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From:

Reinventing Identities.
The Gendered Self in
Discourse. 1999.
Edited by M. Bucholtz
+ A C Liang + L.A. Sutton
Oxford University Press.

7

CAITLIN HINES

. . . .

Rebaking the Pie

The WOMAN AS DESSERT Metaphor

> . . . the question [is] how do feminists not only get women a piece of the pie, but rebake the whole pie.
>
> —Susan Faludi, *San Francisco Chronicle & Examiner Image Magazine*, Sept. 27, 1992, p. 12

A venerable approach in language and gender scholarship has been to analyze the ways in which sexism is built into a language (usually English). Muriel Schulz's classic article "The Semantic Derogation of Women" (1975) is one such careful deconstruction of linguistic chauvinism, using the tools of dictionary definitions and etymology. Despite much solid work, this entire line of inquiry was trivialized and branded as "radical feminism" based on the misunderstood and decontextualized claims of a few researchers in the 1970s (see especially Penelope 1990 (reprint of 1975 work); Todasco 1973; and, for a book-length articulation, Spender 1980). Language and gender studies moved on to the macro issues implied by sexist usage on the one hand, with gender seen as but one of many social variables speakers bring to the table (largely the concern of sociolinguistics), and to the micro issue of sexist usages in individual conversations on the other hand (exemplified by discourse analysis). Meanwhile, cognitive linguistics was establishing itself as a subfield dedicated to elucidating the interdependencies of thought and language, focusing mainly on the (ungendered) role of metaphors in constructing cognition. In this chapter I bring together these two disparate approaches, using each to illuminate the other.

There is a consistent, widespread, generally unconscious and undocumented metaphor in English equating women-as-sex-objects with desserts, manifested both in linguistic expressions (such as *cheesecake*, *cookie*, *tart*, and so on) and in customs (such as women jumping out of cakes). The presence of a virtual bakery of dessert terms for women considered sexually (see appendix to this chapter) is evidence of an underlying conceptual metaphor of WOMAN AS DESSERT—a metaphor that functions as what Claudine Herrmann has called "a micro-language filled with winks and allusions specifically aimed at [women]" ([1976] 1989:7) and that can have unexpected psycholinguistic side effects.

Background: Beyond objectification

It is unremarkable that the WOMAN AS DESSERT metaphor reduces women to the status of objects, with the attendant implications of powerlessness, inanimacy, and procurability; the metaphorical commodification and belittling of women is well known (e.g., *baby, bimbo, doll*—see R. Lakoff 1975; Penelope 1977; Schulz 1975; and, for how girls can internalize these beliefs, Coates, chapter 6, this volume). What is surprising is the degree to which the metaphor is extended: Women here are not just objects, but *sweet* (that is, compliant, smiling), and not just desserts, but *pieces* or *slices*.

I use a cognitive framework to tease apart linguistic and conceptual features of this metaphor and to pose questions such as "Why desserts?", "Why baked desserts?", and "Why *cupcake* but not **shortcake*?" I take as a point of departure Sally McConnell-Ginet's finding that natural languages "both encode and perpetuate speakers' beliefs and attitudes." McConnell-Ginet notes that "it is in part because the connections of language to thought and to social life are seldom explicitly recognized that language use can enter into the transmission and preservation of attitudes and values that are seldom explicitly articulated. . . . Many of the messages we convey and receive are 'loaded' with import beyond their overt content and perhaps beyond what the speaker intended" (1980:7). I show that these covert messages exploit available linguistic channels: semantics, syntax, the lexicon, and phonetics. This chapter is part of a larger work on the DESIRED WOMAN metaphor, wherein I also examine the functionally parallel semantic fields of SMALL ANIMALS/GAME (*chick, filly, fox*) and FEMMES FATALES (*siren, tigress, vamp*), in each case finding unexpected phonosemantic or morphosemantic coherences that are correlated with ways of expressing diminution and derogation in English (Hines 1996b). Such iconicity between form and meaning is central to cognitive linguistics, which takes the position that metaphors are not "a matter of mere language [but] rather . . . a means of structuring our conceptual systems," in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980:145) formulation. I turn this around, showing that metaphors are not merely a matter of conceptual systems but can also be a means of structuring our language—and our identity.

Throughout, I use an "ecological" approach, in Richard Rhodes and John Lawler's sense of "reject[ing] monocausal explanations" (1981:1). My goal is to reveal the systematic linguistic patterning at work and thereby to question the assumed arbitrariness of the metaphorical sign, simultaneously bringing into awareness the social role that metaphors play in transmitting coded messages.

Evolution of the metaphor

Conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary; indeed, their insidious power hinges on the degree to which they "make sense." When a metaphor captures a felt truth, its compelling logic seduces us into accepting unstated conclusions. As Richard Lewontin

cautions, "The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance" (quoted in Gentner & Grudin 1985:181).

