From *Poule de Luxe* to *Geisha*: Source Languages behind the Present-Day English Synonyms of *Prostitute*

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Abstract: This paper aims at drawing a picture, as complete as possible, of an anthropocentric reality hidden in the synonyms of *prostitute* which have been incorporated into the English lexico-semantic system from other languages since the beginning of the 19th century. The body of Present-day English synonyms of *prostitute* to be analysed includes *horizontal*, *geisha*, *shawl* and *poule de luxe*. Apart from providing the source languages from which English borrowed the afore-mentioned synonyms of *prostitute*, an attempt will be made at discovering the plausible cultural and sociological justification for the lexical borrowings to have taken place. In order to make the onomasiological picture of the sense 'prostitute' as complete as it can be within the limits of this paper, a mention will be made of the lexical heritage within the range of the synonyms of *prostitute* which were incorporated into the English language in the course of Middle English, Early Modern English and Late Modern English.

Keywords: anti-language, X-phemism, synonyms of *prostitute*, borrowing

1. Introduction

Language and culture have always been strongly interrelated with each other and, as noticed by a number of linguists and anthropologists of language, it is a daunting task to analyse one without making at least the slightest mention of the other. Being the natural cradle and environment for the development of language and culture, society as a collective of human beings who co-exist together forms another integral element for the study of language in the social and cultural context. It needs to be stressed that the overwhelming terminological bias is of little help in any author's attempts to come to terms with the definition and scope of anthropological linguistics. As Professor Fisiak notices in his preface to Chruszczewski (2011), anthropological linguistics is a relatively new discipline and is constantly developing its methodologies and stance on a number of issues. An undisputed help and, some would say, a cornerstone to the theoretical backbone of anthropological linguistics is Foley (2006) and, recently, Chruszczewski's (2011) monograph sheds theoretical and methodological light on the discipline of anthropological linguistics. One of the definitions of the discipline in question is the one proposed by Foley (2006, p. 3) which sees anthropological linguistics as a search for the (changing) meanings in linguistic practices, which are – due to obvious reasons – entrenched in broader cultural practices. Within the scope of

anthropological linguistics there seems to be space for the study of euphemism in the context of anti-language.

2. Anti-language and Euphemism

The idea of anti-language was first used by Halliday (1976, p. 570) who described it as a form of language generated by an anti-society which "serves to create and maintain social structure through conversation, just as an everyday language does; but the social structure is of a particular kind, in which certain elements are strongly foregrounded." In his study of anti-language and anti-society Halliday (1976, pp. 572-573) makes use of Podgórecki's (1973, p. 14) analysis of "second life" in prison, its social stratification and anti-language called *grypsera*. Podgórecki (1973, p. 14) explains the specifics of the anti-society formed by inmates in both Polish and American prisons along the following lines:

[…] the incarcerated create in their own social system a unique stratification which is based on the caste principle. The caste adherence in the case of "second life" is based not on a given social background or physical features, but is predominantly determined by a unique link with magical rules which are not functional for the social system in which they operate. The only function which these rules have is to sustain the caste system (quoted after Halliday, 1976, p. 573).

Similarly, in the case of the anti-society of prostitutes the social stratification is evidenced to have existed already in ancient Greece where, apart from the opposite classes of pornê and hetaera, the stratification included a number of other classes of prostitutes, which is summarised in *Table 1* below:

Table 1 Stratification of the anti-society of prostitutes in ancient Greece (based on Duda, 2014a, p. 98).

