

An Analysis of Animal Metaphors in Episodes of Gender-Based Violence Reported in Spanish and Canadian Newspapers

Un Análisis de las Metáforas Animales en Episodios de Violencia de Género Publicados en la Prensa Española y Canadiense

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Abstract: This article explores animal metaphors in episodes of gender-based violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers. It analyzes the most common zoomorphic representations of female victims in real cases of gender-based violence documented in the news in Spain and Canada from 2006 to 2022. The research shows how the bestial iconography articulates discourses of gender-based violence and how the male perpetrator sees the abused woman through an animal lens to dehumanize, sexualize, exert, and even justify his violent actions.

Keywords: gender violence; abused woman; male perpetrator; animal metaphors; Spanish and Canadian newspapers.

Summary: Introduction. Animal Metaphors in Discourses of (Gender) Violence. Method: Procedure and Analysis. Findings and Discussion. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo explora metáforas animales en episodios de violencia de género publicados en la prensa española y canadiense. Se analizan las metáforas zoomórficas más frecuentes empleadas en la representación de las víctimas femeninas en casos reales documentados en la prensa de España y Canadá desde el año 2006 al 2022. Los resultados de esta investigación muestran cómo el lenguaje de las especies articula discursos de violencia de género y cómo el maltratador masculino ve a su víctima femenina a través de una óptica animal para deshumanizar, sexualizar, ejercer e incluso justificar sus actos violentos.

Palabras clave: violencia de género; mujer maltratada; hombre maltratador; metáforas animales; periódicos españoles y canadienses.

Sumario: Introducción. Metáforas animales en discursos de violencia (de género). Metodología: Procedimiento y Análisis. Resultados y Exposición. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

The gang rape of an 18-year-old woman during the running of the bull celebrations of San Fermín in 2016 became publicly known as “*la Manada*” (‘the Wolf pack’) case after the name of the WhatsApp group that the men used to chat, film, and boast about their sexual exploits. In addition to the perpetrators’ moniker framing (sexual) relationships in terms of a male animal hunting his female prey, their on-line conversations, behaviors, and even physiques displayed animal imagery too (Romano 636; Molpeceres and Filardo-Llamas 59). In their chat, the youngest friend was explicitly told to use drugs and even weapons to have sex with women if he wanted to become a wolf: “*la prueba de fuego para ser un lobo*” (‘the manhood test to become a wolf’) (Cedeira 1). The leader of the group also had a substantial tattoo of a wolf’s pawprint on his back, which he had publicly shown on his social media along with sexist remarks (Requeijo and Montero 1–6).¹

In like manner, in 2002 Canada solved the mystery of the disappearance and killing of 33 women in what the police called the “pig girl” case owing to the job of their serial killer, the pig farmer Robert Pickton (Butts 2; Cameron). Pickton’s view of female drug addicts, prostitutes, and indigenous women in terms of dirty pigs polluting society led him to treat his victims as this animal. In fact, after kidnapping and sexually assaulting them, Pickton forced most of these women to stay in a pigsty. He went on to kill them with a butcher knife, sometimes burying their corpses in his pig farm, feeding their remains to his real pigs, and even taking them to a slaughterhouse, where they could be transformed into meat for human consumption (Butts 3–9). Despite taking place in two distant countries and in different years, these two real stories show the (ab)use of zoomorphic metaphors in episodes of violence against women.

¹ This article is dedicated to my daughter, Helena. Thanks for being in my life.

1. ANIMAL METAPHORS IN DISCOURSES OF (GENDER) VIOLENCE

Animal metaphors have been documented in discourses of violence (Cikara et al.; Haslam et al.; Prazmo). Zoomorphic symbols are frequently used to degrade particular social groups based on their race, ethnicity, origin, profession, religion, sexual orientation, and gender (López-Rodríguez, “Of Women”; López Maestre). Black people have traditionally been likened to apes, and Jews, to mice and rats; immigrants are often perceived as vermin; police officers are imagined as pigs, just like Muslims. Homosexual males are compared to all sorts of birds, whereas women are often described as chicks, kittens, and cougars. Far from being mere figurative usages, these—and other—animal names, when labeling people have important, real-life consequences that may affect an individual’s integrity and life, for, as Lakoff points out, “metaphors can kill” (1).

According to research in human cognition, culture, and communication, metaphors are cognitive mechanisms that influence people’s thoughts and actions (Lakoff and Johnson; Lakoff and Turner; Kövecses). Value-laden, ideologically charged, and culturally motivated (Deignan; Goatly), metaphors provide conceptual frameworks to understand people’s selves and experiences. As iconographic references, metaphors may force individuals to see something through a specific lens, often leading to a distorted vision of reality which may encourage people to believe in and commit to certain actions, for, as Fairclough states: “[w]hen we see the world with a particular metaphor, it then forms the basis of our action, our perception of the world and behaviour will change according to the use of a particular metaphor” (67).