I describe the evolution of the WOMAN AS DESSERT metaphor in figure 7.1. It begins harmlessly enough with the ubiquitous metaphor PEOPLE ARE OBJECTS, an example of which is the special case that George Lakoff, Jane Espenson, and Alan Schwartz have called PEOPLE ARE BUILDINGS, as in *Eyes are windows to the soul* (1991:192). This ungendered metaphor collides (and colludes) with the cultural stereotype "women are sweet" (as in the nursery rhyme "What are little girls made of?/Sugar and spice and everything nice . . .") and with another common metaphor, ACHIEVING A DESIRED OBJECT IS GETTING SOMETHING TO EAT (as in *She tasted victory*), yielding WOMEN ARE SWEET OBJECTS (in this case, DESSERTS). Notice that the sweetness predicated of women is itself metaphorical, referring to their supposed sweet nature rather than an actual flavor, as in this Jamaican English appreciative comment to a woman: "You don't have to sugar up your lips for me" = 'You don't have to make yourself more dessert-like, i.e., wear makeup' (metonymically and metaphorically represented here by lipstick, which is not usually literally sweet).[1]

As the folklorist Alan Dundes observes, there are many associations of women and food, from breastfeeding to clichés such as *Motherhood and apple pie; [A woman's place is] barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen*; and *The way to a man's heart is through his stomach*, all of which, he writes in ironic understatement, "tend to restrict the range of female activity" (1980:165). The DESSERT metaphor, however, goes further, implicitly trivializing women, first reducing them to their sexuality and
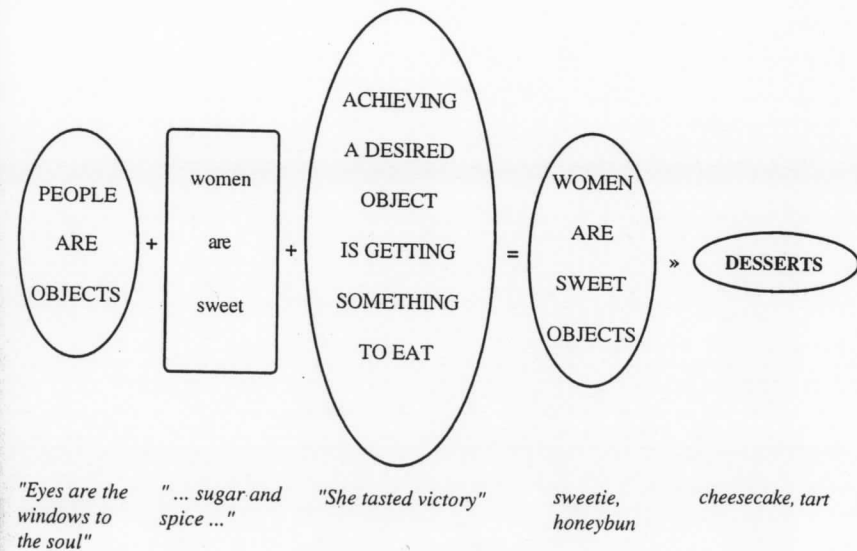

Figure 7.1. Evolution of the WOMAN AS DESSERT metaphor

then equating them with not just any edible objects but specifically peripheral food items: compare the clearly fanciful male *beefcake* with the readily available female *cheesecake*. As desserts, women can be bought and sold, eaten, elaborately decorated (as in the use of *frosting* to describe the makeup of beauty pageant contestants), admired for their outward appearance, dismissed as *sinful* and *decadent*—or, in the ultimate degradation, simply done without: desserts are optional/inessential, frivolous, perhaps even a waste of time.

Although many writers have commented on "the subconscious relating of sex and food" (Wentworth & Flexner 1975:xiii; see also Dillard 1977), there are few discussions of specific gender-related terms (notable exceptions are Rawson 1989 and Todasco 1973). I was thus pleasantly surprised to find Dundes's discussion of "the socially sanctioned saccharine quality of females [which] is confirmed later in life by such terms of endearment as sweetheart, honey bun(ch), sugar, sweetie pie, and the like . . . one can appreciate the large number of slang terms for the female or her genitalia which draw upon dessert metaphors" (1980:164). Dundes cites the "sugar and spice" nursery rhyme, as well as several other childhood verses supporting the stereotype of female sweetness; his discussion parallels parts of this chapter.[2] There is, however, a subtle but crucial distinction between mere toothsome objects, such as *sweetie* or *honeybun*, which can be used of either women or men, and actual items that could be ordered off a menu, such as *cheesecake* or *tart,* which are used only of women; it is this second set that I will examine in this chapter.[3]

Cupcakes and buttered buns

I began this research by collecting as many terms as possible. Because the semantic fields of eating and sex are highly taboo, especially in the subfields of desserts and women, I drew on a variety of sources, some decidedly beyond the academic pale, for citations of actual use, of metaphor "as she is spoke." I became something of a lexical detective as I sorted through slang dictionaries. For example, *cookie* is variously defined as

A dear, a sweetheart, or an alluring young woman. (Jacobson 1993:54)

A promiscuous female likely to be found in an American bar. (Holder 1989:221)

An attractive young person of the opposite sex, esp. a young woman; . . . the vulva and vagina. (Lighter 1994:472)

A girl or young woman, esp. an attractive, vivacious one; . . . the female genitalia. (Wentworth & Flexner 1975:120)

The female genitals; cf. bun, cake. (Spears 1981:84)

Female genitals. (Richter 1995:53)

To avoid basing my analysis on a term of dubious currency, I struck a balance between the vulgar (Grose [1796] 1992; the racy journal *Maledicta*) and the academic (Cameron 1992; Hughes 1991), with a smattering of items drawn from popular culture (*Glamour* and *Seventeen* magazines, television sitcoms, advertisements). As a

final check, I sorted through 2 years' worth of elicited slang data from undergraduate students in an introductory linguistics class at the University of California at Berkeley.[4] All of this data collection resulted in a large and unwieldy set of terms (see the appendix to this chapter). It was obvious to me that *cupcakes* and *pumpkin* (*pies*) were conceptually more central to the metaphor than *buttered buns* and *sugar doughnuts*, but I wanted a way to capture that intuition, so I devised the following tests for metaphorical centrality:

1. It must have a nonmetaphorical sense—that is, it must refer both to a woman-considered-sexually and to an actual dessert, which rules out the fanciful *cutie pie*, *honeybun*(*ches*), *sweetie* (*pie*), and so forth and foods not primarily served as desserts, such as *muffin, pancake, tootsie roll.*
2. It must be multiply cited, which rules out *available jelly* [*roll*], *cream puff, fortune cookie*, and so forth.

