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ON ZOOSEMY, FOODSEMY AND PLANTOSEMY: A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO SELECTED TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

Abstract: Regardless of time and place people express their emotions in a number of different and – sometimes – strange ways. Endearments originate from our creativity, therefore the number of ways we have of addressing each other in an endearing way seems to be unlimited. We may come across similar or even identical endearments in many languages, but there are a lot of peculiar local- and culture-specific terms. On the one hand, new terms constantly extend the lexicon; on the other, a number of endearments fall into oblivion and become archaisms, because they have undergone the process of meaning amelioration or pejoration. Still, the vast majority of people tend to employ traditional and typical pet names in intimate contexts.

In this paper we shall discuss the semantic development of English terms of endearment which are – by and large – employed to woo a partner and we shall focus on the role of the cognitive mechanisms in the changes of their meaning. In particular, we shall concentrate on the importance of such mechanisms as zoosemy, foodsemy and plantosemy.

Key words: endearments, cognitive approach, foodsemy, plantosemy, zoosemy

Introduction

With the exception of a handful of languages that are lacking in endearments, in many cultures it is both common and natural not to call a person we feel affection towards by his or her real name in some – predominantly intimate – contexts. Instead, we are inclined to employ terms of endearment (in this paper used interchangeably with *pet names*, *love-isms* or *terms of affection*) which – in a nutshell – may be defined as loving nicknames. Such love-isms may

either carry sexual innuendo or be utterly devoid of it. In fact, everything depends on the addressee of a pet name. Not surprisingly, in contrast to lexical items employed by sexual partners, terms directed toward children and animals lack sexual references.

Overall, it is women that tend to use endearments more often than men, which might be attributed to the fact that males are considered to be less eager to show their emotions, whereas females not only express their feelings but are also prone to verbalize them. The English language is abundant in a diverse and rich collection of endearments, ranging from the old-fashioned ones which originate in Anglo-Saxon times (e.g. *darling*) to the serendipitous slang pet names (e.g. *main squeeze*) and made-up nicknames, among which we may encounter nonsense formations (e.g. *shabookadook*) and silly names (e.g. *stinky*).¹ One may even come across a sprinkling of borrowings, such as German *Schatz* ‘treasure’, although – curiously enough – loanwords are few and far between here, thus we may assume that the language of intimacy is rather patriotic. It is worth noting that such unexpected endearments introduce an element of fun into a relationship.

Needless to say, the vast majority of language users employ the same endearments (e.g. *honey*, *sweetheart*, *darling*), which seem to be unremarkable and deficient in creativity. It is fitting to add that such lexical items fail to bear any resemblance to the addressee of the pet name and they hardly tell us anything specific about a beloved person. Animal nicknames predominate over other groups of endearments, despite the fact that women are often fond of the terms in which they are compared to small objects, such as Polish *kruszyńka* ‘a tiny woman’². Not surprisingly, females are partial to terms which stress their fragility and softness rather than the ones that are associated with rodents. While female-specific pet names usually connote with small, innocent and sweet animals, male-specific ones often allude to large and dangerous predators, such as a *tiger*.

The purpose set to the paper that follows is to elaborate on the semantic development of selected terms of endearment and search for their common features. In particular, we shall focus on those lexical items which result from the application of such mechanisms as zoosemy, foodsemy and plantosemy. In the subsequent sections we shall briefly discuss all these mechanisms. We shall tackle both common pet names and the lexical items which functioned as terms of affection in the past, but – for various reasons – fell into oblivion. Due to the fact that the substantial part of this paper is confined to the three figurative processes, we shall now present their tripartition in the table:

¹ See <http://www.fluentu.com/english/blog/american-terms-of-endearment/>.

² Lit. ‘crumb’.