Seeing people as animals deprives the former of their human condition and rational capacity. The PEOPLE AS ANIMALS metaphor (Kövecses, *Metaphor*) is generally embedded in the context of humans as evolved animals able to refrain from their innate impulses thanks to their superior mental faculties. Underpinning most faunistic metaphors is the notion of (lack of) control that presupposes that the animal side of a person must be kept at bay as part of civilized behavior. The identification of people with beasts tends to highlight their inability to control emotions and drives—such as sexual desire (i.e., *cougar*), anger (i.e., *unbridled* rage), hunger (i.e., *pig out*), or physical strength (i.e., *bull*). Falling within the so-called “control metaphors” (Pérez 180), thus, faunistic metaphors have become powerful mechanisms to exert power over certain groups.

Research on animal symbols in metaphoric war-like scenarios (Steuter and Wills), anti-immigrant (Santa Ana; Mujagić and Berberović), racist (Goff et al.; Haslam et al.), criminal (Thibodeau and Boroditsky), political (Arcimaviciene; Pinchin; Schoor), and gender (Rudman and Mescher; Bock and Burkley; Tranchese and Sugiura) discourses has shown how the bestial iconography usually goes hand in hand with the promotion of negative attitudes and violent behaviors towards the target group.² Certainly, along with dehumanization (Haslam et al.), faunistic tropes often entail notions of danger (López-Rodríguez), for animals, unless domesticated or tamed, pose a threat to people. Hence, the identification of people with animals calls for the subjugation of the animalized subject. To illustrate, the projection of wild beasts onto enemies frequently leads to their annihilation. The representation of migrants as pests and beasts of burden serves to justify their marginalization and labor exploitation. The activation of ape imagery to refer to black people contributes to the condonation of physical violence against them. The depiction of criminals as beasts preying upon citizens often results in tougher court sentences, including the death penalty. The identification of political opponents with fierce or contagious fauna is conducive to the sabotage of their meetings. The reduction of women to kittens and chicks helps to perpetuate sexist beliefs and a culture of sexual violence towards them.

In the realm of gender-based violence, studies have brought to the forefront the fatal consequences of envisioning women and men as animals (Luke; Bock and Burkley; Gutmann; Rudman and Mescher).³ Certainly, although both males and females are prone to animalization, the former are usually compared to fierce, large, predatory beasts (e.g., *tiger*, *wolf*, *bear*) whereas the latter to docile, small, domestic creatures (e.g., *chick*, *kitten*, *bunny*) (Nilsen; López-Rodríguez, “Of Women”). Apart from reinforcing

² This concept of “scenario” is taken from Musolf: “we can characterise a ‘scenario’ as a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about ‘typical’ aspects of a source-situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the ‘dramatic’ storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc.” (“Metaphor Scenarios” 28).

³ Also, in the field of metaphor and gender studies, Lakoff and Johnson’s article “The Metaphorical Logic of Rape” provides a good insight into how metaphors shape the perception and representation of rape in American culture. After arguing that metaphors are not harmless exercises in naming, the authors reflect on the legitimization of rape through metaphor.

sexist assumptions about the social role of men and women, this imbalance in the codification of zoomorphic metaphors also fosters ideas of male's (sexual) dominance and female's (sexual) submission. In fact, men appear as dominant initiators of sexual advances and women as submissive recipients (Glick and Fiske; Kang) or, to put it in animalesque talk, men are the predators chasing their female prey (López Maestre). This faunistic discourse, which often informs and negatively affects individuals' understanding of heterosexual relationships and dating scenarios (Rudman and Mescher; Bock and Burkley), appears in episodes of abuse against women reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers.

This article aims to explore metaphorical fauna in real cases of gender-based violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers, a comparative study of two different cultures that has not yet been addressed in the literature. Note that in this paper gender-based violence is understood as distinct kinds of violent acts against women, whether verbal, physical, psychological, sexual, or socioeconomic (Casique and Ferreira 951). The main research questions are as follows:

- a) What are the main animal metaphors deployed by male abusers to refer to their female victims in episodes of gender violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers?
- b) What are the common metaphors, and which of those are the specific ones for each cultural landscape?
- c) What are the ideological implications of these animal metaphors in discourses of gender-based violence?
- d) How are these animal metaphors used by the male abuser to legitimize gender-based violence?

2. METHOD: PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS

Data for this study were collected from forty-two (42) newspapers, namely: *ABC*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *La Razón*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Español*, *Libertad Digital*, *El Confidencial*, *El Periódico de Aragón*, *Diario de Cádiz*, *El Nacional*, *Nius Diario*, *El Correo*, *Diario de Sevilla*, *Diario de Córdoba*, *La Gaceta*, *Diario de Mallorca*, *Faro de Vigo*, *Voz Pópuli*, *El HuffPost*, *El Comercio*, *Diario de Asturias*, *El Periódico Mediterráneo*, *El*

Periódico Extremadura, La Tribuna de Albacete, El Plural and *La Voz de Galicia*, for the Spanish news articles, and *The National Post, The Globe and Mail, Calgary Herald, Calgary Sun, Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Sun, The Daily Courier, The National Post, The Vancouver Sun, Ottawa Citizen, Ottawa Sun, Montreal Gazette, Telegram, Toronto Sun, and Toronto Star*, for the Canadian news articles. These publications were chosen because of their availability and wide circulation in both countries.

