’). Out of the 34 records in the 18th century corpus, four refer to women employed to wait upon a sick person in the home, the rest to female servants looking after children. There is only one record of the term *wet-nurse*. The practice of hiring women to suckle and nurse babies was going out of fashion during the second half of the 18th century, as a result of more positive and loving attitudes towards children (see Ch.2, pp.35-36). The following example from the last decade of the century reflects, with its implied criticism, this new attitude towards child-rearing.

After the mother’s throes she felt very few sentiments of maternal tenderness; the children were given to *nurses*, and she played with her dogs. (Wollstonecraft, p.7)

Most gender-specific terms that have become epicene due to changes in attitudes and in society are originally male. *Nurse* is one of the few exceptions to the rule. So
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what is the reason behind the acceptance of the originally female term nurse for men employed to tend to the sick, when matron would be unacceptable? The answer may partly lie in the more obvious female origin of matron. Although traditionally all nurses were women, the term nurse in itself is morphologically unmarked for gender. The Swedish term sjuksköterska which nowadays is used also for male nurses, seems to contradict this argument. But there are usually several factors involved in the acceptance or non-acceptance of terms. In Sweden, the male variant sjukskötare was already taken up for another occupational role by the time male nurses appeared on the scene. Had this not been the case, it is likely that the male variant would have been used for male nurses. Whether or not the development eventually would have lead to sjukskötare becoming epicene and sjuksköterska going out of fashion in analogy with e.g. lärare/lärarinna (‘teacher’ M/F), is a matter for speculation.

Another contributing factor to the acceptance of nurse as an epicene term might be that the men who first chose to become nurses were less conventional and career-minded than those who wanted to be hospital managers. Hence they may have found it easier to accept a traditionally female occupational term.

Maid is by far the most frequent occupational term with female reference in the corpus. There are no less than 84 records of maid and its compounds chambermaid, cook-maid, dairymaid, handmaid, housemaid, milkmaid, servant-maid and waiting-maid. Within the domestic and private service domain there is a striking difference between male and female terms as regards number of terms. Although there are fewer records with male than with female reference, there are twice as many different terms for males in service. If compounds such as chambermaid and foot-boy are counted as tokens of maid and boy there are 32 tokens per term for females and only 12 for males. Whereas male servants were more often given specific terms or titles according to their tasks or occupational roles (e.g. butler, page, valet, scullion, groom
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and lacquey), 46 most female servants had to do with variations on the maid theme. The reason may be that their being ‘maids’ in the original sense of young, unmarried girls was of greater importance than their occupational role. Their work was seldom regarded as a proper career and they were often sacked if becoming pregnant or getting married (a pregnant maid being a contradiction in terms).

A similar sense development can be found in other languages. The sense of the Sw. piga changed over the centuries from ‘girl’ (cf. Norw. pike) to ‘young female servant’. The low status of piga as an occupational term led to its being replaced by hembiträde (‘home assistant’) in the 20th century, just as the English maid is now often replaced by domestic help.47

A female servant or attendant who had outgrown the term maid was often referred to as woman, mostly in the possessive form (her woman). There are 50 records of woman used as an “occupational” term.

My women, who threw all their cares upon their mistress, set their minds at ease from the time when they saw me treated with respect. (Johnson, p.93)

The compounds washwoman, workwoman, and woman of the town (one record of each in the corpus) refer to more specialised occupations. A washwoman (washerwoman in current Br.Eng.) took in washing, while a workwoman specialised in needlework (a sense that is now obsolete). A woman of the town was not analogous to a man of the world, but a euphemism for prostitute. Man by itself, on the other hand, is used in a similar manner to woman.

She sent this inventory by her own man, and instructed him to procure persons for bringing thither every thing belonging to Mademoiselle de Roquelair, (Haywood, p.545)

46 Note the French origin of several of these terms, which added to their status.

47 At the present time hembiträde has already acquired a slightly old-fashioned ring and is often replaced by hemhjälp (‘home help’).
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The use of the central terms man, woman, boy and maid as occupational terms in the field of domestic service may be seen as an example of what G. Lakoff (1987) and others call radial categorisation. This is one of the most common types of sense extension. The basic idea is that when words are used in new domains, new senses will radiate out from the basic central sense and polysemy may emerge. The central sense of woman, for example, contains the concepts of ‘female’ and ‘adult’. In the phrase her woman the term is used within another semantic domain, where a functional role rather than the basic concept of ‘female’ is highlighted. The sense of the term is now ‘female follower or servant’. In the phrase his woman the focus has changed again to another functional role in the domain of sexual relationships and the sense is ‘mistress’.

The results of such processes of sense extension are not arbitrary, as the possibilities for extension are determined by the basic sense of the terms. The possibility of the use of woman in the sense of ‘mistress’, for example, is dependent on its basic concept of ‘female’. However, the extension is not predictable, as not all terms with the basic concept of ‘female’ are used in the sense of ‘mistress’. Lakoff describes this type of sense extension as being motivated by the central case (1987:91), another example of motivation being a central phenomenon in human conceptual and linguistic systems (1987:346).48

So what are the motivating links between these four central terms and their use as occupational terms within the domain of domestic service? One obvious link may be called ‘common property’, as certain attributes were shared. The concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘age’, basic in the central category of terms for human beings, are also of importance in the domain of service. The functional roles in a household are (or were in the 18th century, at least) to a high degree dependent on the gender and age of the servant. Another motivating link may be described as a form of “mapping”. Just as the terms man, woman, boy and maid in their central category are very general, i.e. they

48 See also the discussion of metaphors in this volume (Ch.5).

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have few central concepts and therefore a wide reference, so are the functional roles they refer to when used within the service domain. The main concept here is 'service' or 'the master/servant relationship' (as emphasized by the frequent possessive constructions). When specific tasks that require training or experience are involved, the terms used are also more specific (e.g. cook, gardener). The lady of a house would hardly call her female cook her woman.

7.2.3. Female terms marked by the suffix -ess

In spite of the tendency in English to avoid gender-marked terms, few of the occupational terms formed with the suffix -ess in the corpus are yet obsolete. Some are rarely used, but the reason is often a scarcity of referents (e.g. shepherdess, procuress). As always, however, caution is required when interpreting the numbers of records in the corpus. Surprisingly large numbers of governess (26) and shepherdess (12) do not really reflect an abundance of 18th century women in these professions, but rather the fact that Sarah Fielding's The Governess is one of the texts used and within this novel a fairy-tale about a shepherdess is inserted.

Some -ess terms are semantically parallel to the male ones from which they are formed, i.e. they refer to occupations that can be practised by both men and women. In other cases either divergent senses have developed or the male and the female terms have had different senses from the beginning. The following terms in the corpus belong to the first category of parallel terms. (Brackets indicate that there are no examples of the male form)

(abbot) – abbess; actor – actress; poet – poetess; seamster – semstress; shepherd – shepherdess; tutor – tutoress

The terms abbot and abbess seem to be truly parallel in meaning. Just as abbot refers to the male superior of an abbey, abbess refers to the female superior of a
nunnery. The use of the term *superior* in both cases also suggests that these positions of power had similar status. However, the 18th century use of *abbess* as a slang term for 'procuress' does not seem to have been paralleled by any use of *abbot* in the sense of 'pimp' – another instance of how male terms avoid the sexual attribute values that are so readily acquired by their female counterparts.

The popular debate that is going on at present about the use of gender marked terms may give the impression that the current changes is something unprecedented and only due to so called political correctness. Such switches in usage between male and female terms are nothing new for our century, however, as is shown by the history of *actor/actress* (Table 21).

**Table 21. Gender changes in the terms *actor* and *actress*, 1500–2000.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (circa)</th>
<th>'doer'</th>
<th>'performer'</th>
<th>'doer'</th>
<th>'performer'</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1700</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M (E?)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the present as well as the 18th century senses of *actor* and *actress* are parallel when referring to stage performers, this has not always been the case. Originally, both terms were used in a general sense of 'doer'. This sense is now obsolete as regards *actress* and the male term *actor* is used for both male and female referents. In the dramatic sense, on the other hand, *actor* was used for both male and female performers until the latter part of the 17th century. Pepys refers to a female
performer by the term *actor* in his diary of 1666, while Dryden in 1700 talks about "the trade of love behind the scene, where *actresses* make bold with married men" (*OED*). The latter quotation suggests that the term *actress* had an attribute value of immorality that was not paralleled in the male term. As women had only recently been allowed onto the stages of professional theatres, actresses were regarded with suspicion. At the beginning of the century they were often associated or even equated with the prostitutes who found the theatre with its mix of people of all kinds a good place for attracting customers. The reputation of actresses improved over the century, however, partly as a result of their increasing connections with the aristocratic ladies who also played an important part in the theatre audience (Crouch, 1997:58-78). The sexual innuendo in the 20th century catch-phrase "as the bishop said to the *actress*" indicates that two centuries later, there is still an added meaning of 'loose morals' in the term *actress*.

A Sermon repeated after this Manner is like the Composition of a Poet in the Mouth of a graceful *Actor*. (Addison, p.218)

The Gentleman in the Strawberry Sash ... subscribed to every Opera this last Winter, and is supposed to receive Favours from one of the *Actresses*. (Steele, p.288)

Although *actor* is sometimes used to refer to female performers in current English, it seems as if *actress* is one of the -ess terms that may survive the current decline of gender terms. Some linguists have suggested that terms referring to an activity where gender plays a part stand a better chance of survival than those where gender is irrelevant to the activity. *Poetess* is on its way out, while *actress* will stay since there are roles that can only be played by women (Quirk et al., 1985:1549-1550).