<i>zoosemy</i>	<i>foodsemy</i>	<i>plantosemy</i>
<i>bird</i>	<i>honey (-pie)/(-toast)</i>	<i>buttercup</i>
<i>bear</i>	<i>sugar (-pie)</i>	<i>daisy</i>
<i>bunny</i>	<i>crumpet</i>	<i>clover</i>
<i>bawcock</i>	<i>cupcake</i>	<i>violet</i>
<i>tiger</i>	<i>dumpling</i>	<i>flower</i>
<i>mouse</i>	<i>fruitcake</i>	<i>petal</i>
<i>chick</i>	<i>muffin</i>	<i>blossom</i>
<i>duck/duckling</i>	<i>pudding</i>	
<i>kitten</i>	<i>cinnamon</i>	
<i>lamb/lambkin</i>	<i>tart</i>	
<i>pet</i>	<i>cookie</i>	
<i>cony</i>	<i>meatball</i>	
<i>swan</i>	<i>powsowdy</i>	
<i>culver</i>	<i>apricot</i>	
<i>dove</i>	<i>cherry</i>	
<i>turtle-dove</i>	<i>peach</i>	
<i>whiting</i>	<i>strawberry</i>	
<i>sparling</i>	<i>pumpkin</i>	
<i>sparrow</i>	<i>cabbage</i>	
<i>wolf</i>	<i>peanut</i>	
<i>(little) owl</i>		

Table 1. Division of endearments. All highlighted terms are to be scrutinized in the paper.

Methodology – a brief outline

For obvious space limitations, the framework adopted in the paper that follows is that of selected elements of Cognitive Linguistics. Firstly, both Lakoff (1987) and Taylor (1992) understand the notion of ‘conceptual category’ as a kind of ‘structure’ embodied in humans’ conceptual systems, which stem from bodily experience. The root of our conceptual systems is based on such elements as body movement, experience and our ability to comprehend the true nature of

things (see Lakoff 1987: xiv). Given that the number of conceptual categories is innumerable (e.g. BODY PARTS, MAMMALS, FALLEN HUMAN BEING), we shall limit our analysis to the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS.

The term *domain*, in turn, allows us to apprehend the meaning of a given lexical item in the context of other semantic units. In the words of Langacker (1987: 488), it is *a coherent area of conceptualization relative to which semantic units may be characterized*. And so, MONTHS are the semantic domain against which *January, February, March* and so on are understood. By the same token, *football, volleyball* or *basketball* can only be explicated by means of the domain of TEAM SPORTS. In what follows, we shall also make use of the notion of ‘attributive (or conceptual) values (or elements)’ which help to define a conceptual domain.

Furthermore, following Ungerer and Schmid (2006: 119), *entrenchment is the degree to which the formation and activation of a cognitive unit is routinized and automated*. To analyse the meaning of a given lexical item we shall also use the notion of *profiling/highlighting*, which is a part of the process of a lexical item acquiring meaning. As Taylor (1992: 84-85) puts it, *profiling entails the structuring of a domain by means of an appropriate ‘schema’ or set of schemas*.

The influence of zoosemy on the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS

The process of zoosemy stands behind the creation of a number of lexical items employed with reference to human beings. It is so due to the fact that we are disposed to perceive animals as beings endowed with various earmarks which – simultaneously – may also be attributed to people (see Persson 1990: 169). And so, we frequently resort to the vocabulary connected with the realm of animals if we intend to scorn, ridicule or libel someone. As maintained by Basaj (1996: 282), the motivation behind the operation of the process of zoosemy probably originates from psychological parallelism; that is, various kinds of similitude between human beings and the reality they live in. The similarities in question hinge on the cognitive way of thinking provoked by a comparison. In turn, the semantic conditioning of the concocting of comparisons stems from the speaker’s intention to underscore some feature of a human being in intensive and evaluative ways. One has grounds to say that living creatures, or some groups of them, are associated with either real or imaginary stereotypical connotations in our cognition, which expedites the choice of a model, namely the element of the comparison which constitutes the underpinning of the image. In a nutshell, the foundations of such a comparison are the names of animals or other things that surround us (see Kiełtyka 2008: 62-63).

The quantum of animal-related terms of affection may be divided in the following way:

BIRDS	<i>bird, duck, swan, culver, dove, turtle-dove, sparrow, owl</i>
MAMMALS	<i>bear, tiger, lamb, cony, wolf</i>
FISH	<i>whiting, sparling</i>
RODENTS	<i>mouse</i>
diminutives	<i>duckling, lambkin, kitten, birdie</i>

Table 2. Animal-related terms of affection.