Applying these tests to the complete list of collected terms yields the following set of central terms: (*piece of*) *cake, cheesecake, cookie, crumpet* [*Brit.*], *cupcake,* (*a tasty bit of*) *pastry,* (*cherry*) *pie, poundcake, pumpkin* (*pie, tart*), *punkin,* [*jam*] *tart, tartlet/-lette*. It is this group that will be analyzed herein. Some of these terms will seem more prototypical than others, and some readers may even object that a given term (such as *pastry*) is archaic in their dialect. This is probably inevitable: Slang is a hotly contested area of language, and one that is constantly in flux. However, I do have recent citations for all the central terms; for example: "From MTV tartlet to arthouse pastry du jour. No wonder the adoring critics who droolingly dub her 'luminous' are so eager to gobble Liv Tyler up. You can almost sniff a just-from-the-oven freshness about her as she strides into the room" (*USA Today*, quoted in *The New Yorker*, July 15, 1996:84). The correlations detailed here are pervasive, and the overall pattern they form is not significantly altered by the removal of any single lexical item (for every *poundcake* there is a *cheesecake*; for every *pastry* a *tart*).

My conclusions are meant to apply only to Standard English, which largely means white, heterosexual, middle-class English. Not being fluent in other dialects, I find myself unable to account for the different connotations of, for example, *jelly-roll* 'one's lover, spouse; from the twenties to the forties, a term for the vagina' (Major 1994:256) and *sweet-potato-pie* 'term of endearment for either sex' (Major 1994:460), both from African American slang. Until very recently, slang dictionaries were almost exclusively compiled by straight white men for other straight white men; women, men of color, and gay men were not welcomed. As Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler point out, "whatever their intentions . . . dictionaries have functioned as linguistic legislators which perpetuate the stereotypes and prejudices of their writers and editors, who are almost exclusively male" (1990:8)—and, we might add, white and straight. Slang used by and about gay men in particular could be quite illuminating of the overlap between terms for women and terms used to disparage gay men as effeminate, such as *cream puff*, as well as of how identity is subversively reclaimed (see Leap, chapter 13, this volume). I hope to be able to include this exciting and largely uncharted area of research in future analyses.[5]

Semantic shifts: Pejoration and amelioration

Linguistic expressions based on the WOMAN AS DESSERT metaphor have undergone various semantic shifts, including pejoration, or the acquisition of negative evaluative senses, which has the effect of narrowing the range of meaning; and amelioration, or the acquisition of positive or neutral evaluative senses, which has the effect of broadening the range of meaning. Pejoration is the more common process, as Muriel Schulz notes: "Again and again in the history of the language, one finds that a perfectly innocent term designating a girl or woman may begin with totally neutral or even positive connotations, but that gradually it acquires negative implications, at first perhaps only slightly disparaging, but after a period of time becoming abusive and ending as a sexual slur" (1975:65).

An example of a term that has taken on pejorative connotations is *tart*, which in the nineteenth century was an affectionate term for a pleasant or attractive woman, as in this 1864 definition:

> *Tart,* a term of approval applied by the London lower orders to a young woman for whom some affection is felt. The expression is not generally employed by the young men, unless the female is in 'her best'. (Hotten's *Slang Dictionary*, quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* 1989)

This sense coexisted well into the twentieth century in Liverpudlian, Australian, and New Zealand dialects of English alongside its usual U. S. meaning, 'prostitute' (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989; Rawson 1989:381; Wilkes 1990:326), to such an extent that George Orwell could write in 1931, "This word [*tart*] . . . seems absolutely interchangeable with 'girl', with no implication of 'prostitute'. People will speak of their daughter or sister as a tart" (quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* 1989).

Other expressions have undergone amelioration with resulting generalization: Consider the phrase *easy as pie*, a representative slang definition of which is the following:

> *Pie* A woman considered sexually. From the expression "as easy as pie," also reinforced by 'nice piece of pie,' which is euphemistic for 'nice piece of ass.' Cf. *cake*, *tart*. (Spears 1981:298)

Another example is a *piece of cake*, which might seem entirely unconnected to gender. Yet as Eric Partridge (1984:878) wrote of *piece*, "it has, in C.19–20, been usu. apprehended as elliptical for *piece of tail*; cf. *piece of mutton*. . . ." Compare also the list of terms in the appendix, especially *cut yourself a piece of poontang. Cake* by itself is slang for 'prostitute', making this reading doubly motivated (Spears 1981:61).

These two senses converge in *cherry pie*. Jane Mills writes:

> In the second half of the C19th *cherry* and *cherry pie* began to be used colloquially for an attractive young woman. By the mid-C20th *cherry pie* came to mean something easily obtainable . . . perhaps influenced by the notion that a young woman who was considered attractive was sexually promiscuous, i.e., a ripe fruit ready for picking and for

(male) consumption. This probably influenced the development of *cherry* as a euphemism for the hymen. (1989:46)

In addition to the cherry-as-hymen metaphor (which has been extended to mean 'mint' or 'virgin' in the case of restored cars and is applied contemptuously to a new military recruit, "one who has yet to be bloodied" [Mills 1989:46]), a woman can be called a *peach*, *plum*, or (*hot*) *tomato*, and a woman who sells sex for drugs, especially crack cocaine, is known as a (*straw*)*berry*. There are numerous fruit terms for breasts, such as *apples*, *casabas*, *cantaloupes*, *grapefruits*, *lemons* (especially used of small breasts), *melons*, and *watermelons* (large breasts), as well as *cherries*, *raspberries*, and *strawberries* for nipples, all of which accentuate the *ripe*, *fresh*, *juicy* quality of desirable women (compare *a wrinkled old prune* 'a woman past her sexual prime'). Extensions include *cherry orchard* (girls' dormitory), *cherry picker* (man who desires young girls), and *cherry splitter* (penis).