STATUS	SUBCLASS	FEATURES
HIGH	Gr. MEGALOMISTHO	*megalomistho* 'high priced prostitute'
	Gr. HETAERA	better educated, a certain degree of economic autonomy, sometimes long-term engagements
both male and female	TRAINED PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS	*singer*, Gr. *auletride* 'flute player', Gr. *psaltria* 'harp player', Gr. *kitharistria* 'lyre player'
	BROTHEL WORKER	
	OIKEMA WORKER	Gr. *oikema* 'little house'; male prostitutes found there
	STREETWALKER	
LOW	Gr. PORNÊ	common whores working in the streets or brothels

As can be seen in *Table 1* and as described in detail in Duda (2014a, pp. 96-98), within the subclass *pornê* we may differentiate between two conceptually very much related subclasses, namely *streetwalker* and *brothel worker*, with the latter being slightly higher on the status ladder and public perception scale. It is noteworthy that, according to the *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work* (henceforth: the *EPSW*), there existed an intermediate subclass, namely *oikema worker*, which referred to a prostitute who accepted her partners in small houses (Gr. *oikema* 'little house'). Yet another subclass was *trained professional musician* which included a variety of singers, flute players (Gr. *auletrides*), harp players (Gr. *psaltrias*) and lyre players (Gr. *kitharistrias*). Trained professional musicians – both male and female – were invited to dinner parties in order to entertain the guests with music and the accompanying sexual pleasures. Rather unsurprisingly, there were times, as the *EPSW* notes, when the subclasses of *hetaera* and *trained professional musician* overlapped. The highest rank in the stratification of prostitute subclasses – higher than *hetaera* – was *megalomistho* which foregrounded the element of financial welfare, as it was used in the sense 'high priced prostitute'.

Much later, in the 19th century, and in a completely different corner of the planet, American West, we may observe a similar caste-like stratification of prostitutes which may be itemised in order from the highest position on the economic ladder to the lowest, as presented in the *EPSW*:

1.   brothel dweller,

2.   saloon/dance hall girl,

3.   crib woman,

4.   streetwalker.

As described further in Duda (2014a, p. 85), the category of brothel dwellers comprised prostitutes who were usually younger and more attractive, and thus could successfully demand higher rates for their services. As they became older they either turned into saloon or dance hall girls or they rented cribs, which was much cheaper than renting a room at a brothel. It is worth noting at this point that streetwalkers occupied the lowest position on the economic ladder because they could neither afford to rent a crib nor demand a decent rate. Consequently, they were fully dependent on their clients as to the rate and place of stay.

In turn, when it comes to naming prostitutes we are definitely struck by the number of words and phrases (around 500 hundred according to Spears (1991) and Schulz (1975)) which are evidenced to be used in the sense 'prostitute' at least at one point in their semantic lives. Although it may seem rather far-fetched to treat the synonyms of *prostitute* as anti-language, some, if not most of them, may be seen as part of an anti-language. Suffice it to consider a number of features of anti-

language, for example, as aptly put by Halliday (1976, p. 571), "[t]he language is not merely *re*lexicalised in these areas: it is *over*lexicalised". This feature is indeed at work in the case of *prostitute* and its synonyms where five hundred words and phrases is a lot more than we need to express a single concept. Secondly, Halliday (1976, p. 576) maintains that "[t]he anti-language arises when the alternative reality is a *counter*-reality, set up *in opposition to* some established norms." In this respect prostitution has been – most of the time – *counter*-reality, being on the outskirts or completely outside the society, which confirms yet another characteristic of anti-society that there is "continuity between society and anti-society" (Halliday, 1976, p. 576). Furthermore, Halliday (1976, p. 576) goes on clarifying that "there is also tension between them, reflecting the fact that they are variants of one and the same underlying semiotic. They may express different social structures; but they are part and parcel of the same social system." In addition, the secrecy and the wish to hide certain pieces of information from the society triggers the situation in which, as Halliday (1976, p. 576) puts it, "[…] social meanings will be seen as oppositions: values will be defined by what they are not […]." Take, for example, the synonyms *high-flyer*, *model*, *pavement princess* and *white slave*. Superficially, none of the values represented by the synonyms, that is flying, modelling, being a princess or a slave, is in fact foregrounded in the profession of sex care providers. Only when we dig deeper and try to find links between these values and prostitution do we see the hidden conceptualisation patterns, more often than not of a metaphorical kind. For instance, according to *NODE*, *fly high* means 'to be successful', and *high-flyer* is used in the sense 'someone who is successful academically or in business'. Adding to that the conceptual metaphorical extension SEX IS TRADE which is mirrored in such linguistic expressions as *sell one's body*, *buy love* or *get down to business*, we end up using the word *high-flyer* in the slang register in the sense 'fashionable prostitute'(late 17th c. → 19th c. and 20th c. Am. E; see, the *OED*, Partridge 1984 and Green 2003) or – to be more precise – a prostitute who is prosperous and is a successful "businesswoman" in the sex trade. In Halliday's (1976, p. 578) terms, "[i]t is this metaphorical character that defines the anti-language. An anti-language is a metaphor for an everyday language; and this metaphorical quality appears all the way up and down the system."