*Semster* (*seamster, sempster*) and *semistress* (*seamstress, sempstress*) refer to male and female persons respectively whose occupation is sewing. Just as in the case of *actor*, the gender of *seamster* has fluctuated over the centuries. Although originally a

49 Cf. the survival in Sw. of *skådespelerska* ('actress'), *aktris* and *dansös* ('female dancer').
female formation (OE seam-estre which had a male counterpart seam-ere) the term was applied also to men at an early stage. In the 17th century the new female form semstress appeared and sempster gradually became exclusively male. Both terms refer to persons doing plain sewing and mending. During the 13th century a French male term, tailor, (Fr. tailleur) was borrowed for the more advanced work of cutting and making men’s clothes, sometimes also the clothes for women. Three centuries later a female form, tailoress, emerged. This term still exists but is rarely used.

...Corporal Trim (who to the character of an excellent valet, groom, cook, sempster, surgeon and engineer, superadded that of an excellent upholsterer too)... (Sterne, p. 521)

...an Irish Fellow, who dresses very fine, and struts in a laced Coat, and is the Admiration of Semstresses who are under Age in Town. (Steele, p.263)

...the corporal did not knock as oft as perchance your honour’s tailor - I might have taken my example something nearer home; for I owe mine, some five and twenty pounds at least, and wonder at the man’s patience - (Sterne, p.590)

Although there are 20 records of the terms shepherd and shepherdess, not one of them has an 18th century British person as referent. In most cases the terms are used about rustic characters in the pastoral literary tradition. They either refer to persons in tales told within a novel (Fielding) or inhabitants of foreign lands (Johnson, Sterne). The reason may be that the task of tending sheep had become less common in England because of the enclosures (see Ch.2, p.25-26). Sheep within enclosed areas probably do not need looking after in the same way as sheep that are roaming freely.

The Queen ... espied a young Shepherdess, not much older than the Princess Hebe, but possessed of such uncommon and dazling Beauty, that it was some time before she could disengage her Eyes from so agreeable

---

50 Whether the term shepherdess has ever been used as an ordinary occupational term is doubtful. The OED gives the definition “A female shepherd; a woman or girl who tends sheep; also fig. Also in pastoral poetry”, but none of the quotations given is a clear example of occupational usage.
Chapter 7

an Object. (Fielding, p.79)

Their way lay through fields, where shepherds tended their flocks, and the lambs were playing upon the pasture. (Johnson, p.49)

At first glance tutor and tutoress seem to be parallel terms in the field of education. According to the OED a tutor is a person 'employed in the supervision and instruction of a youth in a private household' and a tutoress is 'a female tutor; an instructress, a governess'. There are differences, however. To the definition of the male term is added 'Also, one engaged to travel abroad with one or more pupils'. It is doubtful whether that definition would ever have applied to tutoress.

Her husband set off for the continent the same day, with a tutor, to finish his studies at one of the foreign universities. (Wollstonecraft, p.15)

... by this and some other of my talk, my old Tutoress began to understand me, about what I meant by being a Gentlewoman; (Fielding, p.50)

There is also a special sense of 'supervisor of undergraduates', originally found in Oxford and Cambridge but nowadays also used in other colleges and universities. Although the female term tutoress may possibly be used in this context, it is highly unusual.51 In English tutor is an epicene term.

The following terms belong to the second category, i.e. male and female terms that are linguistically in parity but not semantically (terms within brackets have no records in the corpus):

governor – governess; (launderer) – laundress; master – mistress; (procurer) – procuress

During the last decades many linguists (e.g. Kleparski, 1990) have stressed the tendency for male terms to keep or improve positive meanings while female terms often deteriorate. The lack of parity between governor and governess is a case in point.

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51 It is included in the list of -ess terms that are now obsolete in R.W. Burchfield's third edition of Fowler's Modern English Usage (Burchfield, 1996).
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Originally, both terms were applied to rulers, to persons who governed provinces or countries. Queen Elizabeth I, for example, referred to herself as a *governess* (Spender, 1980:18). Both terms could also be used for someone in charge of a young person’s education. Gradually the two terms parted company. *Governor* kept its sense of ‘ruler’ but became obsolete in the sense of ‘tutor’, while *governess* kept its sense of ‘tutor’ and lost its sense of ‘ruler’. The male term retained the wider concept of ‘power’, while the female kept the narrower concept of ‘domesticity’. While in the 18th century the term *governess* was still applied to female school teachers, in the 20th century its domain has become even smaller, as it refers mainly to tutoring in the home.

He was honest, frugal and diligent, but of mean sentiments, and narrow comprehension: he desired only to be rich, and to conceal his riches, lest he should be spoiled by the *governours* of the province. (Johnson, p.19)

Then you will have the pleasure of having caused the Quiet of the whole School; your *Governess* will love you; and you will be at Peace in your Mind... (Fielding, p.8)

In recent years in England the term *governor* has found a new use within the school domain and as a result has become a household term. When elected governing bodies consisting of parents, politicians and teachers were introduced in comprehensive schools, the members of these bodies were given the title *school governor*, regardless of gender. The reason behind the omission of the female form may be that it was already being used in another sense within the field of education. Another reason may be that using the *-ess* form for an activity where gender plays no part would seem outdated in England of the nineties.

The terms *launderer* and *launderess* also have a varied history. In the 14th century the occupational term for someone who washed linen was *launder* and it was applied to both men and women. In the 16th century it was gradually being replaced by the extended form *launderer* which was also used as an epicene term. About the same time a specifically female variant, *laundress*, appeared. Although *laundress* was gaining...
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ground, launderer continued to be used also with female reference. It has now become obsolete in British English (although still used in American English) and the term laundry-man has been introduced for men working in a laundry. The pair launderer/launderess is a rare example of occupational terms where the female -ess variant has survived while the male variant has disappeared. The reason may be that the majority of persons employed in this field are women. A term that is in frequent use often stands a better chance of survival than one that is rare.

My shirts!... - I never had but six, and a cunning gipsy of a laundress at Milan cut me off the fore-laps of five - (Sterne, p.599)

Master and mistress are terms with multiple meanings, some of which are parallel, others highly disparate. A master (head) of an Oxford college may have a mistress but the senses are far from symmetrical. Among the occupational uses of these terms, there are some, however, that are in parity. The only difference between a school master and a school mistress is the gender of the referent. Until the 15th century both terms were also used for tutors of both genders who instructed young persons in the home. From that century stems the first recorded use of mistress for ‘concubine’ (OED), which may be the cause of the disappearance of the term for a female ‘home tutor’. The risk of ambiguity is obvious. Having a master come to your house did not arouse the same suspicions, as the male term never acquired such sexual attribute values. This is an example of what G. Leech calls “reflected meaning”, i.e. when a special sense of a word is actualized even when the word is used in a different sense (1981:16-17). This phenomenon is especially common when the sense in question is of a sexual nature and it often leads to avoidance of the word also in other contexts.

The compound school-master apart, most of the records of master and its various combinations (dancing-master, singing-master, writing-master) refer to instructors of a specific skill or art, rather than to tutors in general. ‘Mastering a skill’ seems to be an important concept in this use of the term, in addition to the concept of ‘teaching’.
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Out of 18 records of master (+combinations) used as an occupational term, two refer to captains of merchant vessels and the other sixteen to tutors of various kinds.

The five records of the occupational mistress all refer to school teachers.

As I was supposed to trade without connexion with my father, it was easy for me to become acquainted with the master of a ship, and procure a passage to some other country. (Johnson, p.21)

...the Lady had Masters home to the House to teach her daughters to Dance, and to speak French, and to Write, and others to teach them Musick; (Defoe, p.55)

"...I hate all my School-fellows: And yet I dare not do them any Mischief; for my Mistress will punish me severely if I do." (Fielding, p.9)

The development of the terms procurer/procuress is similar to that of launderer/laundress. Procurer in the sense of “one who procures women for the gratification of lust” (OED) was first used as an epicene term. In the 18th century the female -ess variant appeared. The -er form continued to be used also with female reference, although the exclusively female term was gaining ground. As mentioned earlier, bawd changed from being an epicene term to becoming prototypically female during the same period. The male term pimp may have filled the gap as regards male reference. Pimp is recorded from the beginning of the 17 century and is still in frequent use today, while bawd, although not yet declared obsolete, has an old-fashioned ring to it.

...but who should I see there but the most artful Procuress in the Town, examining a most beautiful Country-Girl, who had come up in the same Waggon with my things. (Steele, p. 268)

The suffix -ess, which came into the language from French during the ME period and replaced the native -ster as a female suffix, was highly prolific until the middle of the 19th century. Although it is probably no longer a living formative suffix there are still some -ess terms about that seem to stand a good chance of survival (Burchfield,
Several of the occupational terms found in the corpus belong to this category (abbess, actress, governess, procuress, seamstress). Whether there are any logical reasons for the survival of certain terms and the decline of others, is difficult to tell. The argument that the -ess term survives, if gender is of importance to the activity, seems plausible in some cases (actress). Sometimes survival may be due purely to chance or to a particular cultural environment. The term mayoress, which in this corpus appears only as a title for the wife of a mayor, has survived as the term for a female mayor in American English. Although in British English female holders of the office are usually called mayor, a change may be on its way. In the 1999 election campaign for the office of Lord Mayor of London, there were several possible female candidates. Whether a successful woman candidate would have been addressed by the doubly male title of Lord Mayor or by the contradictory term Lord Mayoress as used in *The Independent on Sunday* (1.3.1998) is not clear.52

7.3. Gender and semantic domains

Figure 14 in the introduction to this chapter shows a large discrepancy in numbers between male and female reference for both terms and tokens. As the proportions vary greatly across the occupational spectrum, the records have been split up into the following domains:

Private and domestic service; education; religion; crafts, industry and commerce; the arts; prostitution; farming; science; politics, law and administration; military and maritime; miscellaneous.