Data collection and sampling were purposive, guided by the objectives to explore the research questions stated above. The study conducted a qualitative analysis of the animal symbols used in newspaper articles tackling violence against women. Note that only the animal metaphors used by the male abuser—whether in direct or reported speech—were considered since one of the main goals of this project was to hear the aggressor’s voice when exerting violence towards women.

Due to time and financial constraints to access these journals, a total of four (4) newspapers (whether in print or on-line) were consulted each month over the course of sixteen (16) years (2006–2022). This selection was made randomly, but always with the aim to encompass a wider variety of newspapers to enrich data. A total of 768 newspapers were consulted (an average of 48 newspapers annually) with an average of one (1) article dealing with gender violence per issue. This yielded a final corpus of 768 articles. All these articles were recorded in a word document to facilitate the coding process. Furthermore, although the dates were selected arbitrarily (2006–2022) and only reflect the beginning and end of this research project, these 16 years offer a panoramic view of animal metaphors in discourses of the male batterer in Spain and Canada. Besides, they provide information regarding an upward trend in the use of these animal metaphors reported in the Spanish and Canadian press.

Once collected, the animal-based metaphors of this corpus were then manually coded applying the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group 3), which consists of the application of the following three steps: 1) read the text to get a global understanding of the meaning, b) determine if each lexical unit has a more concrete, more precise, or historically older meaning in other contexts different than the one in the given text, and c) if so, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

Having identified and coded all the animal metaphors applied to women in episodes of gender violence in the above corpus according to MIP, the next step involved their organization into meaningful clusters. The formulation of the conceptual structures underlying the tokens

labelled as metaphorical was carried out considering that the main function of metaphor is the understanding of abstract ideas in terms of more concrete, bodily, or familiar ones (Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*; Semino). Based on this premise of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study thoroughly examined the main zoomorphic scenarios to which male abusers recurred when exerting violence towards women. The resulting corpus was comprised of three hundred and fifty-seven (357) metaphorical items (129 belonging to the English corpus and 228 to the Spanish corpus). Note that all these linguistic metaphors were considered as the surface manifestation in language of conceptual metaphors. Hence, once retrieved and noted, the former were grouped thematically, so that conceptual metaphors could be put forward to explain them. Also, note that no reliability tests were performed in the analysis of the corpus given that the main goal of the research project was to compile a vast number of animal metaphors used in the speech of the male abuser in both Spain and Canada.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of the animal metaphors used in episodes of gender violence as reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers was framed within a discourse analytic approach, as described by Fairclough, Charteris-Black, and Mussolf (“The Study of Metaphor”). Implementing cognitive semantics, this view considers the social influence of ideology, culture, and history to provide a more reliable account of why particular metaphors are selected in specific discourse contexts. In fact, the preference of one metaphor over others not only reflects different ways of representing reality, but it is also ancillary in constructing a particular view of reality (Koller 11). In this sense, metaphors can become vehicles for the transmission of ideological values and power relations; even serving to legitimize particular world views (Charteris-Black 90–112). These functions of metaphor, thus, are relevant in this study, which focuses on how the male abuser animalizes his female victim when exerting violence against her.

The present paper discusses the use(s) and function(s) of the animalesque talk found in the language of the male abuser in episodes of violence against women reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers. Special attention will be paid to the wider psychological, cultural, and social discourses from which these metaphors are drawn. In the analysis of the corpus, translations of the Spanish examples are provided.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports on the research findings and discusses their significance to delve into the real implications of the animal metaphors employed in real cases of violence against women.

Table 1. Metaphoric conceptualization of female victims of gender violence in the Canadian corpus

No.	Animal metaphors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	bitch	83	64.34%
2.	cow	23	17.82%
3.	dog	12	8.52%
4.	pig	11	9.30%
Total		129	100%

Table 2. Metaphoric conceptualization of female victims of gender violence in the Spanish corpus

No.	Animal metaphors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	zorra (vixen)	174	76.31%
2.	perra (bitch)	41	17.92%
3.	cerda (pig)	11	4.82%
4.	loba (she-wolf)	1	0.43%
5.	coneja (bunny)	1	0.43%
Total		228	100%

Table 3. Animal metaphors organized according to their year of publication in the Canadian corpus