The phenomenon that seems to boost up overlexicalisation within anti-language is euphemism or, rather, its negatively loaded counterpart – dysphemism. As Allan and Buridge (1991, p. 11) put it, "[a] **euphemism** is used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one's own face or, through giving offense, that of the audience, or of some third party." On a more general note, Dąbrowska (2006, p. 56) argues that "on a linguistic level [euphemisms] are any formal (phonological, morphological, syntactic) and semantic means which can be used to form cover terms (textual synonyms) to replace the name proper (*verbum proprium*)" (orig.: „(…) na płaszczyźnie

językowej są to wszelkie środki formalne (fonologiczne, morfologiczne, składniowe) i semantyczne, które mogą być wykorzystane do tworzenia określeń zastępczych (synonimów tekstowych) w stosunku do nazwy właściwej (*verbum proprium*).”). In turn, Allan and Burridge (2006) make a distinction between euphemism, which they call "sweet-talking" and dysphemism, which they define as "a word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about denotatum and/or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance" (Allan & Burridge 2006, p. 31). Additionally, Allan and Burridge (2006, pp. 32-33) introduce the term orthophemism which "is typically more formal and more direct (literal) than the corresponding euphemism." However, both euphemism and orthophemism are used when we want to avoid embarrassing or offending the hearer or when we do not want to be embarrassed or ill thought of (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 33). Since the differentiation between the dysphemistic and orthophemistic values of words largely depend on context, and the same word may have different connotative, affective meanings (i.e.: certain words may be cross-varietal synonyms), Allan and Burridge (2006, p. 29) suggest yet another term, namely X-phemism, "to refer to the union set of euphemisms, orthophemisms and dysphemisms", and the relation between the terms may be represented in the following way:
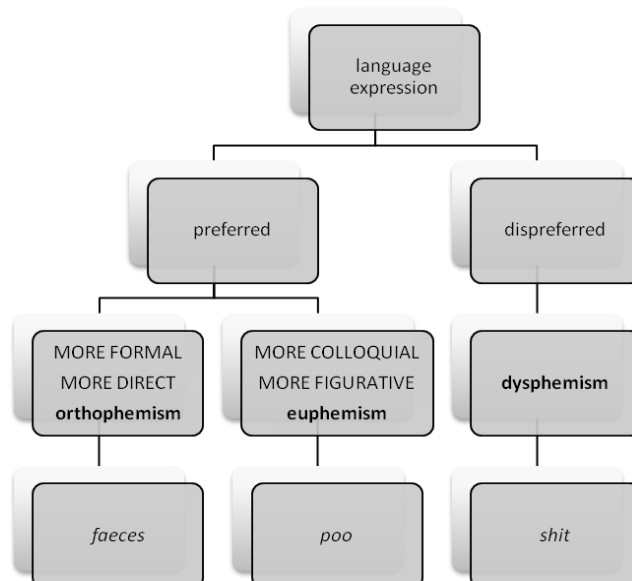

Figure 1 Distinguishing X-phemisms (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 34)