7.3.1. Private and domestic service

There is not a great difference in numbers of records within this domain as regards

52 Such contradictions are not impossible, as shown by the Sw. *Fru Talman* ('Mrs Speaker'), the standard term of address to a female Speaker of the House in the Parliament.
gender of reference (Table 22). Female servants dominated inside the house, but there was also a demand for male servants to look after the gardens, care for and drive the horses and carriages, deliver messages and assist their employers in a variety of ways. It should be remembered, however, that for men domestic service was only one of many areas of employment. Only about 20% of the tokens of occupational terms with male reference fall into this category, while the corresponding figure for female reference is 70%.

Table 22. Private and domestic service domain. Terms and tokens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms with Fem. Ref</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Terms with Male Ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attendant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>attendant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cook</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>boy (+comp.)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drudge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>butler</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housekeeper</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housewife</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>domestic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maid (+comp.)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse (+comp.)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>groom</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servant (+comp.)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>helper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman (+comp.)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>house-stewart</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lacquey</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>man (+comp.)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>page</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>scullion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>servant (+comp.)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>valet (+de chambre)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there are more tokens with female reference than with male, there are much fewer terms (25 tokens per term for females, 12 for males). There is, in other words, a greater variety of terms for male servants. Whereas female servants were denoted by
Chapter 7

terms in plain English, often variations on the basic *maid* and *servant*, their male counterparts were often referred to by more specific terms for different occupations. The obvious French origin of several of the male terms may also have enhanced their status.

7.3.2. Education

The second largest area of female employment in the corpus is education (Table 23). The figures should probably not be taken as representative of society as a whole, since the setting of one of the novels is a girls’ school where all the teachers are women (*The Governess*). Most of the records with female reference come from this book.

**Table 23. Education. Terms and tokens.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>governess</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>fellow</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mistress</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>instructor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutoress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lecturer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>master (+comb.)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>professor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tutor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern that emerges is similar to the one found in the domain of private and domestic service. There are a few more tokens with female reference; still, there are twice as many terms with male reference. Although women were allowed to work in education, it was only within strict limits. As universities were inaccessible, there are of course no records with female reference of the terms *fellow*, *lecturer* or *professor*. In an 18th century corpus this is not surprising. It is rather more surprising that no female referents were allowed for the term *fellow* in some Oxford colleges until the late 1970s.

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7.3.3. Religion

Table 24. Religion. Terms and tokens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abbess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>archbishop</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clergywoman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>bishop</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nun</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>cardinal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>chaplain</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>church-warden</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clergyman</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dean</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>divine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>minister</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>parson</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prelate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>priest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prior</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vicar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Terms:          | 4      | Terms:        | 18     |
| Tokens:         | 13     | Tokens:       | 61     |

Convents not only provided refuge and a home for unmarried women, they also offered them a respectable, although hardly a lucrative, career. Yet, also within the religious domain, their opportunities were confined to a few positions (Table 24). To men the church offered a career with a whole series of gradations, some of which (e.g. archbishop, cardinal, pope) are still unobtainable for women, while others have just recently become accessible (e.g. priest and vicar). Although the term vicar is still prototypically male in England, the gender bias is quickly disappearing, partly due to the popularity of some current British television and radio series which feature female
vicars (The Vicar of Dibley and The Archers).

7.3.4. Crafts, industry and commerce

The broad domain called 'crafts, industry and commerce' is one of the areas where women are known to have played a part. The small female proportion of terms and tokens is therefore somewhat surprising (Table 25).

It is of course possible that these figures are not very representative due to some bias inherent in the source. To some extent they may result from the texts being mainly a product of and for the middle classes. Many of the terms with male reference do not, however, refer to upper or middle class characters, but rather to minor characters from the lower classes or from the lower section of the middle classes. Another explanation may be that women were a hidden work force in this domain (Hufton, 1995:91). Wives and daughters were often employed in workshops and other family businesses, but what they could and could not do was circumscribed by guild rules and regulations. Even if they were the ones who made the sausages and meat pies in a butcher's shop, it was the husband or father who was termed butcher. The women did not enjoy the professional identity that comes with an occupational term.

It is not surprising that most of the terms with female reference that do appear in the corpus come from the area of female clothing and fashion. The increasing wealth of the middle classes had led to an expansion of the trade in women's fashion. This was a relatively new domain that was not controlled by the old, male guilds. Nor were the latter particularly interested in gaining control since the margins for profits were small (Hufton, 1995:93).
Table 25. Crafts, industry and commerce. Terms and tokens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apprentice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>artificer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laundress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>artisan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milliner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>banker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sempstress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>barber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workwoman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>bookseller</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cake-baker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>draper</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>engineer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>haberdasher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hair-dresser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inn-keeper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mercer</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>merchant(+man)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>milliner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pedlar</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>perfumer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>publisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sempster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shopkeeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shopman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>smith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>steward</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>stock-jobber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sword-cutler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>taylor</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trader</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tradesman</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>undertaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>upholsterer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>weaver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms: 5  Terms: 34
Tokens: 11  Tokens: 108
Chapter 7

7.3.5. Art, drama, music and literature

Although a few women writers achieved a certain fame during the Restoration (e.g. Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn) and although women were admitted onto the stage to act the female parts during the same period, it was the 18th century that saw the first upsurge of female activity within arts and culture. To a large extent they were 'consumers' – readers, spectators, collectors and patrons (!) of cultural activities – but, during the latter part of the century in particular, they also became contributors (Brewer, 1997:76-80). Their impact on the literary field was most noticeable, but there were also famous women painters (Angelika Kauffmann), singers (Elisabeth Linley) and actors (Elizabeth Griffith). A greater proportion of female reference within this cultural domain could therefore have been expected (Table 26).

Table 26. Art, drama, music and literature. Terms and tokens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>actress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>actor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>author</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>artist</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poetess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ballad-singer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>critic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poet</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sonneteer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>writer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of the growing female contribution to the arts, a professional woman artist was still looked upon with suspicion, by women as well as by men. Talent in itself was admired and respected, but the public exhibition of talent was not compatible with the concept of 'female'. While women often criticized professional female artists for neglecting their roles as wives and mothers, male criticism was often concerned with the effeminating effect they were supposed to have on culture (Brewer, 1997:80). Such
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attitudes may have played a role in keeping down the numbers of female terms and tokens within this field. Arts as professions were not yet part of the female ideal.

7.3.6. Prostitution

Prostitution is the one domain within the semantic field of occupational terms where the male/female proportions are reversed. There is only one term with male reference, *whore-master* (1), and three with female reference, *bawd* (3), *procuress* (1) and *whore* (3). Although the female dominance is obvious, the paucity of records may paint a false picture of the real situation. It is well-known that prostitution was widespread and involved a considerable number of women. Still, it was probably a topic to be avoided in polite circles, especially in the presence of middle-class women who made up a large part of the readership. Six of the records come from *The Spectator* and the remaining two from *Moll Flanders*, a novel which to some extent takes place in the underworld.

7.3.7. Farming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(shepherdess)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>husbandman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>planter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(shepherd)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>squire</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>woodman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yeoman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Terms:</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tokens:</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One female term, *shepherdess*, prevents the domain of farming from being totally male (Table 27). However, since none of the records of *shepherd* and *shepherdess* refer to characters in 18th century England, these terms have been put in brackets to indicate that caution is required in interpreting the data.

The sense of *husbandman* within this context is 'a man who cultivates the soil; a
farmer' and does not include the concept of 'marriage'. It is closer to its Old Norse origin *husbondi*, which referred to a freeholder in his capacity of being the master or the head of the household (cf. Sw. *husbonde*). As the head of a household was also the master of his wife, *husband* soon acquired the second sense of 'married man in relation to his wife'. The term *husbandman* was sometimes employed for the same purpose, a usage that is now obsolete. A third sense of *husbandman*, which has also died out, is 'a thrifty man'. This latter sense probably developed out of the necessity for small farmers to be thrifty in order to eke out a living.

*Planter* is still another term for farmer, 'one who plants in the soil'. *Woodman* can mean either 'huntsman' or 'someone who looks after the trees in a forest'. As hunting and forestry were often part of farming, the term is included in this domain. A *yeoman* within this context is a farmer somewhere between *husbandman* and *squire* in social standing. The *OED* defines *yeoman* as "a man holding a small landed estate; esp. one who cultivates his own land", whereas a *squire* refers to "a country gentleman or landed proprietor". A *yeoman* could be found working in his fields, but probably not a *squire*.

There are several possible explanations for the absence of female referents in the domain of farming. Firstly, fewer women worked in farming, partly as a result of the enclosure that had turned farmers' wives into 'ladies' and confined farm labourers' wives to housework after the abolition of the common plots. Secondly, there were no special occupational terms for women within this field. They may have been referred to by more general terms such as *woman* or *maid*. Thirdly, since most of the terms also include the concept of ownership of land, all but a few women were excluded. Lastly, farming was not part of the female ideal of the 18th century and therefore there was little mention of women farmers in the novels. Which of these factors are the more important is difficult to know; they probably all contribute in some way to the imbalance between male and female reference.