Year	Bitch	Cow	Pig	Dog
2006	2	1	0	0
2007	2	0	0	0
2008	4	0	0	0
2009	2	1	0	1
2010	3	0	0	0
2011	3	2	0	0
2012	4	1	1	0
2013	3	3	0	1
2014	2	1	1	1
2015	4	1	1	1

2016	6	1	1	1
2017	7	1	1	1
2018	6	1	1	1
2019	8	2	1	1
2020	8	2	1	1
2021	8	3	1	1
2022	11	3	2	2
Total	83	23	11	12

Table 4. Animal metaphors organized according to their year of publication in the Spanish corpus

Year	<i>Zorra</i>	<i>Perra</i>	<i>Cerda</i>	<i>Loba</i>	<i>Coneja</i>
2006	6	1	0	0	0
2007	5	1	0	0	0
2008	3	2	0	0	0
2009	6	1	0	0	0
2010	5	2	0	0	0
2011	7	3	0	0	0
2012	6	2	0	0	0
2013	8	2	1	0	0
2014	9	2	0	0	0
2015	8	2	1	0	0
2016	4	2	1	0	0
2017	9	2	1	0	0
2018	12	2	1	0	0
2019	18	2	1	0	0
2020	17	5	1	0	0
2021	18	4	2	1	0
2022	33	6	2	0	1
Total	174	41	11	1	1

The woman is a bitch

The most frequent animal metaphor aimed at women in episodes of gender-based violence is “bitch.” It accounts for 64.34% of all the animal-based metaphors of the English corpus. Like with most figurative fauna, “bitch” conveys notions of (mental) inferiority and unrestrained behavior.

These senses appear to be in the mind of the male batterer that addresses his partner as “bitch” to belittle her intellect and physically harm her:

- (1) The man responds by yelling at the woman, calling her a “**stupid bitch**” and an “ignorant cow” before grabbing her by the hair and repeatedly slamming her head on a tabletop. (Yourk 2)
- (2) Her husband called her “fucking idiot” and “**stupid bitch**” and kicked her several times. (Cheap 12)
- (3) Her boyfriend called her “**dumb bitch**” and punched her repeatedly. (Patrick 29)

Data analysis revealed that, in incidents of domestic violence, the largely taboo “bitch” tends to collocate with words that reinforce notions of ignorance and foolishness, such as “stupid” (24%) and “dumb” (13%). In fact, as seen in the excerpts above, in (1), “bitch” appears with another image of an unintelligent animal, namely, the cow, which, in turn, is modified by the adjective “ignorant.” The co-text is similar in (2), where the swear word expression “fucking idiot” precedes “stupid bitch.”

The corpus also showed “bitch” in scenarios of verbal abuse that target female politicians and feminist activists. In fact, studies have drawn attention to the common use of this slur to refer to women who have powerful and influential roles, particularly in politics and economics (Kassam; Kleinman et al. 530–40). In these cases, this term of opprobrium transmits the senses of belligerent, malicious and domineering; in other words, negative traits traditionally associated to female power (Hughes).

- (4) Sandra Jansen, a female Alberta politician, faced offensive online comments such as “dumb broad” or ‘traitorous “**bitch**” after leaving the Tories and joining the governing NDP party. (Bennett 2)
- (5) Former Liberal cabinet minister Belinda Stronach gets called, variously, a dog, a whore, a **bitch** and a prostitute. (Kinsella 4)
- (6) The long-time president of the Windsor Minor Hockey Association called Canadian women who participated in the Women’s March in Washington “**dumb bitches**” on his social media. (“Dumb Bitches” 3)

As can be inferred from the previous examples, the corpus also showed the co-occurrence of “bitch” with other animal metaphors (37%) equally demeaning women, such as “cow,” and “dog.” Besides reinforcing the dehumanization of the female subject, such faunistic metaphors further contribute to the humiliation of women, since they connote ugliness (cow, dog), stupidity (cow), and even sexual promiscuity (dog) (Eble 89). This co-existence of fauna also sheds some light onto the metaphorical workings of the mind. Far from being isolated instances, all these animal metaphors are activated simultaneously in the mind of the male abuser to dehumanize and hurt females.

The study of the corpus also revealed that most male abusers exploit the strong sexual charge of “bitch” (Hughes 91) to label women as promiscuous and even sex workers, particularly while harassing and assaulting them. This idea of “loose woman” is further reinforced by the appearance of terms such as “slut,” “whore” or “prostitute” in their speeches:

- (7) Greene described Rumbolt telling her she would “never have a life in this town,” calling her degrading names in repeated attempts at contact. On one occasion, he followed her in his police car as she walked to a friend’s house, she wrote, calling her a “slut” and a “f[uc]king **bitch**.” (Mullin 4)
- (8) Her boyfriend called her whore, prostitute, and **bitch** before raping her. (Suarez 3)

This use of “bitch” also appears in those news articles reporting on cases of sexual violence in Canadian schools and universities, as seen below:

- (9) Ontario Christian school tells court it was unaware abuse . . . That abuse included repeated references to girls in their care as “sluts, whores, Jezebels [and] **bitches** in heat.” (Sawa 3)
- (10) 5 female students sexually abused during the **bitches** and drinks parties at Western University. (Luci 7)

The woman is a cow

Applied to a stupid, annoying, and even fat woman, the derogatory “cow” represents 17.82% of the animal metaphors registered in the English

corpus. This term, which resonates in the obesity discourse that stigmatizes females with weight issues (Hardy 11), is usually employed by male abusers to fat-shame their female victims:

(11) Her husband was physically abusive and called his wife a “bitch,” a “big fat **cow**.” (May 23)

(12) He was so angry he started yelling, “You fat **cow**! Thanks a lot, you fat **cow**!” (“Insults” 19)

The corpus showed that “cow” tends to be modified by the adjective “fat” (11%) to intensify the idea of heavy weight. It also appears with other offensive animal names, such as “bitch” (11) and in one instance with the cow’s sound “moo”:

(13) A woman was mortified at being **mooed** at like a **cow** on way to sister’s wedding. (Collinson 4)

The woman is a pig

Classified as one of the most offensive animal names applied to people according to psychological studies (Haslam et al. 322), the metaphoric pig carries the negative implications of fatness, dirtiness, shame, and even promiscuity (López-Rodríguez, “Of Women” 91). The corpus registers this symbol 11 times (8.52%). It frequently appears in episodes of extreme sexual violence, particularly involving sex workers (5.92%):

(14) The woman testified Hoggard raped her repeatedly, choked her, called her a “dirty little **pig**” while he made animal noises and dragged her to the bathroom where he asked her to urinate on him and she said no. (“Hedley’s Jacob” 3)

(15) he called me “fucking **pig**” and raped me. (“Night Rape” 32)

(16) The prostitute was called “dirty **pig**,” raped and killed. (“Sex Crimes” 11)

As can be seen, “pig” is often modified by “dirty” to intensify notions of uncleanness, especially connected with sex.

The woman is a dog

The metaphorical dog accounts for 9.30% of the total English corpus. This term, when applied to women, implies ugliness, promiscuity, and even prostitution (Eble 43). It usually appears in articles reporting on cyberbullying against influential women and in sexual assault reports:

- (17) Former politician Belinda Stronach called a **dog**. (“Stonach” 11)
- (18) What he’d done wasn’t rape, he said—so don’t tell anybody that it was. When I pleaded with him to stop, he called me a **dog**, a bitch and a slut. (Peterson 32)
- (19) After calling her **dog** and bitch, he raped his partner and killed her. (Malone 41)

Like with most metaphoric fauna in the corpus analysed, “dog” often appears with other animal metaphors, mainly its female counterpart “bitch” (4.5%). It also collocates frequently with “slut.” This might be so to reinforce the carnal overtones of “dog,” especially considering episodes of sexual violence.

The woman is a vixen

As far as the Spanish corpus is concerned, the most common metaphor found was “*zorra*” (literally ‘vixen’), which accounts for 76.31% of the total. This negative word, which denotes a cunning woman, a promiscuous woman, and even a sex worker (Fernández and Jiménez 782), often appears in articles that tackle the verbal abuse that many female politicians and feminist activists face. As its English counterpart “bitch,” “*zorra*” appears to deride strong, independent, and powerful women since, within patriarchal societies, these are undesirable characteristics.

- (20) *No son pocos los insultos que recibe Rita Maestre a través de sus redes sociales. La portavoz de Más Madrid en el Ayuntamiento de la capital ha leído en una intervención en el Consistorio una serie de ‘tuits’ dirigidos hacia su persona . . . como zorra sinvergüenza.* (Rita Maestre is the target of countless of insults on her social networks. During her speech in the council meeting, the spokesperson of Más Madrid has

read a series of tweets insulting her, such as shameless **vixen**.) (“La respuesta” 2)

- (21) *El coordinador de Vox en Sevilla llama “zorras machorras” a las feministas.* (The coordinator of VOX in Seville calls feminists ‘butch **vixen**.’) (“VOX” 3)
- (22) *Bernal recuerda que dos de sus miembros, entre ellos Zugasti, fueron absueltos por “colgar pancartas machistas” en los juzgados de violencia sobre la mujer de Madrid. A pesar de los mensajes que portaban—“in dubio, pro zorra” o “llama y te desplumamos el pollo” [sobre el 016]—la Audiencia Provincial de Madrid no lo consideró delito de odio, sino una falta de injurias, figura despenalizada en la reforma del Código Penal de 2015.* (Bernal remembers that two of the party members, among them Zugasti, were absolved from “displaying male chauvinist signs” in the court houses of gender violence in Madrid. Despite the messages—“in case of doubt, you are a **vixen**” or “call and we will pluck the chick” [gender violence line 016]—the provincial courtroom of Madrid did not consider these messages as hate crime, but mere injuries, which is decriminalized in the reform of the Penal Code of 2015.) (Marrón 1–4)

Most newspaper articles of the corpus, however, register the word “*zorra*” in episodes of gender-based violence where verbal abuse goes hand in hand with physical harm and even sexual aggression. Furthermore, the corpus showed the strong sexual load attached to this animal metaphor, since it usually collocates with “*puta*” (‘whore’) (62%) and the animal term “*guarra*” (‘pig’) (12%).