We shall commence our discussion with the history of *culver*, which dates back to Anglo-Saxon times (825 Hwelc seleð me fiðru swe swe *culfran* & ic fliÆu & Æerestu.) (the *OED*). The historically primary sense of the word is defined by the *OED* as ‘a dove, a pigeon’, however, at some point of its semantic evolution the sense of the noun underwent the process of the narrowing of meaning and nowadays it adverts to the wood-pigeon only. In Early Middle English – by the process of zoosemy – the lexical item acquired a novel human-specific sense and started to be figuratively employed as an appellation of tender affection. Let us quote the following examples to illustrate the sense in question:

1225 Cum to me, mi leofmon, mi *kulture*.

1491 She herde oure lorde whiche callyd her sayenge: Come to me my spowse, my *culuer* or douue.

As Kopaliński (1999) points out, these small birds almost always trigger pleasant associations. Apart from the fact that they symbolize heavenly purity and innocence, they also connote Resurrection, rebirth and piety. But, above all, they clearly exemplify love, sensual pleasure and constancy, therefore we may hazard a guess that such features might have contributed to the rise of the secondary human-specific sense of the word in question. Moreover, in spite of the fact that we can hardly come upon any hint that the word might have been female-specific, we may put forward such a hypothesis given that the culver’s beauty has frequently been compared to that of a female. In fact, in ancient times ‘kissing’ culvers were attributes of extremely feminine goddesses of both love and fecundity (see Kopaliński 1999). Thus, it can hardly come as a surprise that the noun *culver* was part and parcel of the language of intimacy.

In terms of our cognitive analysis, we can say that for the historically secondary sense of *culver* the foregrounding of the conceptual element EPICENE specified for the attributive path of the domain of SEX is attended by the highlighting of the attributive elements INNOCENT and PURE presupposed for the attributive path of the conceptually central domain of CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOUR.

Let us now examine the word *bunny* which – in all likelihood – has its roots in the Scottish dialect word *bun* which referred to a rabbit’s or squirrel’s tail (see *Word and Phrase Origins*). As hinted by the *OED*, the noun *bun* was first

attested in the second half of the 16th century (1587 Her Squirrell left away · · she sought to stay The little pretie *Bun.*), whereas its diminutive form *bunny*, which may be defined as either ‘a pet name for a rabbit’ or as ‘an endearment employed with reference to females and children’ appeared at the outset of the 17th century (see the *OED*). Interestingly, it is the human-specific endearing sense of *bunny* that preceded the animal-specific sense of the diminutive form of the noun. In fact, the former sense emerged at the beginning of the 17th century, whereas the latter one not until the end. Compare the following quotations extracted from the *OED* macrostructure:

a) human-specific sense of *bunny*

1606 Sweet Peg · · my honey, my *bunny*, my duck, my dear.
1691 *Bunny* is also used as a flattering word to children.

b) animal-specific sense of *bunny*

1690 Crew, *Bunny*, a Rabbit.
1873 *Bunny* gave a flick of his white tail.

Quite contrary to the positively-loaded associations of the *culver*, the extralinguistic image of a *bunny* is much more intricate. Such a divergence results from the fact that on the one hand the animal represents deception, fickleness, cowardice and malice, but on the other hand, it also stands for resourcefulness, sensuality, fecundity, velocity and vigilance. Curiously enough, bunnies are noted for their exceptional fertility which allows them to survive. It is the only species whose female becomes pregnant for the second time before she drops a litter (see Kopaliński 1999).

Viewed from the cognitive angle, for the construal of the sense ‘an endearment employed with reference to females and children’ of the derivative in question such conceptual domains as the domain of SEX, the domain of PHYSICAL APPEARANCE and the domain of CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOUR may be said to be involved as the attributive paths of the following conceptual elements are respectively activated: EPICENE, SWEET and INNOCENT. Additionally, in some cases we are also dealing with the foregrounding of the conceptual element YOUNG presupposed for the attributive path of the domain of AGE.

The last word to be scrutinized in this group is *turtle(-dove)*. But before we move on to the analysis, let us make a vital distinction between *turtle* the dove and *turtle* the marine shelled reptile, which are two distinct lexical items. As given in *Word Origins*, the former *turtle*, namely the mourning dove, descends from Latin *turtur*, that is the word mimicking the bird’s cooing. Currently, it may only be found in the compound *turtledove*, which surfaced in Middle English. In

fact, no turtles are involved here, as the first part of the lexical item derives from the echoic sound and the second part stems from the word *dove* meaning ‘a diver’ (see *Word and Phrase Origins*). The provenance of the other *turtle*, denoting the reptile, lies in obscurity. It is claimed that it might be an alteration of the French *tortue* ‘tortoise’, but given that the roots of this word are uncharted, we still fail to provide any details of the noun in question (see *Word Origins*).

