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THE NATURE OF WOMEN AS REVEALED THROUGH ANGLO-AMERICAN ANTI-PROVERBS¹

Abstract: For centuries, proverbs have provided a framework for endless transformation. In the last few decades they have been perverted and parodied so extensively that their variations have been sometimes heard more often than their original forms. Wolfgang Mieder has coined the term “*Antispruchwort*” (*anti-proverb*) for such deliberate proverb innovations (also known as *alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, mutations, or fractured proverbs*) and has published several collections of anti-proverbs in German and English. Women are undoubtedly one of the most frequent themes in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. Similarly to traditional Anglo-American proverbs in general (for example, *A woman’s place is in the home; A woman, a dog and a walnut tree: the more you beat them, the better the be; Women and dogs cause too much strife; Women are the devil’s net; Women are the root of all evil*), the overwhelming majority of proverb parodies are also antifeminist and demeaning to women. The present article makes an attempt to answer the following question: How is the nature of women revealed through Anglo-American anti-proverbs?

Keywords: Anti-proverb, Anglo-American, women, nature, proverb, misogyny, feminism, stereotype, feature, wellerism, appearance, sexuality, housewives.

0. Introduction

In the present study I am going to explore the nature of women² as revealed through Anglo-American anti-proverbs. My discussion is organized in eight sections. While the first focuses on female looks, the second depicts women reduced to the status of sex objects. The third section shows women in the role of housewife, and the fourth demonstrates women’s supposed materialism and hunger for money. The focus of the fifth section is on female talkativeness, and the sixth discusses women’s stubbornness, dominance and strong will. The seventh section portrays women’s intellectual abilities and, last but not least, the eighth section gives an analysis of other main female qualities and characteristics (for

example, quarrelsome and critical nature, wickedness, curiosity, infidelity, greediness, and many others).

While certain themes occur pervasively in anti-proverbs about women, others appear in only a few. For this reason, my discussion might sometimes seem uneven and the treatment of certain thematic categories might seem to be either narrower or broader. It must also be mentioned here that a number of our anti-proverbs treat several thematic categories simultaneously. Such examples could be discussed in various sections of the present study, under various headings. As a rule, anti-proverbs that embrace more than one theme will be quoted and discussed only once, except in cases in which only a few anti-proverbs have been identified to illustrate a specific theme.

Although the title of this study features the word ‘anti-proverbs’, I couldn’t resist the temptation to quote a few examples employing proverbs without any change. The following examples might not be considered anti-proverbs³ but they offer too clear a parallel to omit (the first two represent the wellerism):

“Time works wonders,” as the lady said when she got married after an eight years’ courtship. (OPND 310)

“Every little bit helps,” as the old lady said when she pissed in the ocean to help drown her husband. (OPND 141)

Make love, not war.

I’m married, I do both. (OPND 211).

In order to confirm or argue with some statements expressed in anti-proverbs, American proverbs about women are also cited throughout the article. The overwhelming majority of them are quoted from the largest dictionary of American proverbs—that edited by Wolfgang Mieder (see Mieder *et al.* 1992); on women in American proverbs, see Kerschen 1998 and Rittersbacher 2002; on women in Polish proverbs, see Perlinska 1996; on women in Yoruba proverbs, see Daniel 2008; on women in proverbs from around the world, see Schipper 2003.

The anti-proverbs discussed in the present study were taken primarily from American and British written sources. The texts, and others too numerous to include here, were drawn from hundreds of books and articles on puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks,

quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams, and graffiti. Most of the anti-proverbs quoted here can be also found in the books “Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs” (see Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999) and “Old Proverbs Never Die, They Just Diversify: A Collection of Anti-Proverbs”, or *OPND* (see T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006).

1. “It’s not easy for a beautiful girl to believe that love is blind”

It has been considered a general truth that while men exercise their power over women through their money and physical strength, women’s power over men primarily rests on their looks and sex appeal. The proverb *A man is as old as he feels, a woman as old as she looks* emphasizes that while men are judged by their inner youthfulness, women are judged by their looks. No wonder that by means of various beautifying practices, including clothes, cosmetics, jewellery and hairdoes, women work really hard on their looks in order to charm and seduce men.

Prettiness may be the only virtue of some women, and even so they might still have quite great power and influence on men. Numerous examples stress the advantages and profitability of **female beauty** in everyday life:

Beauty may be only skin deep, but if she were mine I’d skin her. (OPND 102) {Beauty is only skin deep}⁴

It’s not easy for a beautiful girl to believe that love is blind. (OPND 206) {Love is blind}

Opportunity knocks but once, but for a pretty girl it whistles all the time. (OPND 254) {Opportunity knocks but once}.