Interestingly, Chruszczewski (2011, p. 191) describes euphemisms as linguistic scapegoats and assumes that "euphemisms take on a linguistic form of a victim and

function as substitute violence and preventive violence at the same time" (orig.: „(…) eufemizmy przybierają formę językowej ofiary i funkcjonują jako przemoc zastępcza a zarazem przemoc zapobiegawcza."). The author compares euphemism to an offering in Catholic Church where a real lamb is replaced with the Host as today's society would reject the brutal act of killing a lamb on the altar, even as a form of an offering to the Lord. There are, however, extra-linguistic situations where the use of a euphemism, this preventive violence (to use Chruszczewski's (2011) terms), is either insufficient or turns futile, and – in such cases – we need to turn to anti-language in its pure form. Nevertheless, Chruszczewski (2011, p. 191) warns against overusing anti-language and goes on to explain that the modern urge, especially among young people, to find more and more emulative means to express oneself leads to greater extra-linguistic brutality, which we definitely should counteract.

3. Borrowing in the Context of Language Contact and Synonyms of *Prostitute*

Anti-languages are overlexicalised and they constantly change their lexical resources in order to create and maintain counter-reality (Halliday 1976). In search of secrecy and expressiveness members of anti-societies may turn, for example, to foreign languages to find new means of their "anti-linguistic" resources. Euphemisms, as well, may be formed out of non-native elements, and as such they are said to "sound finer" (Rawson, 1981, p. 8). Durkin (2011, p. 132) points that "[b]orrowing occurs in situations of language contact, and is indeed an almost inevitable consequence of it, although the levels and the types of borrowing which are found differ greatly in different types of contact situation." Along these lines, Foley (2006, p. 384) explains that "[t]he most common kind of borrowing is lexical items, with the items being borrowed indicative of the nature of the cultural contact. If a society comes into contact with another it views as culturally or technologically superior, it is very likely to borrow from this culture heavily […]." However, there is one more aspect of lexical borrowing that needs to be mentioned, that is the level of mutual intelligibility. As Durkin (2011, p. 156) rightly points out, with an extremely low level of mutual intelligibility only very limited borrowing is possible, and the intensity of borrowing goes hand in hand with the degree of bilingualism or intelligibility. In turn, Weinreich (1968, p. 56) states that without doubt "[…] lexical borrowing is less restricted to the bilingual portion of a language community than phonic or grammatical interference." Such was the fate of the English language. Both Latin and French were the languages of superior cultures, from which Anglo-Saxon had a lot to learn and take, lexical items among other things. This political, religious and cultural dominance of Latin and French resulted in a decent level of bilingualism, and consequently an influx of vocabulary to the English lexico-semantic system.

Let us now narrow down our perspective and study the borrowings which found their way into the English language during different historical periods to be used in the sense 'prostitute'. First and foremost, from a quantitative point of view the *HTE* and the *OED* make a record of twenty-nine words of foreign origin, which were either borrowed with the sense 'prostitute' or were borrowed with a different, usually, female-specific sense, and with the passage of time developed the pejoratively loaded sense 'prostitute' (see Duda, 2014b).

As *Table 2* presented below shows, the roots of the majority of loanwords used in the sense 'prostitute' may be traced back to either French (fourteen), Italian (four) or Latin (four). Among the less popular source languages one is to find Dutch (*strumpet*, *frow*), German (*trull*, *frow*), Irish (*drab*), Gaelic (*callet*), Anglo-Irish (*shawl*), Spanish (*amorosa*), Japanese (*geisha*) and Yiddish (*shickster*). One needs to bear in mind, however, that in a number of cases the ultimate and etymologically rigid origin is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. As a result, in several cases two possible source languages are provided, and in the case of *croshabell* the origin is so obscure that determining even a plausible or hypothetical origin is virtually impossible. It is the phonotactic structure of the word that points to the possible foreign origin of this word (Duda, 2014b).