Historically speaking, following the *OED*, *turtle* appeared as early as in Anglo-Saxon times, which may be attested by means of the following *OED* quotations:

1000 Him eac spedlice spearuwa hus begyted, and tidlice *turtle* nistlað.
1860 *Turtle* calleth *turtle* in Heaven's May.

However, it was not until the 15th century that the simple word *turtle* and the rhyming combination *turtle-dove* acquired a figurative human-specific sense defined in the *OED* in the following way: ‘applied to a person, as a term of endearment, or (esp.) to lovers or married folk, in allusion to the turtle-dove's affection for its mate’. The following *OED* examples testify to this historically secondary human-specific sense of the analysed word:

14?? O trusty *turtle*, trewest of al trewe.
1588 Berow. Will these *Turtles* be gone? Kin. Hence sirs, away.
1865 I am a solitary *Turtle* (Dove, not Reptile) just now, my wife being at Rugby.

In cognitive terms, from the 15th century the human-specific semantics of *turtle* started to be associated with the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS and the conceptual category RELATIONSHIPS. Moreover, the senses of the word may be accountable in terms of entrenchment links to the domain of SEX for which the conceptual element EPICENE is activated. Given that turtles are renowned for their conjugal affection and loyalty, we may assume that the transfer from the conceptual macrocategory ANIMALS, or – to be more precise – BIRDS, to the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS may have been conditioned by the presence of such conceptual elements as FAITHFUL, INNOCENT, PURE that are relevant for the construal of both the animal-specific and the human-specific senses and hence provide the bridge for the shift within the attributive path of the domain of CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOUR. These three conceptual elements have played a pivotal role in the rise of the figurative senses of *turtle-(dove)*, that is ‘a lover’ and ‘sweetheart’, because turtle doves were perceived as the epitome of a profound and steadfast love.

Foodsemy³ and its impact on the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS

Along similar lines, foodsemic terms constitute one of the most extensive groups of terms of affection, and this results from the fact that in the creation of figurative language we resort to those conceptual categories that we are most familiar with. As argued by Cymbalista (2009: 13), the names of food products often contain a distinctive component which allows for metaphorical modifications of their meaning. By and large, such transformations are brought about by various metaphorical extensions and the operation of such processes as metonymy or synecdoche.

The phenomenon of foodsemy refers to the process in which novel figurative senses in the lexical items denoting food are coined. In the vast majority of cases, such evaluatively loaded senses advert to the conceptual macrocategory HUMAN BEING (see Cymbalista 2009: 13). That the phenomenon of foodsemy appears to be fairly widespread in English is not a sheer coincidence, as we can encounter numerous examples of its application throughout all the historical periods. However, to make things more complex, we should bear in mind that a number of food-terms simultaneously function as plant-terms, with such illustrative examples as *apricot*, *peach*, or *pumpkin*.

All in all, contemporary food-related terms of affection may be divided into nine main categories, which are as follows⁴:

BAKED GOODS	<i>baby cakes, cookie, cupcake, honey bun, snicker-doodle</i>
BREAKFAST FOOD	<i>doughnut, muffin, pancake</i>
CANDY	<i>bonbon, chiclet, gumdrop, jellybean, sugar-daddy, sugar plum, sweetheart, tootsie, lollipop</i>
DESSERTS	<i>pudding, pudding pie, sugar pie</i>
EDIBLE ANIMALS	<i>chick, duckling, lamb</i>
FRUIT	<i>apricot, blueberry, peach, cherry, pineapple</i>
SAVORY DISHES	<i>dumpling, hot dog</i>
SWEET INGREDIENTS	<i>cinnamon, chocolate chip, honey, marshmallow, sugar</i>
VEGETABLES	<i>peanut, pumpkin</i>

Table 3. The division of endearing food-terms.

Cinnamon is the first lexical item to be analysed in this group. The historically primary food-specific sense of the noun may be defined as a kind of spice obtained from the inner bark of an East Indian tree (see the *OED*). Therefore, we may say that the semantics of the lexical item is associated with the conceptual category SPECIES, embedded in the larger macrocategory

³ The term *foodsemy* was coined by Kleparski (2008, 2012).

⁴ See <http://www.epicurious.com/archive/blogs/editor/2014/09/food-inspired-nicknames-terms-of-endearment.html>.