I am not claiming that speakers today intend or are even aware of these associations; people of both sexes call each other *honey pie* all the time with genuine affection. Nor am I claiming that every term that can be traced to the underlying metaphor of WOMAN AS DESSERT is hopelessly polluted with sexist overtones and must automatically be expunged from our speech; as Susan Ehrlich and Ruth King have shown, attempts at such linguistic cleansing have proven largely unsuccessful. Discussing the actual use of supposedly gender-neutral terms (for example, in job listings in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*), they write:

> Rather than ridding the language of a masculine generic . . . the introduction of neutral generic forms . . . has led to a gender-based distinction between forms such as *chairperson* or *chair* (used to designate females) vs. *chairman* (used to designate males). Thus both the title *Ms.* and these true generics are used in ways that maintain distinctions the terms were intended to eliminate—distinctions that are clearly important to the speech community. (1994:63)

Feminist linguists have eloquently addressed the "chicken-and-egg" question of the relationship between word and world. For example, Julia Penelope writes:

> English does more than hinder and hurt women: it proscribes the boundaries of the lives we might imagine and will ourselves to live. The many ways the language obstructs our ability to conceive of ourselves as agents in the world . . . go beyond mere hurt to emotional, intellectual, and physical immobility that keeps us men's easy prey . . . [women] ponder cosmetics while men plan "star wars" and their conquest of the cosmos. (1990:xiv)

On the other side of this debate, Deborah Cameron argues that it is not the words we should be changing but the minds of their users—"in the mouths of sexists, language can always be sexist" (1985:90)—while Muriel Schulz strives for a compromise position:

> I began with the acknowledgement that we cannot tell the extent to which any language influences the people who use it. This is certainly true for most of what we call language.

However, words which are highly charged with emotion, taboo, or distaste do not only reflect the culture which uses them. They teach and perpetuate the attitudes which created them. To make the name of God taboo is to perpetuate the mystery, power, and awesomeness of the divine . . . and to brand a class of persons as obscene is to taint them to the users of the language. . . . The semantic change . . . by which terms designating women routinely undergo pejoration, both reflects and perpetuates derogatory attitudes towards women. They should be abjured. (1975:73)

I am sympathetic to all of these views; my intention in writing this chapter is not to choose among them but instead to call attention to the process by which this derogation is accomplished through metaphor and to suggest that we examine the language we use as we would any tool, remembering that, in Roland Barthes's phrase, "language is never innocent; words have a second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the midst of new meanings" ([1953] 1968:16).[6]

Synchronic feature analysis

The desserts in terms of which women-as-sex-objects are habitually described can be analyzed on the basis of shared semantic, syntactic, lexical, and phonetic features. They are semantically isomorphic: firm on the outside, soft or juicy in the middle, and either able to be cut into more than one piece (*cheesecake*, *cherry pie*, *poundcake*) or conceptualized as one (snatched) serving of an implied batch (*cookie*, *crumpet*, *cupcake*). Terms such as **custard*, **ice cream cone*, or **mousse* do not occur with this meaning; speakers "know" and adhere to the unstated rules governing well-formed expressions of the metaphor. (Compare the British *She's joined the Pudding Club* or the American *She has a bun in the oven*, meaning 'She's pregnant', that is, sexually undesirable or unavailable.) There are sometimes nonce coinages that do not meet these semantic criteria, such as *available jelly* [*roll*], *gooseberry pudding*, or *hot chocolate*—but the fact that these don't catch on gives implicit support for the "grammatical pull" of the underlying structure around which they orbit.

Of sweethearts, tarts, and stereotypes

Sweetheart originally referred to a sweet or sugar cake in the shape of a heart and was then applied metaphorically to a lover. It is of course now used not only without any suggestion of WOMAN AS DESSERT but also even to refer to a man (although never to refer to a dessert). Captain Francis Grose saw fit to include the expression in his *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*:

> SWEET HEART A term applicable to either the masculine or feminine gender, signifying a girl's lover, or a man's mistress. ([1796] 1992:332)

Notice the lexical asymmetry in the pairs *girl/man* and *lover/mistress*, which shows that just because a word is applicable to both women and men doesn't mean it carries the same connotations in actual use (a classic example of asymmetry is given by

Robin Lakoff with reference to the term *professional* [1975:30]). The sexual sense of *sweetheart* has been so thoroughly displaced over the past hundred years by the rhyming slang [*jam*] *tart* that many speakers of English, including sympathetic readers of this chapter, find it literally incredible that such a synchronically innocuous endearment could really be related to such a highly charged epithet. The evidence, however, is overwhelming (see, among others, Franklyn 1975:82; Holder 1989:178; Mills 1989:235; *Oxford English Dictionary* 1989, s.v. "sweetheart," "tart"; Wilkes 1990:326). *Sweetheart* is even listed as a synonym for *tart* by one source (Farmer & Henley [1890–1904] 1965(5):80). This shift in meaning is an example of what McConnell-Ginet has called "language use [which] can enter into the transmission and preservation of attitudes and values that are seldom explicitly articulated," even those "that have long since been rejected at a conscious level" (1980:7–8).