Turning now to the life span and the survival power of the synonyms of *prostitute*, which were borrowed from other languages, *Table 2* shows that the resistance of the lexical items in the battle for survival in the English language was in no way of a uniform nature. Out of five Middle English borrowings two, namely *strumpet* and *harlot*, may be labelled as unquestionable winners since both are still found in the macrostructures of modern lexicographic sources, such as *NODE*, *LDCE* and *MED*. The remaining three, that is *pute*, *putain* and *common* were either one-time occurrences or their life span was too short to turn them into permanent acquisitions in the lexico-semantic system of English. As for twelve Early Modern English loan words, only three, namely *prostitute*, *courtesan* and *trull*, are evidenced to have survived the test of time whereas the rest had become obsolete by the advent of Present-day English. Out of three Late Modern English borrowings, only *fille de joie* is still recorded in modern lexicographic sources, and *frow* and *bawd* lost their semantic currency soon after they were borrowed (Duda, 2014b).

Table 2 The origin and life span of historical synonyms of *prostitute* borrowed from different source languages

	M.E. (1100-1500)	E.Mod.E. (1500-1650)	L.Mod.E. (1650-1800)	Pres.E. (1800-...)
pute (Fr.)	• 1380			
putain (Fr.)	1300 ⟶	1603		
strumpet (Lat./Du.)	1327			1889 →
harlot (Fr.)	1432			1859 →
common (Fr.)	1300 → 1330			
drab (Ir.)		1530 ⟶	1856	
putanie (Fr.)		1520 ⟶ 1700		
courtesan (Fr.)		1549 ⟶	1868 →	
trull (G.)		1519		1898 →
callet (Fr./Gael.)		1500 ⟶	1785	
pucelle (Fr.)		1520 ⟶ 1700		
succubus (Lat.)		1622 ⟶	1803	
amorosa (Sp./It.)		• 1634		
croshabell (???)		• 1598		
punk (Lat.)		1596 ⟶	1928	
prostitute (Lat.)		1613 ⟶	1840 →	
hackney (Fr.)		1579 ⟶ 1679		
trug (It. *trucca*)		1592 ⟶	1883	
fille de joie (Fr.)			1705 ⟶ 1970→	
frow (Du./G.)			1781 → 1795	
bawd (Fr.)			1706 ⟶ 1842	
horizontal (**Fr.**)				1888 ⟶ 1970
geisha (Jap.)				1891 → 1947→
shawl (Anglo-Ir.)				• 1922
poule de luxe (**Fr.**)				1926 → 1979
escort (Fr.)				1874 ⟶ 2004→
puta (It.)				1967 → 1971→
bimbo (It.)				1929 → 1952
shickster (Yid.)				1839 ⟶ 1965

Since it is impossible to analyse all the borrowings in one paper, we shall concentrate on four selected items originating in Present-day English, namely *horizontal*, *geisha*, *shawl* and *poule de luxe*, and apart from looking at their etymological paths we shall delve into the cultural and sociological background of the borrowings in question.

4. From *Geisha* to *Poule de Luxe*

As shown in *Table 2* above, as many as eight synonyms of *prostitute* have entered the lexico-semantic system of Present-day English, of which only three (*geisha*, *escort* and *puta*) are still recorded in the lexicographic sources of the 21st century.

Horizontal

According to the *OED* and Ayto (2005), *horizontal* came either from French or directly from late Latin in the mid-16th century and at that time the word meant 'of the horizon'. Later, in the early 17th century it started to be used in its modern sense 'flat, level'. The word *horizontal* (also *grand horizontal* or – its unmodified French form – *(grande) horizontale*) was first recorded in the female-specific sense 'prostitute' in the late 19th century (the *OED*, Partridge 1984, Green 2003), but failed to survive till the 21st century. Although the *OED* provides the last quote from 1970 both Partridge (1984) and Green (2003) mark the entry as obsolete (see the *OED*: 1888 I shall let the liason run its course – it will be very amusing & not as costly as an affair with a regular *horizontale*. → 1970 He is over-shadowed throughout by Aunt Augusta, the still unretired *grande horizontale* of seventy-three.).