53 However, the cognate term *husbandry* has survived both in the sense of 'the business of a farmer' and 'thrift'.
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7.3.8. Exclusively male domains

Three domains have no female reference at all: 1. science; 2. politics, law and administration, and 3. the military and maritime domain. Although this was to be expected, the large numbers of both terms and tokens are a poignant reminder of how many options were closed to women.

Science (Terms: 10. Tokens: 65)

(Science is interpreted in a broad sense which includes all academic fields as well as medical practices of various kinds.)

alchemist (1), apothecary (3), astronomer (2), doctor (11), historian (8), mountebank (1), philosopher (12), physician (22), physiologist (1), scholar (2), surgeon (3)

An occupational term that is missing from the above list is scientist itself. The term science was borrowed from French in the 14th century and well established in the 18th, but its agent noun scientist is a relative newcomer. Along with the great advances in science in the 19th century arose a need for a collective name for ‘students of the material world’ and in 1834 the term scientist was put forward at a meeting by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (OED). It quickly gained ground and has become an indispensable term in modern society. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Isaac Newton, possibly the greatest scientist of all, was referred to by the term philosopher.

A term that is rarely used nowadays is mountebank. A mountebank was an itinerant quack who ‘mounted a bench’, i.e. tried to sell his pills and potions to his audience from an elevated platform. From the very beginning (late 16th c.) the term had the second derogatory sense of ‘charlatan’ (OED).

In his book Words in Time (1988:229), G. Hughes gives physician as an example of “dissociation”, the borrowing of foreign terms in order to impress or mystify the laity. The Anglo-Saxon leech (probably related to Sw. läkare) was first replaced by the Latin doctor, which “in recent years ... is being replaced by the Greek physician”. The
records in this corpus (11 tokens of *doctor*, 22 of *physician*) indicate that this was a process that started as early as the 18th century. It is noteworthy that the only surviving medical title of Anglo-Saxon origin is a female term, *midwife*.

*Politics, law and administration (Terms: 35. Tokens: 90)*


The above list underlines the fact that policy-making, law-making and law-enforcing were totally in the hands of men. This does not mean, however, that women played no part at all in politics and public life, only that they were barred from voting and from holding positions of power. A minority of women – those who by birth or marriage were members of families that formed the political elite – did take an active part in politics, especially at the local level (Chalus, 1997:151-178). They were not only expected to perform traditional female duties in the social life of politics, but also to play an important role as canvassers in electoral campaigns for family seats. Although several women among the aristocracy were in effect politicians with considerable influence (e.g. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire), there is no trace of them in the vocabulary. As in many other areas, women’s work was hidden since they held no formal positions and consequently could not be referred to by occupational terms.

Only five of the terms in this field have female variants in current English (*ambassador / ambassadress, mayor / mayoress, governor / governess, alderman / alderwoman, statesman / stateswoman*). The first two, *ambassadress* and *mayoress* are mainly used about the wives of ambassadors and mayors and the sense of *governess* is not parallel to that of *governor*. *Alderman* began as a title of an alderman’s wife, but
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as early as 1768 it was used about a woman holding the position of an alderman (OED), possibly one of the first political positions open to women.

Although the term stateswoman nowadays refers to a woman who takes an important part in the governing of a state, its sense in the 17th and 18th century was more general, 'a woman interested in public affairs'. The following quotation from 1715 suggests that such women may have been the object of ridicule rather than admiration (OED).

Of this kind are the Passions of our Stateswomen, and the Reasoning of our Fox-hunters. (Addison, Freeholder, No. 45)

The reason for the scarcity of female variants may be that most of the terms could not have female referents until the 20th century, by which time the need for gender-marked terms was less strongly felt and the female suffix -ess had become less productive.

Military and maritime (Terms: 15. Tokens: 264)

boatswain (1), captain (68), colonel (5), commander (2), corporal (126), fisherman (1), general (3), horseman (2), lieutenant-colonel (1), mate (5), officer (16), sailor (7), soldier (23), warrior (1), waterman (3)

This domain offers a conspicuous example of the pitfalls inherent in pure word-counting without contextual analysis. 18th century society was not overpopulated by corporals, as the number of tokens may suggest. They all come from Tristram Shandy, where corporal Trim is often referred to only by the corporal. Likewise, the number of tokens of captain is probably misrepresentative, although to a lesser extent. Nineteen of the records come from Evelina and are used in a way similar to corporal. It is difficult to find a way around this problem, since it is not always possible to decide when such a term is used instead of a proper name and not as an occupational term in the ordinary sense of the word. The method used in this study has been to count such terms only when they are not used in combination with a personal name (see Ch.1,
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p.16). In spite of this, caution is always required when interpreting figures, as clearly shown in this semantic field.54

The lack of female reference is not surprising. Until very recently, both the sea and the battlefields have been totally male dominated. While most of the terms in the domain of politics, law and administration would now be regarded as epicene, most of the terms in this field are still male.

7.3.9. Miscellaneous

A number of terms do not fit into any of the domains discussed so far, but are at the same time too disparate to form domains of their own. Also in this collection of terms, the ratio male/female is about four to one, both as regards terms and tokens (Table 28).

One of the two terms with female reference, landlady, belongs to the domestic sphere, although it does not refer to someone in service. The terms with male reference cover a wider area, ranging from the court (courtier) to the coffee-house (waiter).

54 This misrepresentation should also be borne in mind when studying Figure 14 in this chapter. The male bias as regards tokens is probably shown as more pronounced than it should be.
Chapter 7

Table 28. Miscellaneous terms and tokens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>landlady</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>courtier</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matron</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>gladiator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>guide</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>herald</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>jockey</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>keeper</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>magician</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pioneer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>postillion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>recruit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sentinel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>superintendent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>waiter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>workman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terms:</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Terms:</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tokens:</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tokens:</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4. Discussion

The problems associated with using fiction in a study of this kind become most apparent in the semantic field of occupation. Terms within this area are to a greater extent dependent on the settings of the texts than is the case with central, characterising and relational terms. As most of the novels deal with relationships and character development of individuals among the middle classes, there are, for example, not many opportunities for occupational terms of the types used in workshops and industries to appear. The most noticeable feature of the data, the large discrepancy in numbers between records with male and female reference, is partly due to the texts being novels. Another reason is that, linguistically, the work carried out by women (and the majority of women did work) was to a large extent invisible. Women working in a family
business, for example, were not referred to by occupational terms. They were a hidden work force.

The hidden character of women's work is reflected in the paucity of terms with female reference. A smaller number of tokens was foreseen, but the gender difference in the ratio of terms to tokens was larger than expected. There are on average 10 records per term with female reference, only 5.6 with male. The difference would be even more pronounced, if the disproportionate amount of records of certain occupational titles (e.g. captain and corporal) were disregarded.  A lack of terms with female reference in areas closed to women at the time was of course to be expected. The small number of such terms in areas where women outnumbered men was more surprising.

The social status of an occupation is closely linked to its name. If a job carried out has no name, it tends to go unnoticed. In spite of recent efforts to improve the status of housewife (in its modern sense), it does not carry occupational prestige comparable to that of cook or launderess, although the tasks are similar. The two main concepts in housewife are positional and relational. What is seen as important in this role is the home and the married status, not the work carried out. Similarly, unspecific terms such as maid and servant, where the main underlying concepts are 'virginity' and 'serving', do not lend their referents an occupational identity equal to that of e.g. gardener or butler.

The difference in the ratio of terms to tokens can be seen as a reflection of a society where women's work was regarded as less important and consequently less valued. Care must be taken, however, not to impose 20th century values and aspirations on these results. Women from the lower classes in the 18th century did not generally aspire towards interesting paid employment as a goal in itself. Their work was often a means of accumulating money and material goods for a future marriage. Nor was professional work an aim for middle class 'ladies', although such aspirations begin to appear in

55 The fact that such occupational terms are used as a substitute for proper names also reflects the close connection between the man and his occupational role.
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Wollstonecraft's writings towards the end of the century. A woman's identity and social status were dependent on other factors.

Another pattern emerging from the results is graphically illustrated by the pie charts of terms with male and female reference in different occupational domains (Fig. 15). If the home, which encompasses most of the terms within the private and domestic service domain, is taken as the centre, the further away from the home an occupational domain is situated, the smaller the slice of the pie for women (or proportion of terms with female reference).

**Figure 15. Proportions of terms with female reference (grey) and male reference (black) in different occupational fields**

The two centres of female activity, 'home' and 'prostitution', represent the classic dichotomy in the concept of 'woman'. The home, as the place for woman as 'wife' and 'mother', is also the centre for accepted female occupation, *i.e.* serving the family in various ways. The area of prostitution is the centre for woman as 'whore'. Although this role was socially unacceptable, the passing from one of these domains to the other was
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not unheard of for women at the lower end of the domestic ladder. The step from prostitution to domestic service was less common than vice versa, but it was not impossible. The majority of terms with female reference within the arts domain refer to writing, an activity that is typically performed in the home. Likewise, the educational terms with female reference in the corpus mostly cover activities closely linked to the home or taking place in home-like settings.