These attitudes include stereotypes of female promiscuity (as in *crumpet*), procurability (as in *piece of cake*), and the part/whole metonymy of referring to a woman by her genitals (as in *cherry pie*). Hugh Rawson notes, "the use of the same word for both [a woman and her genitalia] is common. Others with this double meaning include . . . *bit*, *bunny*, . . . *cookie*, . . . *piece*, . . . *snatch*, . . . *tail*, and *twat*" (1989:315; see also Sutton 1995). Peripheral terms that exploit this relationship include *pink taco*, *split apricot*, and *knish* (literally, Yiddish for 'dumpling', but slang for 'vagina' [Rosten 1992:276]).

A final semantic point worth savoring: Why fruits and baked goods? Why not, for instance, frozen desserts? (The only exception to this feature requirement is *crumpet*, which speakers seem to be treating as an essentially baked item that here happens to be modified [cooked on a griddle]; we do not find the otherwise parallel **scone* used of women.) A possible answer is suggested by Adrienne Lehrer: "The semantic distinction is that baking refers to the preparation of cakes . . . and other things which are sold in bakeries and prepared by professional bakers. Cooking refers to the preparation of most other kinds of food" (1969:41). This corresponds nicely with the inescapable conflation of WOMAN AS DESSERT and WOMAN AS PROSTITUTE: both kinds of *tart* can be sold in specialty shops, and both can be prepared by "professionals," in the sense that a pimp or madam grooms his or her girls. A tart or cookie purchased in a shop can be entirely consumed there with few or no dishes and utensils to clean up, just as a man can have sex with a prostitute in a brothel or a hotel and then return home with few or no domestic complications. The extensions *cakeshop* (Australian) and *tart shop* (British), meaning 'brothel', and *cake eater* (ladies' man) rely on this correspondence, which also complements the metaphors for lust described by George Lakoff: THE OBJECT OF LUST IS FOOD and LUST IS HEAT (1987:409–410). Such cross-domain structural coherence allows the perception of similarity, so that women as heated desserts can be easily seen as the objects of lust.

As has been well documented (R. Lakoff 1975; Penelope 1977; Schulz 1975), any word for a woman can, in the right context, mean 'prostitute' (from *abbess* and *actress* to *lady* and *woman*); it is as though any woman could, in the right context, be a prostitute (a recent example from popular culture is the movie *Indecent Proposal*, in which Robert Redford pays one million dollars to sleep with Demi Moore, playing Woody Harrelson's wife; the payment of the money to the husband/pimp rather than the wife underlines the metaphorical point).[7] As John Farmer and William Henley note in the

entry for *tart* in their seven-volume *Slang and Its Analogues*, "The distinction between Woman, Wife, Concubine, Mistress, Harlot, and Bawd is very loosely observed, in literary and popular usage, both in English and French" ([1890–1904] 1965(5):77).

Formal promiscuity and syntactic depersonalization

Selectional restrictions further reinforce the stereotype of promiscuity: A *slice* or *piece* of the mass nouns *pie* or *cake* implies a remainder, and a single serving of a *cupcake* or a *tartlet* implies the batch. Put simply, desserts are made to be shared. Thus not only are women grammatically objectified, reduced to mere syntactic objects, but also they are depersonalized, robbed of their uniqueness: One piece of *cheesecake* or one *cookie* is very much like another. Some illustrations of this point: *Next time you make a pie, will you give me a piece?* is a Canadian expression for "a male hint to a girl that she should sexually co-operate with him" (Partridge 1986:215), and *Everybody in town has had a slice of her* is from a definition of *slice* in *Playboy's Book of Forbidden Words*, to which is added: "An intrigue with a married woman. . . . The origin is probably the old proverb that 'a slice off a cut loaf is not missed.' This may explain the odd imagery in piece, piece of ass, piece of tail" (Wilson 1972:266).

The confluence of violent slicing in one domain and sexual consumption in another is made more logically acceptable by the systematic coherence of metaphors for anger and lust in English, the most common example of which is the ambiguous word *mad* (and see Caputi 1991; Johnson 1987; G. Lakoff 1987). This syntactic depersonalization is compounded by the frequent use of the modifier *little*, as in *my little croissant*, *little honeydip*, and *little marzipan confection*, which blurs the line between diminution and derogation.

Lexical domain overlap

The use of words from the same lexical field to talk about both desserts and women-considered-sexually provides another link between the domains. A *cupcake* and a woman can each be described as *decadent, an indulgence, inviting, luscious, mouthwatering, seductive, sinful, tasty, voluptuous*, and so on. A classic eloquent expression of this mixture of lust and distrust is Alexandre Dumas's provocative introduction to his *Dictionary of Cuisine*, wherein he writes of "the appetite roused at the end of a meal when, after normal hunger has been satisfied by the main courses, and the guest is truly ready to rise without regret, a delicious dish holds him to the table with a final tempting of his sensuality" ([1873] 1958:13).

Similarly, the verb *to tart* (*up*), meaning 'to make oneself more attractive', draws on both the literal and figurative senses of 'tart' and "clearly reflects a view that prostitutes—and possibly all women—deceive by dressing to give the impression of quality which does not underlie an attractive exterior" (Mills 1989:235).