Many additional anti-proverbs attest to the good fortune of beautiful women. A number of anti-proverbs stress the exaggerated importance placed by men on women’s **appearance**. Everything counts: pretty legs or feet, nice complexion, blonde hair (considered to be more beautiful and sexier than dark), certain height or weight, and so on:

Why should we look for a wife—that is, a young lady whom we intend making our wife— possessing pretty feet?

Because “All’s well that ends well!” (OPND 91) {All’s well that ends well}

Of two evils, choose the one with the better-looking legs. (OPND 243) {Of two evils, choose the lesser}

Gentlemen prefer blondes, especially those who are married to brunettes. (OPND 151) {Gentlemen prefer blondes}.

Certain features might be treated by males with disrespect and contempt, for example, girls wearing glasses are not too popular among men, as the proverb *Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses* and its transformations below suggest:

Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses, unless they are contact lenses. (OPND 217)

When a man makes passes at girls who wear glasses, it’s probably due to their frames. (OPND 217).

One of the most stereotypical female features is **vanity**, summarized by the proverbs *Women are wacky, women are vain: they’d rather be pretty than have a good brain; The ugliest woman can look in the mirror and think she is beautiful.*

Naturally, **youth** is an important aspect of women’s physical attractiveness and sex appeal. Unfortunately youth does not last forever:

Boys will be boys and girls will be girls, but not forever. (OPND 109) {Boys will be boys}.

The following example is a pun on an *appeal* submitted in court by lawyers and the *sex appeal* of ageing female lawyers:

Old female lawyers never die; they just lose their appeals. (OPND 246) {Old soldiers never die, they just fade away}.

Let us observe a short dialogue between Dorothy Parker (1893–1967), an American poet and satirist famous for her wit and wisecracks, and a young actress:

Dorothy Parker and a young actress were both about to pass through the same doorway when the actress drew back with the words, “Age before beauty.”

“Yes, my dear,” replied Miss Parker, “and pearls before swine.” (OPND 84) {Age before beauty; Don’t cast your pearls before swine}.

As the proverb says, *With age comes wisdom*, but we could add that age also brings us unwanted wrinkles, overweight, diseases, disappearance of beauty, and so on. Although in the text above Dorothy Parker’s age is not mentioned, nor do we know anything about the young actress’s looks, we presume from the remark in the form of a proverb (*Age before beauty*) that the young actress is beautiful and, consequently, Dorothy Parker is an ageing woman who has lost her beauty, which is so crucial for women, especially in the acting business. On the one hand, on the surface, the young actress behaves politely (she allows another woman to pass through the door first), on the other hand, her remark about age and beauty shows her incredible cynicism, maliciousness and aggression. Dorothy Parker, who had the reputation of a “wisecracker” responds wisely (??), also using a proverb. The young actress might be beautiful but is treated as “swine” by the wisecracker, while she looks on herself as a precious stone which should not be thrown “before swine”. The dialogue above is not only seen as a battle of proverbs but also demonstrates the endless struggle between young and old, beauty and ugliness, wise and stupid.

If women can not any longer look young enough, being very vain, they do not confess their age, and this is stressed in the proverbs *The longest five years in a woman’s life is between twenty-nine and thirty*; *The only secret a woman can keep is that of her age* and in the proverb alteration below:

Time and tide wait for no man—But time always stands still for a woman of thirty. (OPND 307) {Time and tide wait for no man}.

There are many more examples demonstrating women’s worries regarding their ageing. Consider the following transformations of the proverb *A man is as old as he feels, a woman as old as she looks*:

A woman is as old as she looks; a man is old when he stops looking. (OPND 68)

A woman is as old as she looks at you. (OPND 68)

A woman is as old as she looks to a man that likes to look at her. (OPND 68).

Not only a woman's age but her **weight** also counts. Being overweight might be quite problematic for her appearance:

Never underestimate the power of a woman—nor overestimate her age and weight. (OPND 236) {Never underestimate the power of a woman}

Hell hath no fury like a well-known overweight comedienne on a liquid diet. (OPND 164) {Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned}.