FOOD. The term was first employed in Greek, which – in all likelihood – borrowed it from an earlier Semitic language (see *Word and Phrase Origins*). Interestingly enough, it was the human-specific sense of the word that preceded the appearance of the food-term in English, as the former one appeared in the second half of the 14th century (1386 *My fayre bryd, my swete cynamome.*), whereas the latter came forth circa forty years later (1430 *Sinamome, frankensence withal.*) (the *OED*). We may assume that the author of the only attested endearing use of the lexical item in question must have known the species before it was imported to England. Such a hypothesis seems to be plausible given that this sense is absent from the vast majority of the consulted lexicographic works and it is only the *OED* that includes it in its macrostructure and labels it as both obscure and rare. It is also hinted in *TTEM* that cinnamon occurs in the affectionate sense in the simile *dear as cinnamon*.

We may conjecture that – from the cognitive angle – the shift from the conceptual category SPECIES to the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS may have been conditioned by the process of activation of relevant conceptual elements within the attributive paths of the domain of TEXTURE, the domain of SMELL and the domain of TASTE, such as BRITTLE, AROMATIC, FRAGRANT and SWEET, which might be connected with both senses. Extralinguistically, the smell of a beloved person is always pleasant; such a person is often perceived – mostly by men – as fragile, therefore one has grounds to say that the above-mentioned values serve to characterize not only the species but also a human-being.

Bestowing people we are fond of and attached to with various soubriquets is both natural and unintentional. Among such ‘love-isms’ we may find a group of lexical items whose sense is associated with the conceptual category DESSERT. *Cookie* is a pet name whose roots go back to the first half of the 18th century (1730 *In the Low-Country the Cakes are called Cookies.* → 1968 *Children sneaking cookies from a cookie jar.*) (the *OED*) when it was used in the sense ‘a small flat sweet cake’. However, in the first half of the 20th century *cookie* was – via foodsemic extension – first employed in the human-specific sense. The noun is reported to have been used mainly with reference to very enticing females and – only occasionally – to males (1920 *That girl friend of yours is a cookie—hey, what?* → 1959 *I met a cookie I know. . . She said you'd said Faustus was like Oklahoma.*) (the *OED*). In all likelihood, this may have given rise to an endearing sense of *cookie* which emerged in the same period.

From the cognitive angle, the rise of the secondary human-specific sense of *cookie* must be pictured in terms of activation of the conceptual value EPICENE presupposed for the attributive path of the domain of SEX. At the same time, one may speak of an entrenchment link to the domain of TASTE for which the positively loaded conceptual elements APPETIZING and SWEET are activated. The transfer from the conceptual category DESSERTS to the conceptual

category ENDEARMENTS may have been conditioned by the presence of the latter conceptual element that is relevant for the construal of both senses and hence it provides the bridge for the shift within the attributive path of the domain of TASTE.

The contemporary word *crumpet*, in turn, was unknown until the close of the 17th century; by then, the form *crompid* had been used. The first crumpets were hard pancakes prepared on a griddle, whereas the Victorian ones were soft and spongy. The earliest attested use of the word comes from the late 14th century (A cake of a loof, a crusted cake spreynde with oyle, a *crompid* cake, of the leepe of therf looues), whereas the altered version appeared three centuries later (1694 They make Cakes of it [Buck Wheat] · · as they do Oat-cakes, and call it *Crumpit*.) (the *OED*). No other sense of the lexical item had been known until the very beginning of the 20th century when *crumpet* acquired a novel human-specific sense and started to be employed as a trivial endearment. Frequently, we may come across the version *old crumpet* with the same meaning. The following quotations testify the human-specific sense of the noun in question:

- 1900 You're Ophelia, Scrubby; but don't you go winking at the johnnies in the stalls,
you giddy little *crumpet*!
1920 Don't, Percival, *old crumpet*.
1923 I say, *old crumpet*, did my uncle seem pleased to see you?

Soon, the meaning of the word underwent the process of pejoration, when the sense *crumpet* started to connote with the conceptual category FALLEN WOMAN. To be more precise, according to the *OED*, the word adverts to females which are perceived as a means of sexual gratification (1936 Fancy staying up as late as this and not having no *crumpet*.) (the *OED*).

In terms of the cognitively-couched model of analysis employed in this paper, we can say that the transfer to the conceptual category endearments may have been conditioned by highlighting such a taste-related element as APPETIZING and the element SOFT that are relevant for the construal of both food-specific and endearing senses and that those two senses provide the conceptual bridge for the shift that originates from the nature of the attributive paths of the domain of TASTE and the domain of TEXTURE.