It must be remembered that the figures based on these data are not claimed to represent "the truth" in a strictly scientific sense. There are some freak results due to topical imbalances in texts (although probably less so as regards proportions of terms than of tokens) that make such claims too audacious. Nor is it possible to offer any stringent definitions of such expressions as "further away from". This should be understood in a general or "fuzzy" sense, where both geographical and psychological concepts play a part. These caveats apart, the general trends that emerge from the results agree with and reinforce a picture of the occupational scene in 18th century England that is also found in other disciplines of study.
RELATIONAL TERMS

8.1. Introduction

Human beings are indeed social animals. Half of all the records in the corpus fall into the “relational” category, a stark reminder of the large extent to which human beings are defined by their relations to each other and to society. Admittedly, this high proportion of relational terms is partly a result of the texts being novels, as novels more often than most other genres deal with personal relationships and social life in general.

Whereas the occupational field is male dominated, the relational field has a female bias, albeit not as pronounced. A larger percentage of all the records with female reference belongs to the relational category (54%) than the corresponding percentage of records with male reference (48%). The female writers also use relational terms more often than do male writers (56% of all records by female writers are relational; the proportion for male writers is 45%).

The category of relational terms comprises not only family and other inter-personal terms but also terms that refer to a person’s standing in relation to other people in society, i.e. his or her social status and group affiliations. It is split up into the following subfields that will be analysed separately.

Family and marital relationships; Love, sexual relations and friendship; Other inter-personal relationships; Social standing; Political and religious affiliation

Due to the large number of terms and tokens within the relational category, only general trends and a selection of individual terms of special interest will be discussed.

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56 In the classification of records, terms referring to habitation (e.g. inhabitant, tenant, townsman) are also included in the relational category. Partly because this is a somewhat dubious classification and partly because this sub-field yielded very few records, they are left out of the discussion.
8.2. Family and marital relationships

This is a broad category that includes not only central family terms such as daughter, brother, niece but also family-related terms like orphan, guardian and heir. The female dominance is clear: 59% of the records have female referents, 41% male. The pattern as regards the ratio terms/tokens that was found in the previous chapter is repeated also in this category. Whereas the ratio of terms/tokens with female reference is 40.9, the ratio with male reference is 35.3.

A league table for the most frequent terms in the field will be used as a starting-point (Table 29).

Table 29. The 10 most frequent terms with female and with male reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fem. Ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Male Ref.</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>uncle</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cousin</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>widow</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>nephew</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mamma</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>parent</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niece</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>relation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>papa</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1240</td>
<td></td>
<td>1110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.1. Parents and children

The high frequency of parental terms is largely a result of subject matter. Young men and women in the process of finding their place in life are the central characters in
many of the texts. In the 18th century parents probably played a more important part in this process than now, especially as far as daughters were concerned. In the middle classes in particular, girls were totally dependent on their parents or their brothers until a husband took over. It seems plausible that the difference in number of records with male and female reference as regards terms that denote ‘offspring’, reflects a difference in degree of dependence on parents. There are altogether 298 occurrences of such terms with female reference – daughter, offspring, babe, child – while there are only 76 tokens of similar terms with male reference (son, child, issue).

The long established terms mother and father dominate the parental field, but two newcomers, mamma and papa are also found among the top ten. The first recorded usage of these latter terms stems from the end of the 17th century (OED). The stress was mostly on the second syllable in both cases, a reflection of their French origin. They were first introduced by the upper class, where they were used by adults as well as by children. Later on they spread downwards in the social structure but continued to represent polite or genteel usage. Nowadays they are regarded as slightly old-fashioned even when used by children. The fact that all the records in the corpus come from female writers, may be another result of the female tendency to use more polite language.

On this my good Mamma bid me remember how much my Brother’s superior Strength might assist me in his being my Protector; and that I ought in return to use my utmost Endeavours to oblige him; (Fielding, p.15)

The most common terms used by English children in our century, mum/mummy and dad/daddy, were in use long before mamma and papa appeared. Their near-absence in the corpus (there is one record of daddy) probably reflects the middle class character of the texts, as these terms represented rustic and childish usage at the time.

‘Molly and Jacky were grown such little darlings, she was almost angry that daddy did not see their tricks[... ] Jacky could say papa with such a sweet voice, it must delight his heart. (Wollstonecraft, p.99)
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Another conspicuous near-absence in the league table is that of terms for grand-parents. There are seven records in total of the terms grand-mother, grand-mamma and grand-father in the corpus, surprisingly few in comparison to the 103 records of cousin and 39 records of niece and nephew. One reason may lie in the English family setting in the 18th century. It was not common for several generations to live together, as it was in many other cultures at the time. Another reason may be found in the shorter life expectancy. Not many people lived long enough to be grand-parents, at least not to adult grand-children. The relatively high frequency of widow, widower and step-mother (49 in total) is probably also a reflection of the shorter life span.

8.2.2. Collateral terms

The higher quantity of records of husband (201) than of wife (147) and of brother (243) than of sister (206) may be purely accidental. However, when considering that the same pattern is found for father (476) and mother (423) and also for uncle (42) and aunt (12), the suspicion arises that these numbers also may reflect the structure of power and dependency within the family. Brothers were more powerful than sisters, fathers than mothers, uncles than aunts. Terms of power were more in agreement with the concept of ‘male’ and may therefore have been more readily used. As a contrast, the term daughter has nearly three times as many records as its counterpart son, a term with an attribute value of ‘dependency’.

As pointed out by Kleparski (1998:152-153) the female kinship terms mother, sister and aunt have all been used in the sense of ‘bawd’ or ‘prostitute’ at some time or other. In The Winter’s Tale, for example, Shakespeare uses the term aunt in this sense when Autolycus sings about ”...summer songs for me and my aunts while we lie tumbling in the hay” (Act IV, scene 3). The term daughter, on the other hand, has never acquired such second meanings. The only male kinship term with a sexual second sense is uncle, which may be used in the sense of ‘mother’s lover’. This is a recent usage, however, the first record in the OED stemming from the 1960’s. Whether or not such pejorative use
of kinship terms has any bearing on the quantitative differences found between the collateral terms, is a matter for speculation.

There are six records of bachelor in the corpus, none of spinster. In the 18th century bachelor had already been used to designate unmarried men for several centuries, while its female counterpart spinster was a relative newcomer in this context. Although the latter had been adopted as the legal term for unmarried women in the 17th century, it may still not have been widely used. The preferred way of referring to older unmarried women seems to have been a collocation with maid or maiden.

...besides, it was necessary she should have a female companion, and there was not any maiden aunt in the family, or cousin of the same class. (Wollstonecraft, p.15)

Although bachelor and spinster are parallel as regards the sense of ‘unmarried’, their origins are different as regards social status. The first sense of bachelor is “a young knight, not old enough, or having too few vassals, to display his own banner, and who therefore followed the banner of another” and the first sense of spinster is “a woman (or rarely a man) who spins” (OED). Thus bachelor has an upper class origin while spinster comes from the working-class. This may be one of the reasons for the lack of records of spinster, another possible reason being its use as a colloquial term for ‘harlot’ during a period between circa 1620 and 1720 (Mills, 1989:226-227). This latter sense may have derived from the term spinning-house, which was a place of correction for “fallen women” where the inmates were forced to spin (cf. Sw. spinnhus, an 18th century institution which served the same purpose).

The two terms still carry very different axiological meanings. As old attitudes of contempt for women without husbands still linger in the term spinster, it tends to be avoided in current English. Instead, unmarried women are referred to by a collocation with single (the term maiden hardly being appropriate in many cases) or even by

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57 For a detailed analysis of the sense development of spinster see Persson, 1994:169-177.
bachelor (-girl), a term with a more “swinging” image. It remains to be seen whether bachelor may eventually replace spinster and become a truly epicene term for unmarried persons.

But sense developments are never totally predictable. Recent findings on the Internet indicate a possible comeback for the term spinster (Persson, 2000: in press). A group of women in America are reclaiming spinster as a positive term for unmarried career women. To add the concepts of strength and independence to the term, they have coined the compound leather spinster and formed the Leather Spinster Fellowship. There are signs that the movement is spreading also to Britain.

The term cousin, which now refers to the child of an aunt or uncle, could formerly be used in a wider sense of ‘relative’. The large number of records in this corpus (103) may reflect not only this usage, but also different family and marital structures. Marriage between cousins was not uncommon and many of the records were taken from The Female Quixote, which describes the twists and turns that eventually lead to such a marriage. As people died younger, it was also fairly common for children to be brought up by relatives, sometimes together with their cousins.

...and, as he always designed to marry Arabella to this Youth, of whom he was extremely fond, he told his daughter of the intended Visit of her Cousin, whom she had not seen since she was eight Years old; (Lennox, p.27)

But now, as I lived in the House with only one Companion, who was so much more admired than myself, the Comparison began to vex me, and I found a strong hatred and Aversion for my Cousin, arising in my mind. (Fielding, p.58)

8.3. Love, sexual relations and friendship

Terms: 15
Tokens: 468

58 Cf. Sw. kusin which used to be applied also to distant relatives and often used as a term of address, esp. between persons of different gender.
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When female characters in 18th century novels talk about their lovers, this does not imply that they lived in a sexually permissive society. From the 16th century until the middle of the 20th, to make love to meant simply 'to pay amorous attention to' and the term lover was used in a sense similar to that of admirer or adorer. The two latter terms only occur with male reference in the corpus, and lover seems to have been prototypically male as well (94 records of lover with male reference, none with only female reference). When used in the plural, the term could have a combined male-female reference (10 records).