Times change, and our ideas about beauty also change. If once upon a time being plump was a sign of female beauty and attractiveness, nowadays slim, thin women are considered more attractive and beautiful. Therefore, scores of women are obsessed with their figures and waistlines. In order to struggle with overweight and to become slimmer, according to these anti-proverbs, females are able to undergo even the cruelest **diets**:

All men are created equal, but necklines, waistlines and hemlines show that women are not. (OPND 84) {All men are created equal}

Give a woman an inch, and she'll start to diet. (OPND 153) {Give her an inch and she'll take an ell [=a measurement of length]}

“Young ladies who feel anxious to preserve the most symmetrical anatomical proportions, should never be in hurry. They should remember that ‘haste’ makes waist.” (OPND 160) {Haste makes waste}.

One of the most decisive things contributing to a woman's appearance is **clothes**. Due to nice garments and finery, even the ugliest women can become quite attractive. Many anti-proverbs stress again and again that females are judged by the way they dress. Witness the numerous parodies of the proverb *Clothes make the man* and of its antonym *Clothes don't make the man*:

Clothes don't make the woman, but they help. (OPND 117)

Clothes may not make the man, but they certainly help a woman to make him. (OPND 117)

Clothes make the man, especially when the right girl is wearing them. (OPND 117).

Some transformations of the proverb *Clothes make the man*, however, emphasize the prevalence and importance of the female body over their clothes, and cynically recommend to them the entire lack of clothes, or nudity. Indeed, that a woman without any clothes might more easily seduce males:

Clothes make the man, and fake the woman. (OPND 117)

Clothes make the man and lack of them the woman. (OPND 117).

For centuries women have been depicted as adoring **jewellery**, see the proverb *Diamonds are a girl's best friend*. It is not only the beauty of a certain piece which is loved. More than that, it is also a symbol of wealth and status the wearing of which, on the one hand, can attract and impress men and, on the other hand, can make other females envious. Jewellery particular popular in our corpus are diamonds and gold:

Diamonds are a man's best friend. (OPND 122) {Diamonds are a girl's best friend}

Love is blind, but not stone blind when a girl gets a diamond with a flaw in it. (OPND 206) {Love is blind}

The only golden thing that some women dislike is silence. (OPND 269) {Silence is golden}.

Since, as these texts would have it, women's worth largely depends on their appearance, in order to attract or not to lose the impact of their looks on the man of their choice, they naturally try to do everything in order to prolong their youth, and therefore, try to **keep abreast with aging**.

Following a piece of advice expressed in the proverb *A little bit of powder and a little bit of paint make a woman look like what she ain't*, women work extremely hard on enhancing their looks, paying frequent visits to hairdressers, delicatessen stores, dress-makers, cosmeticians, and beauticians:

A woman's place is in the delicatessen store and the beauty salon. (OPND 79) {A woman's place is in the home}.

Artificial beautifying might not help women at all, especially if they are depicted in the role of a wife or the generic old woman. Contrarily, it might make things even worse:

A beautician says nothing is less attractive than an elderly woman with bleached or hennaed hair. Only the young dye good, it seems. (OPND 283) {The good die young}.

Women's beautifying inventiveness sometimes has no limits:

Appearances are deceiving: many a girl who puts up a swell front in public is flat-chested at home. (OPND 97) {Appearances are deceiving}.

According to these anti-proverbs, in some women almost nothing natural is left:

"Wife is just one sham thing after another," thought the husband, as his spouse placed her teeth, hair, shape, and complexion on the bureau. (OPND 200) {Life is just one damned thing after another}.

However hard women's pursuits might be in beautifying themselves, their natural beauty is still frequently considered the best attracting power. The variations of the proverb *A man is as old as he feels, a woman as old as she looks* stress that what really counts is how a woman looks before any makeup is used:

A man is as old as he feels before breakfast, and a woman is as old as she looks before breakfast. (OPND 67)

A woman is as old as she looks—at 7 a.m. (OPND 68)

A woman is as old as she looks until she puts her face on. (OPND 68).

2. "*Behind every good moan—there's a woman*"

Many proverb parodies in our material reduce women to the **status of sex objects**⁵:

Behind every good moan—there’s a woman. (OPND 103)
 {Behind every successful [good] man there’s a woman}

A bitch in time saves nine. (OPND 77) {A stitch in time saves nine}.

One of the sexual anti-proverbs even points out rather harshly and cynically:

You are who you fuck. (OPND 339) {You are what you eat}.

Indeed, being a successful man means having a proper sexual partner:

Underneath every successful man there’s a woman.
 (OPND 105) {Behind every successful [good] man there’s a woman}.