- (23) *Los hechos sucedieron el 27 de enero de 2014. J.C llegó a la casa de Susana Flores, que compartía con otros compañeros de piso. La declaración y el atestado recogen que ambos bebieron y que, en un momento dado, él, en presencia de los dos menores (de 4 y 13 años entonces), comenzó a ponerse violento. “Eres una zorra, una puta, seguro que en Zaragoza has estado en un prostíbulo”, recoge el informe policial. A pesar de que Susana le pidió que se marchara de la vivienda, el hombre no lo hizo, sino que le quitó y rompió su teléfono, así como el de su hijo.* (The events took place on January 27, 2014. J.C. arrived at Susana Flores’ house, which she shared with other people. Her testimony and the police report state that both drank and, at one point, he, in front of two minors (4 and 13 years old), became violent.

“You are a **vixen**, a whore, I am sure that you have worked in a brothel in Zaragoza,” reads the police report. Although Susana asked him to leave, the man refused to do this and, instead, he snatched and broke her cell phone and her son’s.) (Requena 9)

- (24) *Ocho meses de cárcel por llamar “zorrra, puta” y dar varios puñetazos en un taxi a su pareja. La sentencia considera que queda probado que el 14 de septiembre de 2019 el acusado llamó “zorrra, puta” y golpeó con el puño varias veces a su pareja, en la parada de taxis de la plaza de Luis Braille.* (Sentenced to eight months in prison for calling his partner “**vixen**, whore” and punched her in a taxi. The sentence considers that on September 14, 2019, the accused called his partner “**vixen**, whore” and punched her several times at the taxi stop in the Luis Braille square.) (“Ocho meses” 3)
- (25) *La Audiencia de Palma ha acogido este miércoles el juicio contra un acusado de quebrantar una orden de alejamiento y maltratar a su expareja, a quien también acosó y agredió sexualmente en Manacor. “Me amenazaba cada día. Me dijo que era una puta, una zorrra, una guarra. Me pegó dos bofetadas y me dijo que me iba a matar allí, que me tiraría al agua y nadie me encontraría”, ha contado la víctima.* (This Wednesday, the court of Palma has held the trial against the man accused of violating a restraining order and mistreating his former partner, whom he also harassed and assaulted sexually in Manacor. “He threatened me every day. He said that I was a whore, a **vixen**, a pig. He slapped me and said that he was going to kill me there, he was going to throw my corpse into the water and nobody would find me,” the victim recalled.) (“Mujer víctima” 1)
- (26) *Afirmó que desde el primer día la relación fue tóxica y perjudicial para ella, encontrándose sometida a un control exhaustivo de su móvil y redes sociales por parte de Ionut Ciprian A. M., recibiendo un trato degradante, discutiendo y recibiendo insultos del tipo “hija de puta o zorrra”.* (She affirmed that from the very first day their relationship was toxic and detrimental to her. She was subject to an exhaustive control of her cell phone and social networks by her partner, Ionut Ciprian A. M., who debased her with insults such as “son of a bitch or **vixen**.”) (“Solicita salir” 4)

The woman is a bitch

Denoting a despicable woman and even a prostitute (López-Rodríguez, “Of Women” 85), the metaphorical “perra” appears 41 times in the Spanish corpus (17.92%). Apart from verbally insulting women, this slur is often embedded in hate speech involving physical abuse:

(27) *Condenado por dirigirse a su pareja como “perra o payasa” y controlarle sus relaciones. El procesado fue sentenciado a tres años y nueve meses de cárcel por tratar a la víctima de forma “vejatoria y despectiva”. Deberá indemnizarla con 3.280 euros.* (Sentenced for calling his partner ‘bitch or clown’ and controlling her relationships. The accused man was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison for treating the victim in a “degrading and derogatory way.” He will have to indemnify her with 3,280 euros.) (“Condenado” 1)

(28) *Un hombre ha sido condenado a quince días de trabajos comunitarios por llamar “perra” a su ex-pareja, sin citarla expresamente, en su perfil privado de la red social Facebook, al tiempo que criticaba la legislación contra la violencia de género.* (A man has been sentenced to fifteen days of community work for calling his ex-girlfriend “bitch” in his personal Facebook profile, while criticizing the legislation on gender-based violence.) (“Condenado a trabajos” 1)