...for, tho’it was my Uncle’s Command I should make my Addresses to her, she received me so ill, as a Lover, that I have never dared to talk to her upon that Subject since. (Lennox, p.64)

Upon this occasion I think it but reasonable to declare, that ... I shall never betray what the Eyes of Lovers say to each other in my Presence. (Steele, p.209)

The OED still defines lover as “one who is in love with, or who is enamoured of a person of the opposite sex”. Such a definition may now be out of date, as the current sense of lover is ‘sexual partner’ rather than ‘amorous admirer’. The reason for this development may be found in a change of meaning that has taken place in the phrase to make love. Sometime around the middle of the 20th century, making love came to have the limited and specific sense of ‘having sexual intercourse’ (Burchfield, 1996: 471).

The polysemy of the term lover in earlier centuries facilitated such a sense development. Although the prototypical sense of the term was ‘admirer’, a more marginal sense was “one who loves illicitly” (OED). An example from Miss Betsy Thoughtless illustrates that illicit sexual activity was sometimes referred to by the term lover. In the following scene a gentleman has just come home to find his unfaithful
mistress and a mercer shut in the bed-chamber. He draws his sword and bursts open the door:

The astonished guilty pair had neither thought nor means to escape; the lover, on the first burst of the door, jumped out of the window into the yard - Mademoiselle ran screaming to one corner of the room. (Haywood, p. 541)

As is often the case in the semantic development of terms, a non-protypical sense (especially if it includes a sexual concept) takes centre ground and becomes the new prototype. In the case of lover, the semantic change also reflects changes in social behaviour. When non-marital sex gradually became more socially acceptable during the course of the 20th century, a term for the male partner in a sexual relationship was needed. As lover could already be used in a sexual context, it was well placed to fill the gap.

The frame analysis in Fig. 16 is an attempt to illustrate the sense development of the term lover.
In the 18th century several terms covered the concept of 'female sexual partner' (mistress, concubine, whore, harlot). In current English whore is either used as a term of abuse or as an occupational term and harlot and concubine sound slightly old-fashioned. Although mistress is still in use, the term lover seems to have gained ground also with female reference. As are also becoming more socially accepted and talked about, the term has been adopted to refer to both male and female partners in such relationships.

However, since our society and its sexual mores are still changing, it may be of
interest to carry this onomasiological analysis a bit further. Co-habitation has now become almost as common as marriage and new terms are needed to refer to the persons involved. The useful Swedish innovation sambo has no good equivalent in English. The expression live-in lover is sometimes used, but it seems as if the sexual weight of the term lover is too strong to make it an everyday term. Maybe the most successful term so far is partner, which is epicene and covers both homosexual and heterosexual relationships. The fact that this is a term in which the sexual concept until very recently has been absent, may indicate that there is some ambiguity in our sexual attitudes. Euphemisms are still needed. Whether or not it will soon be difficult for a senior lawyer in a law firm to introduce someone as his ‘partner’, remains to be seen.

Whereas lover used in the singular has exclusively male reference in the corpus, the term dear is prototypically female (58 records with female ref., only 5 with male). It is used only as a term of address in the phrase my dear. It is often directed to young persons (cf. the use of my child) and it has a somewhat patronising tinge, as in the following record from Evelina.

'O the sweet innocent! So you don't know what I mean? -but, my dear, my sole view is to accustom you a little to your dignity elect...' (Burney p. 369)

Even when not used in a patronising way, it is still a term that expresses familiarity. As such terms are more readily used by superiors to inferiors than the other way around, this may be a reason for it having a female bias. The only records of the expression being used to address males come from Moll Flanders, where the wife addresses her husband in this way. It is possible that marriage was the only context where it was appropriate for a woman to address a man as my dear. It may also have been a practice limited to the lower classes in society.

My Dear, said I, we have been married a Fortnight, is it not time to let you know whether you have got a Wife with something, or with nothing? (Defoe, p.29)
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There are also some differences between male and female writers in this domain. Certain terms seem to belong to male usage, others to female. While all the records of *comrade*, *concubine*, *harlot* and *whore* come from male authors, the records of *adorer* and *charmer* spring from female sources, as do nearly all the tokens of *darling*, *love* and *lover*. The terms *admirer*, *dear*, *friend*, *gallant* and *favourite* seem more neutral, i.e. they are used to about the same extent by both genders. It is not surprising that terms that explicitly refer to non-marital sexual relationships are avoided by 18th century female writers. The concept of 'amorous love' and 'courtship' that forms part of *darling*, *love*, *lover*, *adorer* and *charmer* is probably the reason behind their prevalence in female writing. Courtship was one of the most important aspects of young women's life, comparable to career planning in modern times, and consequently a popular topic for discussion among middle-class women.

8.4. Other inter-personal relationships

Terms: 42

Tokens: 315

A by now familiar pattern is repeated in this category – there are more tokens per term with female reference (7.2) than with male reference (4.6). Most of the terms are epicene and 15 of them appear with both male and female referents in the corpus: *acquaintance*, *assistant*, *attendant*, *bed-fellow*, *companion*, *confidant*, *guard*, *guest*, *idol*, *neighbour*, *partner*, *representative*, *rival*, *servant* (used figuratively), *stranger* and *successor*.

Some of the terms are gender specific. The term *cavalier* can only refer to a man and *arbitress*, *benefactress*, *hostess* and *protectress* are exclusively female. All four -*ess* terms are still current, although the male variants now often appear also with female reference. In fact, all terms within this area are still in use and seem to have the same senses as in the 18th century, although in some cases additional senses have emerged.
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When Dr Johnson writes

'we will thenceforward...live together as friends and partners' (Rasselas, p.1)

there is no risk of ambiguity, as there might be in a modern text.

8.5. Social position

Terms: 38
Tokens: 1074

The large number of records in this sub-field reflects the emphasis placed on social status. A person's exact position in the social hierarchy, within the household as well as in society at large, was of the greatest importance and terms indicating such positions are frequently used in 18th century texts. Most of the terms are gender-specific; if an exact description of a person's status is desired, gender also plays a significant part. The epicene terms are found at the bottom of the ladder - *beggar, slave, outcast, outlaw* - where a more detailed identification is superfluous. The less attention one pays to an object or a person, the less detail is needed or, in other words, the wider the reference of the term used.

At the top of the social ladder the situation is very different; the higher up, the narrower the reference. The importance of the roles played by the referents is reflected in the quantity of records. The number of records is, generally speaking, reversed in relation to the size of the term's reference. Although there are few kings, queens, princes and princesses around, in the corpus there are 37 records of *king*, 61 of *queen*, 107 of *prince*, 140 of *princess*, and in addition there are 8 records of *emperour*, 2 of *monarch*, and 3 of *sultan*. In comparison, there are no more than 20 records altogether of the terms *beggar, slave, outcast* and *outlaw*.

A more detailed analysis of the titles and ranks within the English peerage would require a thesis of its own. In the present study a short summary of the terms and tokens found in the corpus will have to suffice.
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Male terms
baronet, duke, earl, knight, lord, marquis, nobleman, peer

Female terms
countess, duchess, marchioness

There are more than twice as many male as female “nobility” terms in the corpus. The discrepancy is even greater when it comes to tokens; the ratio male/female tokens is more than 10/1 (186 tokens with male ref., 16 with female). There may be several reasons for this difference. Most titled women acquire their titles through marriage, while most men inherit theirs. This means that more young men than young women can be referred to by such titles, which, in turn, leads to a male bias in novels that mainly concentrate on the lives of relatively young people. A contributing cause may be found in the power structure. In a patriarchal society, it is probably more important to refer to men than to women by titles that show their high standing. A titled woman is often referred to by Lady + personal name, while more reverence and distance may be shown to her male counterpart by referring to him only by his title. As combinations of title + name were not recorded, this resulted in fewer records with female reference. The same pattern is found in the domain of occupational terms, where men are often referred to by their professional name (e.g. the captain) instead of by their personal name.

The fact that about two thirds of the records come from female writers, once again confirms that women often prefer more polite terms than men.

The Care of the Marquis’s Funeral devolving upon Mr. Glanville, he sent a Messenger express for his Father, who was appointed Guardian to Lady Bella. (Lennox, p. 59)

Most of the records do not come from the domain of hereditary titles, however, but from the home. As there were servants in most upper and middle class households, the relationship between servants and their employers was important in everyday life and terms for the employers in frequent use. In as far as servants exist nowadays, terms that
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emphasise the hierarchical relationship between the persons involved tend to be avoided. Au pairs, gardeners and cleaning ladies usually address their employers by a combination of Mr or Mrs + surname or even by first name. The term lady, which used to refer to the female employer in a middle or upper class household, often in combination with a possessive pronoun (my lady, her lady), is now sometimes transferred to the “servant” (e.g. cleaning lady).

In the 18th century the power structure was openly reflected in the terms used. A male employer was referred to by master (236 records) and the female head of a household could be denoted by either mistress (106 records) or lady (114 records).

My master has been very kind since my last; for he has given me a suit of my late lady’s clothes... And when he gave me these fine things, he said, “These, Pamela, are for you... and wear them for your good mistress’s sake”. (Richardson, p.7)

In spite of there being two terms for female heads of households and only one for male, the ratio terms/tokens in this sub-field repeats the old pattern – there are more tokens per term with female reference (30) than with male (24).

8.6. Religious and political affiliation

Terms: 10
Tokens: 35
beguine, christian, churchman, jew, jesuit, party-woman, partizan, quaker, tory, whig

The paucity of terms and tokens within this domain is striking; had the corpus not included Tristram Shandy where there are ten records of the term beguine, all

59 The term lord which was formerly used to denote the male head of a household seems to have been obsolete in the 18th century. There are no examples of this usage in the corpus and the latest record in the OED dates from 1611.