Therefore, not surprisingly, having sexual intercourse with a woman is considered to be much more fulfilling than merely talking to her or masturbating:

A girl had in bed is worth two in the car. (OPND 57) {A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush}

A woman in the bushes is worth two in the hand. (OPND 57) {A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush}.

Sexist attitudes and hostility towards women are very prominent in the following sexual⁶ alterations, which rework one of the most widespread anti-feminist proverbs in the English language, *A woman’s place is in the house* (generally interpreted to mean, “a woman should stay at home, doing housework and raising children”; see Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999: 26):

A woman’s place is in the car. (OPND 79)

A woman’s place is in the hay. (OPND 79)

A woman’s place is sitting on my face. (OPND 79).

While the first two examples above demonstrate where sexual intercourse might take place (e.g., “in the car”, or “in the hay”), the last one depicts a form of oral-genital sex called facesitting, in which the receiver (in this case a female) sits on the giver’s face (presumably a man) and pushes her genitals into his face.

The anti-proverb below not only reduces women to the status of sex objects but also brings up one of the most desirable characteristics for women and one of the qualities least frequently possessed by them, the ability to keep silent (the feature discussed in section 5):

Women should be obscene and not heard. (OPND 115)
 {Children should be seen and not heard}.

Similarly to children, who are required by the text of the original proverb above to “be seen and not heard”, women in its transformation above are also instructed to be silent but, more than that, they should also be able to give men “obscene” sexual pleasure. What kind of obscenity might be referred to here? One possible answer might be fellatio, a very rare activity when a woman simply can’t speak at all, since her mouth is “occupied”.

Nowadays it is not only the man who seduces the woman or encourages sexual intercourse; this age-old stereotype is often reversed. Therefore, a number of stereotyping proverb alterations depict women as **promiscuous**, **lustful** and **sexually active**. As the proverb says, *Once a crook, always a crook*, that is, referring to the anti-proverb below, a once promiscuous woman will always remain promiscuous. Therefore, when men meet a woman who has been known for having had a rich “history” of sexual life, they hope that they will also be gratified with sexual pleasures:

A woman with a past attracts men who hope history will repeat itself. (OPND 167) {History repeats itself}.

Being **seductive**, women may catch the man of their choice (be it a boss, a coachman, or a future husband):

Give a boss with a sexy secretary enough rope, and he’s bound to be tied up at the office. (OPND 152) {Give a man enough rope and he will hang himself}

It’s the early girl that catches the coachman. (OPND 280)
 {It’s the early bird that catches the worm}.

More than that, females in return also expect men to be sexually seductive; this is the reason why girls might be disappointed if boys don’t behave in such a way:

Boys will be boys, otherwise the girls would be disappointed. (OPND 110) {Boys will be boys}.

An interesting fact needs to be mentioned here: while in many anti-proverbs about women the adult word “man” is used for males, the immature and derogatory “girl” is used for their counterpart, females:

The way to a man’s heart may be through his stomach, but a pretty girl can always find a detour. (OPND 295)
{The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach}

Spring–1. When a young man’s fancy lightly turns to what the girl has been thinking about all winter. 2. The season of balls–golf, tennis, base and moth. (OPND 182) {In the spring a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love}.

3. “*All work and no pay makes a housewife*”

For centuries nothing else has been considered to be more important for a woman than serving her husband and children. In fact, a number of proverbs even emphasize that women should not leave their homes: *A woman’s place is in the house; A woman, a cat, and a chimney should never leave the house*. Numerous anti-proverbs from our corpus express the idea that **women were created for housework**. While these anti-proverbs portray women as working bees, they also show men’s negative attitudes towards women, their anti-feminism and chauvinism (on male chauvinism in American proverbs, see Mieder 1985c).

Housework is considered to be hard work but the difference in it and other kinds is that a housewife is not paid:

All work and no pay makes a housewife. (OPND 88) {All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy}.

The following anti-proverb, continuing the statement expressed in the original proverb, that is that it is necessary to find the appropriate person for each assignment, also adds one small detail: who else other than a woman is the person to be delegated:

Never send a boy to do a man’s job—send a woman. (OPND 236) {Never send a boy to do a man’s job}.

Waiting patiently is not enough for getting something you want, you also have to work in the meanwhile, is drawn attention to in the proverb transformation below:

Everything comes to she who waits...if she works while she waits. (OPND 144) {Everything comes to him who waits}.