Phonetic considerations

A final correspondence that merits further study is the shared phonetic shape of these metaphoric expressions. There is an overwhelming tendency for each of the central

terms to begin each stressed syllable with one of the three possible English voiceless stops, /p/, /t/, or /k/ (as in *pumpkin* [*pie*], *tart, cookie*); terms such as **gingerbread, *scone*, and **sherbet* do not occur with this meaning, and occurring terms that violate this sound-symbolic pattern either do not catch on (?*biscuit,* ?*golden doughnut,* ?*sweet-potato-pie*), are fanciful coinages (*baby cake(s), cinnamon girl, sweet thing*), or are not typical dessert foods (*gum drop, lollipop, muffin*). The only exception is the somewhat syntactically odd *cheesecake*, which begins with the voiceless palato-alveolar affricate /č/—a common element in diminutives and pet names in what Yakov Malkiel calls "a wide variety of by no means closely related languages" (1990:159; see also de Reuse 1986); even the peripheral terms show an unusual preponderance of initial stops (*baby cake, biscuit, buttered bun,* [*love*] *cake, cream puff, croissant, cutie pie, dumpling*, etc.). There is also strong pressure to conform to the monolexemic prototype, so that *punkin* appears for *pumpkin pie* and *pastry* for *a tasty bit of pastry*. (These correspondences have been italicized in (1) in the appendix.)

Of course, dessert terms for women must be drawn from the preselected lexical set of all dessert terms, so it could be argued that these phonetic correspondences, if they say anything at all, say more about a linguistically encoded attitude toward sweet foods than toward women—if there were not other terms available that are *not* used. Consider the phonetically incorrect but semantically plausible set {**brownie, *gingerbread, *gingersnap, *scone, *shortbread, *shortcake*}, for which I have not found a single citation to describe women-as-sex-objects.[8]

Although the phonetic pattern is inescapable, it is not as inexplicable as it first appears. One motivation may be the frequent association in English between syllable-initial voiceless stops (/p/, /t/, and /k/) and diminutive, trivial, or feminine things, as in the contrasting end-of-scale pairs /*p/uny* versus /*b/ig*, /*t/iny* versus /*d/eep*, /*c/ute* versus /*gr/eat*. Admittedly, the case is circumstantial, and counterexamples will be easy to find, since this is a tendency rather than an absolute rule. However, as John Lawler wrote of the contrasting assonance pair /br-/ and /pr-/, as in *broad* and *prude, bray* and *pray, brute* and *prig*: "What is fascinating about the social terms [beginning with /br-/] is that they are so diametrically opposed in register to the roles exemplified in [terms beginning with /pr-/] (both of which are one-dimensional categories). One is tempted to look at this as a sociosemantic version of Grimm's Law, with the devoicing of the stop cluster an iconic representation of "devoicing" of the social connotations of the role stereotypes" (1990:37). He notes that /br-/ words "tend to represent aspects of female cultural stereotypes that go back to our rustic Germanic origins. The image of a bride in braids, brewing broth and breeding brats, is hard to avoid"(1990:34). A near-minimal pair in the present data illustrating a similar point is the (voiced) male *beefcake* and the (voiceless) female *cheesecake*.

Interacting linguistic levels: Phonosemantics

It is tempting to dismiss these phonetic features as coincidental—dessert terms not used for women could already have been blocked at the semantic level (**hot fudge sundae, *pudding*, and **souffle*, for example, are not usually subject to slicing into discrete pieces). However, it turns out that the interplay of linguistic levels motivates the use of *cake* but not the equally phonetically correct **custard*, which fails on semantic grounds, and of *cupcake* but not the morphologically comparable **shortcake*, which does not

match the phonetic profile. In other words, matching either (but not both) the phonetic or semantic profile is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for central category membership: *Cream puff* and *cutie pie* fail the semantic test, while *angel food* and *muffin* fail phonetically. Fanciful extensions such as *chocolate bunny*, *love cake*, and *sugar dumpling* are not constrained by the phonetic pattern, whereas terms that name real desserts, such as *cupcake*, (*cherry*) *pie*, and *tart*, overwhelmingly are. (Appropriately, *sweetheart* belongs with the extensions, having transferred both its pejorative and dessert connotations to the phonetically correct rhyming slang, [*jam*] *tart*.) Particularly noteworthy is the nonappearance of the semantically ideal but phonetically bad *brown Betty, *Charlotte, *crepes Suzette, and *madeleine, desserts named after women. This distinction is paralleled by that between the edible and the appetizing, between *buttered bun* and *pumpkin* (*pie*), as nicely illustrated by a suggestive entry in a seventeenth-century book of proverbs: "I love thee like pudding, if thou wert pie I'de eat thee" (Ray's *English Proverbs*, quoted in Browning 1982:384).

Lexical ambiguity and psycholinguistics

Because much sexism is encoded in language, forming part of the background, there is a great deal of plausible deniability available to speakers (as in the indignant retort that serves as the title of Deborah Tannen's 1986 bestseller on conversational style, *That's Not What I Meant!*). Psycholinguistics gives us a way of measuring what Roland Barthes termed the "second-order memory," or inheritance, of language, and studies have provided quantifiable evidence for this elusive phenomenon, demonstrating that all meanings of an ambiguous word are initially activated by a listener; Patrizia Tabossi writes that activation takes place "regardless of [the word's] context of occurrence . . . context intervenes in selecting the appropriate interpretation of the lexical item only subsequently" (1988:324; see her bibliography for numerous studies confirming these results). Further, Tabossi cites a lexical-decision experiment by W. Onifer and D. A. Swinney (1981) on sentences that bias dominant meanings of ambiguous words, which found that "neither dominance nor context affects the initial activation of a word, whose access is an autonomous subprocess of the process of language comprehension" (Tabossi 1988:325). With respect to this chapter, this means that calling a woman a *tart* summons images of an edible, sweet, possessable *object*—even though we may later reject that meaning in favor of the figurative sense of 'loose woman', not just in deliberate double-entendres such as (1) but even in sentences that seem contextually unambiguous, such as (2):

(1) Boy, I'd like to get some of *that* tart for dessert! (Said as a waitress displays a dessert tray.)