Another obsolete and obscure term of affection, namely *powsowdy*, emerged at the outset of the 16th century. Curiously enough, we are dealing here with a very rare instance of the semantic shift from the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS to the conceptual category FOOD. Currently, the term refers to a Scottish pudding made with rum, sugar, nutmeg and toasted bread or – alternatively – by stewing sheep's brain, but the earliest attested use of the noun alludes to a beloved person (the *OED*). As given in the *OED*, the endearing sense dates back to the early 1500s (1500–20 'My claver, and my curldodie, My hwny

soppis, my sweet *possodie*’.), while the food-specific sense of *powsowdy* was recorded as late as in the second half of the 17th century (1685 F. Sempill Blythsum Wedding vii, There will be · *Powsodie*, and drammock, and crowdie.).

Cognitively speaking, we may speak here of an entrenchment link to the domain of SEX for which the conceptual element EPICENE is activated. Moreover, the human-specific sense of *powsowdy* is accountable for in terms of an entrenchment link to the domain of TASTE for which the positively-loaded conceptual element APPETIZING is activated.

The influence of the phenomenon of plantosemy on the conceptual category ENDEARMENTS

While English may boast a number of pet names which arose via zoosemic or plantosemic extension, the examples which result from the metaphorical transfer from the conceptual macrocategory PLANTS to the category ENDEARMENTS are rather scanty, thus we are justified in advancing a thesis that the phenomenon of plantosemy is not very productive in terms of coining new endearments. Succinctly, the process of plantosemy itself may be defined as employing various plant-terms to denote human qualities. Contrary to what might be expected, flower-terms are few and far between in this small group. In fact, we have managed to track down only seven such endearments. In this section we may distinguish only two major groups of love-isms:

FLOWERS	<i>flower, buttercup, daisy, clover, violet</i>
varia	<i>petal, blossom</i>

Table 4. The division of flower-terms.

The first noun to be analysed in this group is *clover*, which came forth in Old English to denote the species of Trefoil (1000 *Calta*, uel *trifillon*, *clæfre*.) (the *OED*). It took precisely five hundred years flat until the noun started to be employed in a figurative human-specific sense as a humorous term of affection (1500–20 Quod he, ‘My *claver*, and my *curloddie*’.) (the *OED*).

As far as the symbolic nature of *clover* is concerned, such positively-loaded features as protection, affluence, love, fidelity and success are ascribed to it.⁵ But, it is a very rare four-leaf clover that is avidly sought, as – according to superstition – it brings great luck to those who find it. All in all, the chances of encountering such a specimen are slight, because only one in every ten thousand clovers has four leaves.⁶

⁵ See <http://in5d.com/plant-symbolism-a-guide-to-the-spiritual-meaning-of-plants-4/>.

⁶ See http://symbolism.wikia.com/wiki/Four-Leaf_Clover.

The history of *daisy* constitutes one of the prime examples of the working of the mechanism of plantosemy. The roots of the noun go back to Anglo-Saxon times when the word was defined as ‘the common name of *Bellis perennis*, a familiar and favourite flower of the British Isles and Europe generally, having small flat flower-heads with yellow disk and white ray, which close in the evening; it grows abundantly on grassy hills, in meadows, by roadsides and blossoms nearly all the year round; many varieties are cultivated in gardens’ (1000 *Consolda*, *dææseæe.*) (the *OED*). In Late Middle English the word acquired a novel female-specific sense when it started to be employed as a term of admiration, as seen from the following *OED* material:

1485 A dere dewchesse, my daysys Iee!
1605 Adeu, O desie of delyt.

As to the symbolic meaning of *daisy*, it is frequently linked with innocence, purity, new beginnings and true love.⁷

The last flower-term in this group is *violet*, which arose in the Middle English period. From the very beginning the word was defined as ‘a plant or flower of the genus *Viola*, the sweet-smelling violet, growing wild, and cultivated in gardens; the flowers are usually purplish blue, mauve, or white’ (1330 *Mirie it is in time of June, ··Violet & rose flour Woneþ þan in maidens bour.*) (the *OED*). In the first half of the 15th century, a metaphor-conditioned sense development took place, with the introduction of a new endearing sense of *violet*. This sense may be evidenced by means of the following *OED* quotations:

1412–20 *Somme also ··With þe lillye of virginite And violettis of parfit chastite, Ascendid ben a-boue þe sterris clere.*
1593 *Welcome my sonne: who are the Violets now, That strew the greene lap of the new-come Spring?*
1842 *How out of place she makes The violet of a legend blow Among the chops and steaks!*

Extralinguistically, violet evokes only positive associations, as it symbolizes – among others – innocence, fidelity, love or passion (see Kopaliński 1999).