60 A beguine is a member of a lay sisterhood, where women live as nuns but without taking vows and where it is allowed to leave the society in order to get married. Some small communities still exist in the Netherlands.
referring to the same individual, the numbers would have been even smaller. This may be a reflection of the pragmatic attitudes that to a large extent characterise the 18th century. There were few religious and political upheavals and people seemed more interested in money, manners and social climbing than in theories and ideologies. In a culture where political and religious affiliation play a minor role, using terms that define individuals according to their beliefs may seem irrelevant. It may have been of more interest to males than to females, as 31 of the 35 records within this domain come from male writers.

When women displayed an interest in politics, it was often frowned upon. Taking part in heated political discussions was not an activity that agreed with the ideal female behaviour, as is obvious from the following quotation from *The Spectator*.

I have seen a Woman's Face break out in heats, as she has been talking against a great Lord, whom she had never seen in her Life; and indeed never knew a Party-Woman that kept her Beauty for a Twelvemonth. (Steele, p. 253)

For older women who had lost their good looks, such behaviour was of less importance as nobody paid any attention to them anyway. Steele continues:

...I would give free Liberty to all superannuated motherly Partizans to be as violent as they please, since there will be no danger either of their spoiling their Faces, or of their gaining Converts. (Steele, p. 253)

8.7. Summary

All terms within the relational category are still in use today, although some of them may have been used more frequently in the 18th century. Terms that refer to social position, for example, now tend to be avoided in everyday social life and are more or less confined to the occupational field. The importance of hereditary titles has declined as the power of the aristocracy has diminished. The highest ranking terms – *duke*/*duchess*, *prince*/*princess* etc. – are an exception. Although the real power that was once embedded in these terms has been reduced, the media interest in the royal family
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ensures that these terms are in frequent use also in our more egalitarian century.

Most of the relational terms still have the same meanings as two hundred years ago. Not surprisingly, this is especially true of family terms. Apart from cousin, which was used in a broader sense, not much has changed in the way family relations are referred to. Thanks to advances in the domains of biology and technology, mother has acquired several new meanings by means of radial categorisation (birth mother, donor mother, surrogate mother etc.) (Lakoff, 1987:83-84). Although step-mother was frequently used also in the 18th century, there was no need for a term like surrogate mother.

Additional senses have appeared in some terms (lover, partner), reflecting changes in life-styles and attitudes. Some changes have also taken place as regards terms used to denote civil status. The term spinster was relatively new in the sense of ‘unmarried woman’ and it could also have sexual attribute values in the 18th century. It was therefore probably not more common than in English. Its male counterpart, bachelor, was exclusively male, whereas in modern society it has become almost gender neutral.

Certain terms are more popular with female writers, in particular terms that refer to courtship and amorous love (e.g. adorer, lover, darling.) Terms that refer to a sexual relationship (concubine, whore) only stem from male writers in the corpus. Although it has become more acceptable for women in our society to use sexually loaded terms, such distinctions between male and female usage still exist.

The by now familiar pattern of women being referred to by fewer terms, is repeated also among the relational terms. This is true in all sub-fields except the one called “love, sexual relations and friendship” where the ratio tokens per term is 30 for male reference but only 19 for female reference. This is largely due to the high number of records of lover (94), a term that in the singular has only male reference in the corpus.
9

TERMS FOR TEMPORARY STATES AND ACTIONS

9.1. Introduction

Terms for human beings that refer to temporary actions or states are classified in terms of semantic roles. Such roles, or "cases" as C. Fillmore, who developed the theory of case grammar in the late sixties, called them, are used to describe the deep semantic relations between clause elements (Fillmore, 1968). They may also be fruitfully employed in the semantic analysis of lexemes as shown by Magnusson & Persson (1986).

Terms that denote persons performing a temporary action are classified as "agent terms"; those that refer to their being affected by someone else's actions or desires are classified as "patient terms". A third class consists of "experiencer, recipient and positioner terms".

As the emphasis in all three categories is on short-lived situational attributes rather than on long-term ones, they are somewhat peripheral in a study of male and female terms. In the context of "male/active" and "female/passive" they are nevertheless interesting enough to deserve some comments.

9.2. Statistics

The category of patient terms is small, only 47 records. The agent terms are more frequent, 262 records. In these two groups the gender differences as regards numbers are striking. There are twice as many records (25) with specified female reference as with male reference (12) in the patient group. In the agent group the proportions are reversed: 109 records with male reference, 57 with female reference. The group of experiencer, recipient and positioner terms is more balanced as regards male and female records (22 female and 26 male).

There are also differences between male and female writers. In the category of
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patient terms, 37 of the records come from female writers; only 10 from male. As regards agent terms, 152 records come from male writers, 110 from female writers. The corresponding figures for the third group are 39 male and 30 female.

These differences may be purely coincidental, the numbers being so limited, but they fit well into the pattern of “male/active” versus “female/passive”. It is not impossible that if women are more used to playing passive roles, they are also more likely to use terms that refer to human beings as affected by actions rather than as performers.

9.3. Terms formed from phrasal verbs

The two variants wisher-well and well-wisher found in the corpus are examples of 18th century fluctuations in usage. Only the second variant has survived to our days. Other analogue terms found in the corpus are stander-by, looker-on and passers-by. The variant by-stander is now the preferred option (stander-by is described as rare in the OED); looker-on is less common than on-looker, whereas passer-by is still current. As English compounds usually have the primary stress on the first syllable, the stress on the last syllable makes terms such as wisher-well and stander-by sound clumsy. The survival of passer-by may be due to the existence of the term by-pass, which might cause confusion as to the meaning of a term like *by-passer.

On the Contrary, if he coughs, or betrays any Infirmity of old Age, it is easy for a Stander-by to observe a secret Concern in the Looks of all his Servants. (Steele, p.217)

I'm sure they're from your honest friend and wisher-well, Poor Pamela. (Richardson, p.75)

The agential suffix -er is still productive with phrasal verbs. However, the pattern where the particle comes after the nominalization (chucker-out, dropper-in) tends to be restricted to informal contexts due to its awkwardness (Bauer, 1983:288-289).
9.4. Agent terms

Terms with male ref.: 61  
Tokens with male ref.: 109  
Terms with female ref.: 37  
Tokens with female ref.: 57

9.4.1 Classification

There are cases where the classification may seem questionable. A *traveller* and a *passenger* are often involved in the same kind of activity. Nevertheless, since the term *passenger* must include the concept of 'being driven', a concept which is optional in *traveller*, the first term is classified as patient term while the latter is regarded as an agent term.

...she had heard of a vessel on board of which she could be accommodated, and that there was to be another female *passenger* on board, a vulgar one;  
... (Wollstonecraft, p.30)

Will, it seems, had been giving his Fellow *Travellers* an Account of his angling one Day in such a Hole; ... (Addison, p.240)

Another problem arises with regard to such terms as *ravisher* or *betrayer*. Although they refer to temporary activities, the aspects of 'mental characteristics' and 'moral judgment' have been regarded as important enough to place them in the category of characterising terms instead (see Ch. 6, p.137).

Some terms may seem to belong to a totally different category (*e.g.* *author*, *banker*). However, the way a term is used in a specific context has been decisive. When *author* and *writer* refer to a person writing a letter, for example, they are regarded as agent terms, whereas in other cases they may fall into the category of occupational terms. Likewise, when *banker* is used figuratively, it is classified as an agent term, not as an occupational term.61

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61 In spite of their figurative use they could not be classified as metaphors, as that category only included terms taken from non-human domains.
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But what, my dear Sir, am I to conclude from his strange speeches concerning the letter? does it not seem as if he was himself the author of it? (Burney, p.358)

Come then! said she, tying up her little purse - I'll be your banker ... (Sterne, p.545)

9.4.2. A "word in time"

Somewhat surprisingly, the most frequent agent term by far is messenger (18 M, 2 F). Although the term still exists (and recently has experienced a revival with non-human reference in the field of electronic mail) it is not part of everyday usage. Communication technology has diminished the need for human messengers in our present society. But the times in which these texts were written were prior even to the development of the electric telegraph and the penny post which brought about great changes in communication around the middle of the next century. There must have been a constant crisscrossing of messengers in towns and cities delivering invitations, billets and letters. For the most part the messengers seem to have been male, possibly because women and girls were not supposed to be roaming the streets.

Although most referents of messenger in the corpus are servants, the temporary nature of the activity involved was decisive in placing the term in the agent category rather than in the occupational group.

Having taken this Resolution, he ordered his Servant to have the Horses ready early in the Morning;... and, dispatching a Messenger with his Letter, held on his Way to London. (Lennox, p.37)

9.5. Patient terms

The following terms were classified as patient terms:

captive, charge, conquest, doating-piece, dupe, hostage, martyr, object, passenger, patient, prisoner, victim

In the study of metaphorical terms (see Ch.5) it was shown that metaphors from the
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inanimate domain all had female referents. The same pattern is found among the records of patient terms. The three terms that are originally inanimate – charge, doating-piece, and object – have female reference in 8 out of 9 records. The numbers are small but they fit into the general 18th century conceptual model of the world as suggested in Ch. 3 (p.67).