(2) Many people dismiss Madonna as a tart.

In other words, metaphoric expressions are loaded with implications, including some that work subliminally. As Robin Lakoff put it in the opening sentence of *Language and Woman's Place*, "Language uses us as much as we use language" (1975:1).

Conclusion

The WOMAN AS DESSERT metaphor is alive and well; witness the birth announcement I received for a child born February 2, 1998, "The bun is done"; the reference to political gadfly Arianna Huffington as "the Greek Pudding" (*New Yorker*, April 13, 1998:40); the press muffins of *Primary Colors* (Anonymous [Klein] 1996); and the description of actor Goldie Hawn's image "morph[ing] . . . overnight from puff pastry to clever cookie" (*Vanity Fair*, January 1997:118).

Idioms such as *piece of cake* and *easy as pie* are now "dead metaphors," and as such are unlikely to trigger unconscious associations, for all that they once carried double meanings (*piece*, *cake*, *easy*, and *pie*, of course, appearing alone, are subject to the same ambiguity as *tart* or *cookie*). Similarly, *sweetheart* is synchronically unambiguous: It bears no hint today of its dessert origins or former illicit connotations. I have traced the history of these expressions, as well as the more transparently objectionable *cheesecake*, *crumpet*, and *tart*, because I wanted to reveal the systematic pattern of the WOMAN AS DESSERT metaphor, which suggests, in Julia Penelope's phrase, "a paradigm of the definition of women in our culture" (1977:316). Awareness of the underlying cognitive metaphors by which thought and language are coconstructed at least brings this "metaphoric derogation of women" to a conscious level, an essential starting point if we are ever to begin rebaking the pie.

APPENDIX

Lexical Items

(1)   WOMAN AS DESSERT
(*piece of*) *cake*
cheesecake (cf. *beefcake* 'sexy man')
cookie
crumpet
cupcake
(a *tasty* bit of) *pastry* (du jour)
(*cherry*) *pie*
poundcake
pumpkin (*pie*, *tart*), *punkin*
[*jam*] *tart* ← *sweetheart**
tartlet/tartlette

(2)   ELABORATIONS; AS . . .
(a) . . . TOOTHSOME OBJECTS
angel cake
angel food
available jelly [roll]
baby cake(s)*
biscuit (*cookie* in Brit. usage)
brown sugar ('sexy black woman')
bunny cakes
buttered bun

chocolate bunny
cinnamon girl
cream puff
croissant
cutie pie
dumpling
fortune cookie ('sexy Asian woman')
golden doughnut
gooseberry pudding†
gum drop
honeybun(ches)* honeydip, honeypie*
hot chocolate ('sexy black woman')
hot tamale
jelly roll*
knish ('vagina' in Yiddish slang)
little honeydip
little marzipan confection
lollipop
love cake
meringue
muffin (cf. *studmuffin* 'sexy man')
pancake
pink taco
press muffin ('sexy female reporter')

pudding
sugar doughnut
sugar dumpling
sugar pie, sugar-pie-honey-bun
sugar plum
sweet chocolate ('sexy black woman')
sweetie (pie)*
sweet-potato-pie*
sweets, sweetness
sweetmeat
sweet thing/thang
tootsie roll

(b) . . . FRUITS/SWEET SPREADS

apple
apples ('breasts')
banana ('sexy mulatto woman')
berry
cantaloupes ('breasts')
casabas ('breasts')
cherry, pop/lose one's cherry
cherrylets, cherries ('nipples')
fig, split fig
grapefruits ('breasts')
honey (pot)*
jam (pot)
jelly (bag)
kumquat
lemons ('breasts', esp. small ones)
melons ('breasts')
peach(es)
plum (cf. [*wrinkled old*] *prune* 'woman past
    her prime')
raspberries ('nipples')
split apricot
(straw)berry ('woman who sells sex for
    drugs', esp. crack)
strawberries ('nipples')
(hot) tomato
Venus's honeypot
Watermelons ('large breasts')

(c) . . . MISCELLANEOUS
bit (on a fork, of jam)
bite
coffeehouse, coffee-shop
creamie
dish*

easy,* easy as pie
fancy piece
juicy ('sexually aroused woman')
just-from-the-oven freshness
morsel
next time you bake a pie, will you give me
    a piece?
piece (of cake, cut yourself a piece of
    poontang)
ripe (for the picking)
slice, everybody in town has had a slice of
    her
snack, snatch
treat

(3) EXTENSIONS
baking muffins ('having sex with a
    woman')
be in the Pudding Club ('be pregnant')
cake eater ('ladies' man')
cakeshop ('brothel' [Australian])
cherry orchard ('girls' dorm')
cherry pipe ('sexually aroused woman';
    rhyming slang for 'ripe')
cherry picker ('man who desires young
    girls')
cherry splitter ('penis')
cut the cake ('deflower a virgin')
frosting ('makeup')
have a bun in the oven ('be pregnant')
honey shots (revealing photos of female
athletes or spectators)
hot roll with cream ('copulation')
gooseberry ranch† ('brothel')
muffin hunting ('looking for sex' [said of
    men])
shake a tart ('have sex with a woman')
sugar hill ('brothel')
sugar up one's lips ('wear makeup'
[Jamaican English])
tart shop ('brothel' [Brit.])
tart up (*verb*) ('dress up, fancy up')