(29) *El caso es que la fiel escudera de Cospedal y diputada regional del PP de Castilla-La Mancha, Cesárea Arnedo, ha clamado al cielo “por el silencio” del Partido Socialista y del presidente del Gobierno autonómico, Emiliano García-Page, ante los insultos que ha recibido la concejala (ya exconcejala) socialista en la localidad toledana de Pantoja, María Josefa Magán, que parece ser fue agredida verbalmente por su compañero de corporación, el también edil socialista, José Luis de Lucas, quien llamó a la señora Magán “perra”.* (The case is that the faithful squire of Cospedal and regional congresswoman of PP in Castilla-La Mancha, Cesárea Arnedo, has expressed her outrage because of “the silence” kept by the Socialist Party and its president of the regional government, Emiliano García-Page, after the insults targeted at the socialist city councilwoman (now former councilwoman) in the city of Pantoja, Toledo, María Josefa Magán, who, apparently, was verbally attacked by her socialist colleague, José Luis de Lucas, who called Mrs. Magán “bitch.”) (“Insultos en la política” 11)

- (30) *Debido a los celos, el acusado estaba convencido de que ella le engañaba. “Puta, guarra, dime la verdad, no me fío de ti, me estás mintiendo, me estás engañando con otro”, le decía. Otro día, en el interior del coche, también motivado por los celos, comenzó a golpearla. Ella le suplicaba llorando que no lo hiciera pero él continuaba: “Que no tengo huevos a pegarte, te pongo ahí de pegatina, te meto un puñetazo que te comes el cristal entero. Eres una mierda, una mierda de tía, voy a estar detrás de tuyo hasta que me muera. Ten cuidado que te pego y te arranco la cabeza, puta gilipollas de mierda, que te pego un puñetazo que te arranco la cabeza, puta de mierda. Puta de mierda que te parto los brazos. Puta **perra** de mierda”, le espetó. (Due to jealousy, the accused man was convinced that she was cheating on him. “**Bitch**, pig, tell me the truth, I do not trust you, you are lying to me, you are cheating with another guy,” he told her. The other day, inside the car, again moved by jealousy, he started beating her up. In tears, she begged him to stop, but he kept on going: “I have the balls to hit you, I am going to turn you into a sticker, I am going to punch you so that you will eat the whole window. You are shit, a shitty woman, I am going to chase you till I die. Be careful because I am going to hit you and pull out your head, fucking asshole, I am going to punch you and pull out your head, fucking **bitch**. Fucking **bitch**, I am going to break your arms. Fucking **bitch**,” he blurted out.) (“Un acusado” 3)*

The woman is a pig

Like its English counterpart “pig,” “*cerda*” and its synonymous “*guarra*” are offensive terms for a woman, conveying the implications of fatness, ugliness, and dirtiness. In most cases, the animal metaphor is used to attack a woman’s choice of wardrobe (regarded as sexy for their male partners) and to suggest their promiscuity, and even work in the sex industry. In this sense, it bears striking similarities to the English “pig” to debase the female victim in episodes of gender violence:

- (31) *Gritos de “Cerda” y amenazas a una mujer en Murcia por ir en pantalones cortos. (Yells of “pig” and threats to a woman in Murcia because she was wearing shorts.) (Aragón 1)*
- (32) *La joven asegura que el hombre—ilocalizable tras las primeras gestiones policiales—la sometía a vejaciones, la llamaba “hija de puta”, “guarra” y “enferma”. La menospreciaba a ella y a toda su familia, tratando de alejarla de los suyos bajo supuestas amenazas de*

hacerles daño, dice. (The woman claims that the man—untraceable after the first police reports—subjected her to harassment and called her “son of a bitch,” “**pig**” and “sick.” He despised her and all her family, trying to isolate her from her relatives by threatening to hurt them, she says.) (Bigné 2–3)

(33) *A principios del mes de octubre, la víctima decidió poner fin a la relación y se lo comunicó a J. Éste no aceptó la ruptura e inició una discusión con ella en la que le profirió expresiones como “**guarra**, eres una prostituta de viejos, te pagan dinero por acostarte con otros”. El procesado, con conocimiento de que tal actitud provocaría en la mujer un sentimiento de culpabilidad, le pidió mantener relaciones sexuales.* (At the beginning of October, the victim decided to end the relationship and told J. This did not accept the break-up and started an argument where he called her “**pig**, you are a whore for old men, you get paid for having sex with other men.” The accused man, knowing that this behavior will make the woman feel guilty, asked her to have sexual relations.) (“Violencia de género” 1)

(34) *En el juicio, la mujer, J. S., está separada por una mampara para no ver a su expareja. Durante su declaración comenta que la llamó “puta, **guarra**” y muchas cosas más y que rompieron en febrero. “Ha violado dos veces la orden de alejamiento con mensajes. No quiero que se vuelva a comunicar conmigo, es un acoso psicológico y sigo en tratamiento en el Centro de la Mujer”. (In the courtroom, the woman, J.S., was separated with a screen so that she did not have to see her former partner. During her testimony, she said that he called her “bitch, **pig**” and other things and that they broke up in February. “He has violated twice the restraining order with messages. I do not want him to communicate with me, this is psychological harassment and I am still in therapy in the Center of Women.”) (Guillamón 2)*