As to the cultural and sociological background, it is hard to escape noticing that using the word *horizontal* in the sense 'prostitute' whether in French, English or any other language must be conceptually linked with the position prostitutes take while performing their occupational skills. This conceptualisation pattern is based on the metonymic contiguity LOCATION FOR PROFESSION or, to be more precise, its subtype POSITION FOR PROFESSION. Interestingly, when the lexical borrowing took place *grandes horizontals* of the 19th-century Paris were almost world-famous, or rather infamous, for their high-class lavish lives their protectors offered to them. The *EPSW* clarifies that "it was the women, and particularly the women of the *demi-monde*, who were the main source of fascination for visitors to the city and who gave Second Empire Paris its lasting reputation." Not surprisingly, France's closest and ever jealous neighbour wanted to have the same phrase for the same phenomenon. Victorian London, after all, was no worse than Paris with at least fifty thousand prostitutes in the city alone (Garton 2004). Another peculiarity was ostentatious clothing, with the crinoline rage reaching its peak around that time. However, the most bizarre thing, at least from the present-day perspective, was that the most famous *couturier* of that time, Charles Frederick Worth, alas an Englishman, designed and made dresses for grande horizontals, society women and Queen Victoria (the *EPSW*). Without going into more juicy details of "extravagant *vie Parisienne*" (the *EPSW*), we may conclude that it was this atypical cultural dominance of Paris over London that led to the incorporation of the word *horizontal* and its female-specific sense into the English language. Nevertheless, together with the cultural change – the collapse of the Second

Empire and dying out of the phenomenon of keeping hideously expensive grande horizontals – the borrowing was no longer in such a sociolinguistic demand as before, and as such started its gradual and slow way out of the English word stock.

Geisha

To start with, the origin of the word *geisha* is much more conspicuous than its use in the sense 'prostitute'. As the authors of the *OED* conjecture, *geisha* was borrowed from Japanese into English in the late 19th century to be used in the sense 'Japanese girl whose profession is to entertain men by dancing and singing' (see the *OED*: 1890 All Kyôto's *geishas* will be there. → 1939 Up-to-date garb and manners make the *geisha* appear prim and old-fashioned.). The *OED* makes an additional note that the word is also loosely used in the sense 'Japanese prostitute', and one of the quotes provided in the *OED* dating from 1910 seems to constitute a bit of an explanation: "*Geisha…*, strictly the name of the professional dancing and singing girls of Japan. The word is, however, often loosely used for the girls and women inhabiting Shin Yoshiwara, the prostitutes' quarter of Tokyo."

Culturally, as the *EPSW* elucidates, the phenomenon of trained entertainers called *geishas* (lit. 'artists'; first male, but later chiefly female) occurred in the late 18th century. However, the distinction between geishas and prostitutes have never been hard and fast. Although geishas are preoccupied with traditional Japanese arts such as classical dance, singing, playing musical instruments, calligraphy, flower arrangement, writing poetry, playing Go and the tea ceremony, it is not unusual that a sexual relationship grows between a geisha and her regular patron (the *EPSW*). It is worth noting at this point that geishas' patrons are usually executives who have expense accounts to devote, for example, to entertaining themselves in a traditional way, including supporting geishas financially. Another cultural aspect of geishas' lives, according to the *EPSW*, is that they live in communities, for example in hot spring resorts (*onsen*) where they are believed to be more likely to find themselves involved in sexual interactions and less focused on artistic work or in the city, especially Tokyo, where they live and work in areas called *hanamachi* (lit. 'flower quarters'). Looking at all the sociological and cultural aspects of geishas it is hard to escape the impression that the conceptual link between the life of a geisha and that of a prostitute is relatively obvious: living in communities/houses – living in brothels, both financially sponsored by: patrons – clients and, finally, both work to please their patrons – clients. This culturally embedded picture of a geisha, simplified as it is, works perfectly well for language users to employ the word *geisha* as a euphemism for 'prostitute'. Adding to that, none of the dictionaries of slang consulted includes the entry *geisha* in their macrostructure and *LDCE*, *MED* and *NODE* all provide the sense 'Japanese woman-entertainer' next to the entry.