(4) MEN AS TOOTHSOME OBJECTS
beefcake
chocolate twinkie ('black man's penis')
fruit loops ('gay man')
studmuffin

*Can sometimes be used of a man, but usually of a woman
†obsolete

NOTES

Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the Third Berkeley Women and Language Conference and the First Conceptual Structure, Discourse, and Language Conference in San Diego and are published in the conference proceedings (Hines 1994, 1996a); I am grateful to those audiences for stimulating comments and questions. Thanks also to the many friends and colleagues who provided essential encouragement, references, and patience, among them Suzanne Fleischman, Thomas Scovel, Eve Sweetser, Mark Turner, Rachelle Waksler, and especially Julia Williams. The editors of this volume made wonderful suggestions for expanding and clarifying the original paper; thank you, Mary, Anita, and Laurel. Finally, this chapter could not have been written without the help of Sherry Hines, my mother and chief research assistant, who first gave me a reprint of Captain Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, wherein I learned the history of *sweet heart*.

1. I am indebted to G. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), especially chapter 22, on "the creation of similarity," for the scaffolding on which this analysis is built, although the conclusions drawn herein are entirely my own.

2. In contrast, notice that food terms for men tend to be image-schematic metaphors for the penis ([*vienna*] *sausage, tube steak, wiener*), which, unlike nonfood terms (*dick, prick, wanker*) are not used metonymically to refer to a man (**he's a real (vienna) sausage/*tube steak/*wiener*—see Cameron 1992 for additional examples). These are semantically consistent with the stereotype of men as virile, central, and important. The one apparent exception is the curious coinage *chocolate twinkie* 'a black man's penis'; like *beefcake* and *studmuffin* for a sexy man, this compound subverts the metaphor it is supposedly built on by prefixing an actual dessert term with a modifier that destroys its credibility (although Twinkies are available at any convenience store, *chocolate twinkies* no longer exist outside this metaphor).

3. The only citation I could find in which a straight man is called a *tart* is in an article about Rod Stewart, where the fading rock star and sex symbol is called "the Hollywood tart, the definite parody, the saddest poseur" (*St. Petersburg Times*, May 10, 1996:D5). Promiscuous gay men are also sometimes called *tarts*. Another example of a gender-specific term is *tootsie roll*, which in this form is unambiguously female; clipped to *tootsie*, it may ostensibly be used of either sex (as in the name of the 1982 movie starring Dustin Hoffman in drag).

4. My thanks to Leanne Hinton for allowing me access to the Linguistics 55 data for the spring and fall semesters of 1993 and 1994 (an update to the data used in Sutton 1992).

5. For now, see James Valentine (1997) and Michael J. Sweet (1997).

6. For further discussion of feminist approaches to what is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or "linguistic relativity," see Anna Livia (chapter 17, this volume). Both Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf are highly readable; a good introduction is Whorf's essay "Science and Linguistics," with its well-known statement that

> We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, *but its terms are absolutely obligatory*; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. . . . We are thus introduced to a new principle of rela-

tivity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. (1956:213–214)

7. This entailment makes people uncomfortable; for example, a male reader of an earlier version of this chapter protested that the DESSERT metaphor is not meant to apply to *all* women but merely to certain women, an objection that misses the fundamental insight that calling any woman a *tart* automatically places all women in the category of potential *tarts,* for no woman is an island.

8. In the wildly popular 1946 Frank Capra movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, Jimmy Stewart calls his little daughter *gingersnap* (not *cookie* or *cupcake*), which illustrates and reinforces this phonetic distinction.

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8   LAUREL A. SUTTON

. . . .

All Media Are Created Equal

Do-It-Yourself Identity in Alternative Publishing

I don't know, I think I would have to do this zine even if nobody read it, just to get this shit off my chest.

—Cristina, *Queen of the Thundercats* 2 (1995:1)

The medium is the message.

—Marshall McLuhan (1964:7)

In a world where weekly magazines provide the answers to life's questions, where movies provide role models and television is often a babysitter, the message of media is no longer optional. Identity—especially women's identity, which in Western culture is so often framed as "other" (cf. Morgan, chapter 1, and Sawin, chapter 12, this volume)—is a mosaic made up of bits and pieces of the self stolen from media that pervade every waking hour of our lives.

If the medium is the message, why has it taken linguists so long to receive it? Sociolinguistics has, until recently, relied almost exclusively on data collected in the traditional way: tape-recorded (or, more recently, videotaped) conversations and interviews with naive subjects. But this is certainly a narrow view of what linguists can and should use as data, a view bound by tradition and a lingering distrust of the popular press. Why is one channel of transmission more acceptable than another? Who determines what media are taken seriously in linguistics and in society?

Being taken seriously is a problem women still face. Despite some shifts toward greater representation (Cotter, chapter 19, this volume), women's voices are still the exception rather than the rule in mass-media outlets, and media targeted at women run heavily toward advice on dieting, cosmetics, sex, and shopping (Bucholtz, chapter 18, this volume). This kind of discourse is considered by the patriarchy to be lightweight, frivolous, and nonthreatening—and, until recently, it was thought to be unworthy of academic attention. If a woman finds that the only way to express "dangerous" thoughts that fall outside this realm is to put Selectric to paper (or the electronic equivalent) and publish it herself, who will hear her voice?

In this chapter, I call for the inclusion of new forms of expression in the analytic corpus, a move that has been initiated in large part by researchers of language and