"I have told you already I have been in love, and disappointed – the object is now no more; let her faults sleep with her!" (Wollstonecraft, p.29)

The worthiest, the most benevolent, the best of men,... has plighted me his faith that, upon no other conditions, he will part with his helpless charge. (Burney, p.339)

9.6. Experiencer, recipient and positioner terms

beholder, hearer, loser, observer, owner, possessor, spectator, stander-by, sufferer, survivor, witness

Deverbal nouns formed from verbs which lack the concept ‘active’ make up the third category. A hearer, a possessor or a stander-by are not performing an action; they are rather experiencing a situation. In analyses of case relations or semantic roles, subjects of verbs expressing perception, cognition and emotion are sometimes given the role of “experiencer” (Quirk et al, 1985:746; Magnusson & Persson, 1985:183). Subjects of verbs like have, own, possess are said to play a “recipient” role. Likewise, the term stander-by does not include the concept ‘active’. Quirk et al. (1985:746-7) identify the subjects of intransitive stance verbs such as sit, stand and lie as “positioners”. Hence terms formed from these verbs have been classified as “experiencer, recipient and positioner terms”. Along the active/passive scale they can be regarded as occupying a position in between agent and patient terms. Its “neutral” position is reflected in the statistics, as the proportions of male and female reference as well as of male and female writers are more balanced than in the other two categories.
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...when their Skins reddened, and all their Features were changed and distorted by the Violence of Passion, which made them frightful to the Beholders, and miserable to themselves: (Fielding, p.11)

...he felt the whole force of her charms; and as he loved beauty more for his own sake than for that of the possessor, and never liked without desiring to enjoy... (Haywood, p.501)

9.7. Discussion

The terms denoting temporary states and activities strengthen the picture of the active man and the passive woman. The great majority of records of agent terms have male reference, while the opposite proportions are found among patient terms. The more neutral category of experiencer/positioner/recipient terms is almost balanced as regards gender reference. Patient terms taken from the inanimate field are by necessity passive. Nearly all the records of such terms have female reference.

The findings suggest that in the 18th century there was a tendency to focus on men's actions, while women were often seen as affected by actions or circumstances. If the figures are representative and not only accidental, it must still be remembered that they do not tell the whole story of the roles men and women played in real life. Since they are based on fiction, what they show is to some extent a picture of middle class male and female role models. The story of the roles played by lower class women would probably have needed more agent terms in its telling.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

10.1. Chapter summaries

Chapter 1, Introduction, presents the theoretical framework of the study. Recent semantic theories and approaches that have influenced the analysis of the data are introduced (e.g. experiential realism, prototype theory, semantic fields and frames). A short summary of research carried out in the field of language and gender is given. Aims, material and methods are presented and discussed and an introductory “snapshot” of the data is shown.

Chapter 2, Stability and change – England in the 18th century, sets the political, intellectual, social and cultural scene. Scientific discoveries and philosophical theories of importance for the 18th century view of the world and of society are presented, as well as political and economical structures and developments. A brief survey of the social class system, of the status of the family, education and the literature and language of the time is provided.

In Chapter 3, Central epicene terms, data from the category of gender-neutral basic terms for human beings are presented. Gender biases in certain terms (e.g. child, creature and person) are discussed in terms of prototypes and analysed with the help of frames. The findings are related to 18th century concepts of ‘male’ and ‘female’ and of the world structure at large. Comparisons are made with modern concepts, gender roles, and language use.

Chapter 4, Central male and female terms, discusses the basic gender-specific terms in the corpus. Pairs of terms that on the surface seem parallel (e.g. man/woman) are shown to be asymmetrical as regards usage and axiological meanings. Gender gaps in the vocabulary are found in certain domains as well as differences in usage between male and female writers. Collocations are analysed in terms of a power/dependency structure and along a physical/spiritual dimension.
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In Chapter 5, **Characterising terms: metaphors**, theories and definitions of metaphors are discussed. The metaphors in the corpus are found to be conventional and few in number, more frequent with female than with male reference. When classified according to semantic domains, gender differences appear. A frame analysis is performed to explain the differences. The relationship between metaphors and social attitudes is discussed.

Chapter 6, **Characterising terms: mental, physical and social domain**, discloses more gender differences related to semantic domains. Once again the differences are discussed along the lines of power/dependency and spirit/matter. The vocabulary used to describe women is found to be more limited than the vocabulary used for men. This discrepancy is related to their playing fewer roles in society.

In Chapter 7, **Occupational terms**, the narrow limits set for women become apparent as many areas have few female referents or turn out to be exclusively male. Female terms marked for gender are discussed and comparisons made with modern usage. The pattern found in the previous chapter regarding tokens per term is repeated. Even in a field where women outnumber men as regards tokens, there are fewer terms referring to women.

The category with the largest number of records is analysed in Chapter 8, **Relational terms**. A slight female bias is disclosed; women writers use relational terms more often than male writers and a larger proportion of all records with female reference belongs to this field than is the case for male reference. The sense development of certain terms are discussed and related to changes in attitudes and lifestyle.

Three small categories are discussed briefly in Chapter 9, **Terms for temporary states and actions**. Although insignificant in numbers, they may be seen as an epitome of the study as a whole, as the category of agent terms is predominantly male while the category of patient terms is predominantly female.
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10.2. Conclusions

The concepts of ‘male’ and ‘female’ that emerge from my study of 18th century novels may be summarised by the following contrasting pairs: ‘Male’ is ‘doing’ – ‘female’ is ‘being’; ‘male’ is ‘spirit’ – ‘female’ is ‘matter’; ‘male’ is ‘power’ – ‘female’ is ‘dependency’; ‘male’ inspires ‘respect’ and ‘fear’ – ‘female’ inspires ‘tenderness’ and ‘condescension’; ‘male’ is ‘varied’ – ‘female’ is ‘limited’. To what extent the findings are a true representation of gender roles in 18th century England is difficult to ascertain. What this linguistic mirror presents is partly a reflection of attitudes towards men and women and their roles in society in a number of middle-class male and female writers. The picture is largely supported, however, by information about the structure of 18th century society as gained from other sources (see chapter 2).

Some of the results that give credence to the above generalisations may deserve highlighting again.

That men were seen as ‘doers’ is supported by the finding that more than one in five records with male reference fall into the occupational and agent field, while the corresponding proportion with female reference is less than one in ten. The ‘male’ terms cover all the different occupational domains, whereas the ‘female’ terms are restricted to a few domains, mainly situated in or around the home.

An 18th century middle class ‘lady’ was not expected to work for money. However, the discrepancy between male and female as regards ‘active’ terms and tokens should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence that women in general were passive beings. What it shows is that their work and actions were less visible, as other aspects took precedence when referring to women. Their gender came first and their actions second. This is underlined by the small number of occupational terms used about women that do not have an in-built reference to gender (e.g. -maid, -woman).

The claim that ‘male’ is ‘spirit’ while ‘female’ is ‘matter’ is supported by prototypical effects found in several fields. The physical aspect of ‘virginity’ is an
important part of several central female terms, while there is a lexical gap for their male counterparts. Characterising terms are often chosen from the physical domain when the referent is female, but from the mental domain when the referent is male. Although most of the mental terms are negative while most of the physical are positive, the difference suggests that men tended to be judged by mental and women by physical criteria.

A similar pattern is found among the metaphorical terms. Metaphors taken from the inanimate domain, which is exclusively physical, all have female reference, whereas animal metaphors are more frequently used about men. Inanimate objects not only lack soul and intelligence, they are also regarded as the property of mankind. The age-old concept of 'woman-as-property' and dependent on men, made it possible to refer to a woman by terms such as baggage and thing. The aspect of dependency may also have made patient terms, where the referent is seen as the object of someone else's action, more suitable for female referents.

The power/dependency dichotomy is also found in some central epicene terms – creature, child and person in particular. Creature and child have a strong female bias, while person is predominantly male. In the power structure of the world, children and creatures are dependent on adults, just as women were dependent on men in the 18th century. In addition, physical as well as perceived mental similarities between women and children made the term child possible to use for young female adults, but unsuitable for their male peers.

Collocations show that the concepts of 'male' and 'female' evoked different responses. Terms with female reference frequently come with positive or patronising adjectives, while those with male reference often are respectful or negative. Tenderness and condescension are apt responses to beings that are small, ignorant and dependent, while fear and respect are more adequate for those who are big and powerful.

A prominent feature of the corpus as a whole is an imbalance in the ratio of tokens
Chapter 10

per term for male and female reference, 9.4 and 13.4. respectively. There are altogether 496 different terms with male reference; only 307 with female. Even within fields where women dominate as regards tokens, the number of terms used is often smaller. Thus there seems to be a tendency to use more common terms or clichés for women than for men, possibly a reflection of the restricted female world. If women have few roles to play, the vocabulary depicting them becomes limited.

The power/dependency opposition between the genders is also reflected in the language used by male and female writers in the corpus. Female writers employ fewer metaphors and characterising terms when the referent is male, which may be interpreted as a sign of deference. As characterising terms are often based on value judgments, they may be avoided by persons in an inferior position. A general preference for more polite terms in female writers may also lie behind such differences.

Comparisons with modern usage highlight semantic shifts that have taken place in terms for men and women since the 18th century. The extension of some terms, e.g. girl and lady, has changed while the gender balance has shifted in others, not only in many occupational terms but also in such epicene terms as person and creature. Although not many terms have disappeared completely, some are now archaic or have lost certain senses. Most of the sense developments discussed in the study can be related to changes in society, culture and attitudes.
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**Dictionaries**


**Previous publications**

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