In the alteration above the pronoun *he* of the original proverb text, which applies to both males and females and is used in many other proverbs (for example, *He who hesitates is lost; He who laughs last, laughs best*), is changed into *she* in the proverb mutation, clearly demonstrating that it is woman—and not man—who should work.

While a man's duties are usually over when he comes home from work and, therefore, he can be involved in any kind of free time activities such as watching TV, reading a newspaper, and so on, **woman's household jobs do not have an end**. Women are depicted as constantly busy with cooking, washing the dishes, cleaning, raising children and any other household task, as the proverbs *A woman's work is never done* and *Man works from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done* and their numerous transformations below suggest:

Men and women work from sun to sun; then men watch "Seinfeld"⁷ while women do the laundry. (OPND 213)
 A woman's work is never done—by men! (OPND 80)
 Just about the time a woman thinks her work is done, she becomes a grandmother. (OPND 80).

A mother's duties, especially child rearing, do not have an end. Everything has its appointed time and place but rest is the only thing she never has:

To the mother of young children, there's a time and place for everything, except rest. (OPND 299) {There's a time and place for everything}.

Despite the fact that raising children has been considered for a long time the only domain where women are more influential than men, the meaning of the traditional proverb *The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world* (which means "Mothers who look after

their children and shape their personalities have the most power and influence”, see T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 285) is frequently contested in our corpus:

On the matrimonial sea, the hand that rocks the cradle
very seldom rocks the boat. (OPND 285)

The hand that cradles the rock rules the world. (OPND
285)

The hand that cooks the meal is the hand that rules the
world. (OPND 285).

The last example above stresses that a woman who feeds someone properly is the woman who exercises power and is exactly in line with the proverb *The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach*.

Doing the shopping is considered to be women’s obligation, as well as their favorite activity:

A woman’s place is in the mall.

Bumper sticker. (OPND 79) {A woman’s place is in the
home}.

4. “*The way to a woman’s heart is through the door of a good restaurant*”

One of the characteristics consistently attributed to females is their materialism and hunger for money. Not surprisingly, many anti-proverbs portray females as materialistic, calculating species chasing after rich men:

When money talks, some women don’t miss a word.
(OPND 230) {Money talks}

Every man has his price, and every woman has her figure.
(OPND 142) {Every man has his price}.

Beautiful, attractive women might be especially materialistic, since they can demand much more, and, therefore, their choice to choose and to be chosen is simply higher. As reflected in the proverb *Gentlemen prefer blondes*, stereotypically, blondes are considered to have more sex appeal than brunettes. Hence the proverb alteration is showing a reversed picture: it is not only gentlemen who have preferences, but blondes do too, though they do not concern appearance but wealth:

Blondes prefer gentlemen with money. (OPND 151).

Certain **status symbols** (such as expensive cars, homes, cruises, jewellery, fur coats, and restaurants) in these biased texts are very important for women:

For the modern girl, opportunity doesn't knock. It parks in front of her home and honks the horn. (OPND 253)
{Opportunity knocks but once}

Behind every successful man is a woman, who didn't have jewelry [*sic*], a mink coat, and an expensive home. (OPND 105) {Behind every successful man there's a woman}

Behind every successful man is a woman who wants to go on another cruise. (OPND 104) {Behind every successful man there's a woman}.

Contrary to the idea expressed by the original text of the internationally spread proverb *The way to a man's heart is through his stomach*, a number of its alterations express the idea that the best way of making a woman love a man is to spend a lot of money on her, for example, buying her clothes, jewellery, invite her to expensive restaurants, and so on:

The way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but the way to a woman's heart is a buy-path. (OPND 295)

The way to a woman's heart is through the door of a good restaurant. (OPND 295)

The way to a woman's heart is through your wallet. (OPND 295).

For many centuries women have economically depended on men's material achievements; and such dependence is also frequently emphasized in our corpus. Therefore the financial status of her future husband might be crucial for a woman. Moreover, the anti-proverbs below, as well as many other ones from our corpus, express that she might even be seduced into marriage by money:

Love may be blind, but when a girl examines her engagement ring it's evident she's not stone blind. (OPND 206) {Love is blind}

Man proposes and the girl weighs his pocketbook and decides.⁸ (OPND 212) {Man proposes, God disposes}

The man to whom money isn't everything, should marry the woman to whom everything isn't money. (OPND 226) {Money isn't everything}.