Shawl

In the mid-17th century, as recorded by the *OED*, the word *shawl* was incorporated into the English word stock from Persian *shāl* via Urdu and other Indian languages and was originally used in the sense 'oblong piece of material made from the hair of a Tibetan goat worn by Orientals as a scarf, turban or girdle'. Both the *OED* and Ayto (2005) maintain that versions of shawl were not seen in the West until the mid-18th century. Together with the exotic clothing novelty the word for it spread around all European languages, which adopted it according to their own morphophonological rules, for example French *châle*, Spanish *chal*, Italian *scialle*, Dutch *sjaal*, Russian *shali* and Polish *szal*. Interestingly, Danish and German borrowed the word *shawl* from English, and not from Indian languages as other European languages.

In the semantic development of *shawl* from 'piece of garment' to 'prostitute' we can clearly observe the metonymic contiguity pattern FEATURE FOR PERSON ADORNED WITH THIS FEATURE, and, to be more precise, its subtype ITEM OF CLOTHING FOR PERSON. In the 19th century Ireland, especially Dublin, Anglo-Irish fisherwomen started wearing large woollen shawls as cheaper substitutes of hooded cloaks. This sociological change led to the common association of shawls with low-class Anglo-Irish women who began to be called *shawly/shawlie* (Partridge 1984). This must have inspired James Joyce as he used *shawl* in the sense 'prostitute' in his *Ulysses* (see the *OED*: 1922 Blind to the world up in a shebeen in Bride street after closing time, fornicating with two *shawls*.). However, the extract from Joyce is the only quotation used in the *OED* to testify to the sense 'prostitute', which failed to enjoy longer life in the English language.

Poule de luxe

This borrowing definitely betrays its French origin both by its looks and its sound and, like *grande horizontale*, constitutes yet another piece of evidence that when we want to linguistically beat about the bush "foreign languages [do] sound finer" (Rawson 1981:8). According to the *OED*, the etymology of *poule de luxe* takes us back to French *poule* 'hen', which, as pointed out by Green (2003), was used as a synonym of *prostitute* already in French slang register. The rise of this human-specific sense of *poule* owes to the well-rooted conceptual metaphor HUMAN BEING IS ANIMAL, which lies behind the multitude of animal → human sense developments.

Interestingly, the word *poule* when borrowed – in the early 20th century – was used in slang in the sense 'girl, young woman, especially when considered as promiscuous'. Only when the composite element *de luxe* was added did it change to mean 'high-class prostitute, courtesan', and as such may be treated as a

euphemism for 'prostitute'. Once again it was the aura of prestige and extravagance that might have inspired the incorporation of *poule de luxe* into the English word stock.

5. Conclusions

The analysis conducted in the foregoing clearly shows that studying cultural and sociological aspects of linguistic phenomena, such as lexical borrowing and linguistic change, facilitates deeper understanding and grasping of the reality we live in. What is more, more often than not it is cultural and sociological background coupled with diachronic approach which contribute to distinguishing between euphemisms and dysphemisms. The Present-day English synonyms of *prostitute* presented and analysed here, though in a fragmentary way, seem to show that lexical borrowings may enrich equally well slang terminology and euphemisms. What may be an interesting element of further studies on prostitution, and its anti-language, is not only how prostitutes are called, whether offensively or euphemistically, but also how they call each other as in-groupers and how they talk about their job and whether what we treat as slang when talking about them and their profession is in fact abusive and offensive to them.

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