Flowers have always been associated with femininity, it is therefore surprising that – in comparison to other groups of endearments – flower-terms constitute only a narrow fraction of all pet names. All of the terms of affection included in this group are female-specific, thus we feel justified to posit the foregrounding of the attributive value FEMALE specifiable for the attributive path of the domain of SEX. Following Kopaliński (1999), flowers epitomize a

⁷ See <http://www.flowermeaning.com/daisy-flower-meaning/>.

woman's attractiveness and love, they are emblematic of a female's sexual organs, so – we may say that the endearing sense of *clover*, *daisy* and *violet* may be explicated in terms of highlighting the conceptual elements BEAUTIFUL, EXQUISITE and APPEALING presupposed for the attributive path of the domain of PHYSICAL APPEARANCE. We may also postulate an entrenchment relation to the attributive paths of the domain of SMELL and the domain of SIZE, for which such conceptual values as FRAGRANT and SMALL are activated, respectively. Simultaneously, we may speak about activation of the attributive values FRAGILE, DELICATE and BRITTLE presupposed for the attributive path of the domain of PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS. All these conceptual elements played a prominent role in forming the bridge between both the historically primary plant-specific and the secondary female-specific senses of the words in question. Both a flower and a beloved girl may be said to be beautiful or delicate. Moreover, the scent of someone we love is as pleasant as that given off by flowers.

The question remains as to why there are so few plant-related terms of affection if both flowers and women have so much in common. A premise that – by and large – men are not familiar with various species of flowers is by no means a sweeping generalization. Given that all plant-related love-isms are female-specific – which implies that they were coined by men – it should hardly come as a surprise that the number of them is so modest. It is not that men lack creativity or are ignorant, but rather the fact that the realm of plants, or – to be more specific – flowers, is closer to women. The vast majority of men fail to recognize the names of flowers; therefore, the most widespread plant-related endearment is the noun *flower* itself. It seems to be intriguing, especially when we take into account the fact that men tend to employ more animal-related terms of affection, despite that fact that women and – for example – mice or ducks do not bear any resemblance. There is a very plausible explanation for this phenomenon; namely that the animal kingdom is much closer to humans, and as a result language is inundated with numerous examples of animal-terms, which on the one hand may function as compliments (for example, pet names), but on the other – they might ridicule our vices (for example, invectives).

Conclusions

Terms of affection are an intrinsic part of the language of intimacy and English may vaunt a wide array of endearments which can be divided into a number of groups. In this paper we have taken a closer look at ten pet names which result from the application of the processes of zoosemy, foodsemy and plantosemy. The following conclusions may be drawn from the analysis.

From the cognitive angle, the semantic development of the words which may be found under the label zoosemy, namely *culver*, *bunny* and *turtle-dove*, involves the activation of the positively-tinted attributive elements INNOCENT, PURE and FAITHFUL that are specified for the attributive path of the domain of CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOUR. Simultaneously, such a positively-loaded conceptual element as SWEET is also presupposed for the attributive path of the domain of PHYSICAL APPEARANCE. In all three cases discussed in the paper, the above-mentioned elements provided a bridge between the historically original animal-specific senses of words and their secondary, human-specific endearing senses, as both the animals and people we love share the same features.

As far as the foodsemic terms of affection are concerned, the transfer to the category ENDEARMENTS of the nouns *cinnamon*, *cookie*, *crumpet* and *powsowdy* may have been conditioned by highlighting such positively-loaded conceptual elements as APPETIZING and SWEET that are relevant for the construal of both senses and – as a result – provide the conceptual bridge for the alteration in meaning that derives from the nature of the attributive paths of the domain of TASTE. We may also say that such attributive elements as AROMATIC and FRAGRANT associated with the domain of SMELL are also activated.

In turn, having analysed a sprinkling of flower-related terms of affection, we may observe that it is the domain of PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, the domain of PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS and the domain of SMELL that gave rise to the endearing female-specific senses of *clover*, *daisy* and *violet*. Observe that this is the only group of endearments that includes lexical items employed exclusively with reference to women, thus all the cases of flowersemy involve the activation of the conceptual element FEMALE presupposed for the attributive path of the domain of SEX.

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