The woman is a she-wolf

The predatory she-wolf denotes aggressive, sexually active, and even promiscuous women and sex workers (López-Rodríguez, “Of Women” 92). It is in this last sense that the ones registered in the corpus refer to, for it appears in an article informing of a network of prostitution where the sex workers are named after this animal. Besides, the name of this illegal business of sexual trafficking is made up of the blend “love” and the Spanish “*loba*” (‘she-wolf’):

- (35) *Búsqueda y captura contra el presunto líder de la red de prostitución de menores 18 Lovas. El juez procesó el pasado 30 de noviembre a Agustín Alemán Barreto por 24 delitos de prostitución de menores, dos de agresión sexual y otros dos de trato degradante. Las chicas eran las lobas.* (Search and capture order against the leader of a prostitution network for minors known as 18 **she-wolves**. On November 30th, the judge pressed charges against Agustín Alemán Barreto for 24 crimes involving sexual trafficking with minors, two of sexual aggression and other two of mistreatment of women. The girls were called **she-wolves**.) (Gabilondo 1)

The woman is a bunny

The data only showed one instance of “*coneja*” (‘bunny’). This zoomorphic metaphor, often used to denote the female genitalia (López-Rodríguez, “Of Women” 92), also refers to sexually attractive women. The corpus registers “*coneja*” in an article reporting on an entire men’s dorm’s sexist chants harassing female students. These college male students described the female dorm as a burrow (i.e., *madriguera*), which implies that those women were bunnies. The faunistic metaphor in this chant exploits the sexual connotations of the semantic field of bunny, where the furry animal visually recreates the female genitalia:

- (36) “*¡Putas, salid de vuestras madrigueras! ¡Vais a follar como conejas!*”, *el grito machista de universitarios del colegio mayor masculino Elías Ahúja en Madrid.* (“Whores, get out of your **burrows!** You’re gonna fuck like **bunnies!**”, the male chauvinistic chant in the university male dorm Elías Ahúja in Madrid.) (Silió 1)

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study on animal metaphors in newspaper articles reporting on episodes of gender violence in Spain and Canada was to analyze the use(s) and function(s) of the bestial iconography in the discourse of abuse against women. An analysis of a corpus consisting of 357 faunistic metaphors (129 pertaining to the English corpus and 228 to the Spanish corpus) has shown how male abusers think of women in terms of different animals (e.g., *pig*, *bitch*, *cow*, *dog*, *vixen*, *bunny*, etc.), and, as a result, exert all sorts of violence against them. Along with their dehumanizing effect,

most faunistic metaphors encountered in this research contribute to the sexualization and belittlement of the female subject. In addition to their usage, data analysis has revealed that these animal metaphors do not usually appear in isolation in the discourse of the male batterer, but rather, are part of a metaphorical network (e.g., *bunny-burrow*, *bitch-dog*, *pig-sow*, *cow-moo*, etc.). Hence, despite the conventionality of these metaphors in the discourse of gender violence, creativity also seems to play a role in the encoding of their spin-offs.

Despite the cultural and linguistic differences that separate Spain and Canada, there are some commonalities regarding the use of animal metaphors encountered in the discourse of gender violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers (i.e., *bitch-perra*, *pig-cerda*). Other zoomorphic metaphors, however, differ (*cow*, *dog* vs. *zorra*, *loba*, *coneja*), given the pivotal role played by culture in metaphorical reasoning (Kövecses, *Metaphor*). Furthermore, considering the time span of this research (16 years), one can see a clear upward trend in the reporting of all these animal metaphors in both countries (e.g., *bitch* is recorded two times in 2006 and 11 times in 2022 and its Spanish counterpart *zorra* appears 6 times in 2006 and 33 times in 2022). This does not mean, however, that male abusers are increasingly resorting to the metaphoric animal kingdom to conceptualize their victims, but rather that the media and society in general are more aware of the social problem of gender-based violence. This, certainly, manifests in more women denouncing abuse and a wider coverage of gender-based violence in newspapers.

Finally, because, as Lévi-Strauss (10) states, animals are essential in people's lives not only because they are good to eat, but, more importantly, because they are good to think with, the analysis of the bestial iconography that articulates the discourse of the male abuser in episodes of gender-based violence as reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers can shed some light onto the detrimental and lethal effects that this type of language can have on the female victim. Hence, notwithstanding the numerous shortcomings of the present research (i.e., its theoretical nature, its limited use of newspapers, or the lack of reliability tests for the analysis of the corpus), this study has attempted to demonstrate how the discourse of the male abuser in episodes of gender-based violence reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers is tinged with similar and/or identical animal metaphors that dehumanize, debase, and sexualize women.

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