The two examples below point out that it doesn't matter if a man courts a woman in a gentle or an aggressive way, the only thing which matters for a woman is "a full purse":

Faint heart never won fair lady—but a full purse can always pull the trick. (OPND 146) {Faint heart never won fair lady}

None but the brave deserve the fair, but only the rich can support them. (OPND 240) {None but the brave deserve the fair}.

Marriage has meant, and in many families still means, that a husband has to support his wife materially. Naturally, financial support is what many women still expect men to do after they marry them. Here come the numerous transformations of the most frequently parodied proverb about women in our corpus, the proverb *Behind every great [successful] man there is a woman* (the number of its transformations in our corpus is 36):

Behind every successful man is a woman who makes it necessary for him to make money. (OPND 104)

Behind every successful man is a woman who wanted a mink. (OPND 104)

Behind every man who lives within his income is a wife who doesn't. (OPND 104).

In fact, in these anti-proverbs, there is no end to women's financial wishes and demands. The more they have, the more they want, and their obsession might cost men quite a lot (see the proverb *A woman can throw out of the window more than a man can bring in at the door*), even **bankrupting** them. The numerous transformations of the proverb *Clothes make the man* will help us to prove the last statement:

Clothes may make the man, but his wife's may break him. (OPND 118)

The clothes that make a woman can break a man. (OPND 118)

Clothes make the woman and break the man. (OPND 118).

Some other examples point out that the cost of women's beautiful looks or their other purchases might lead to a man's empty purse:

It takes nine tailors to make a man and one woman to break him. (OPND 185) {It takes nine tailors to make a man}

Talk is cheap, but one word sometimes, like a woman's yes, can cost you thousands. (OPND 275) {Talk is cheap}.

5. "A woman never puts off till tomorrow what she can say today"

Talkativeness is usually depicted as an inborn female characteristic, and the tongue is a body part primarily associated with women (see the proverbs: *Wherever there is a woman, there is gossip; A woman's hair is long; her tongue is longer; A woman's strength is in her tongue; One tongue is sufficient for a woman*). Observe the transformation of the latter proverb below which satirically plays on the polysemy of the word "tongue"⁹ (meaning "language" as opposed to the body part):

Milton was asked by a friend whether he would instruct his daughters in the different languages; to which he replied, "No, sir, one tongue is sufficient for a woman." (OPND 253).

A number of additional anti-proverbs from our corpus also contemptuously portray women as talkative. A woman's **talkative** nature is referred to in the following example (naturally, the first one can't remain true any longer, with the spread of cell phones):

A woman's place is in the home because that's where the telephone is. (OPND 79) {A woman's place is in the home}

A woman never puts off till tomorrow what she can say today. (OPND 234) {Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today}.

Women speaking is presented in our material not only as talkativeness, but also as chattering and gossiping:

Many a woman never puts off till tomorrow the gossip she can spread today. (OPND 235) {Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today}

A chatterbox is known by the silence she doesn't keep. (OPND 69) {A man is known by the company he keeps}.

Ideally, as the anti-proverbs would have it, the ability to be silent is considered to be one of the most appreciated female characteristics (although a very rare one), as expressed in:

The only golden thing that some women dislike is silence. (OPND 269) {Silence is golden}.

The following wellerism might express the man's fantasy and desire to be with a submissive woman, the one who is ready to fulfill all his sexual needs and desires, without a quarrel or fight, without even saying a word, without asking anything in return. Even if she is dumb, many men would rather be with such a woman:

"Silence gives consent," as the man said when he kissed the dumb woman. (OPND 269).

Similarly to the wellerism above, the following debasing anti-proverb which, pointing out the power of silence in a woman, also draws a parallel between her silence and her sexual submissiveness:

Women should be obscene and not heard. (OPND 115)
{Children should be seen and not heard}.

Women's talkativeness (or *words*) is frequently set against their deeds (or *work*). In the following three examples reworking the proverb *A woman's work is never done*, "work" is transformed into "word" (or "talk") as the positive notion of a hard-working woman is traded for the image of a female who talks too much:

Women talk more than men because woman's work is never dumb. (OPND 80)

A woman's word is never done. (OPND 80)

Woman's work is never done, probably because she can't get off the telephone long enough to do it. (OPND 80).

6. "Where there's a woman, there's a way—and she usually gets it"

A number of proverbs argue that women are **stubborn, manipulative**, and **bossy** (one of the most deep-rooted stereotypes of women in a role of wife). **Having a strong will**, they persistently try to **get their way** and, therefore, whenever they can, they **exercise their power and dominance** on men, for example, *Women will have both her word and her way; Two things govern the world—women and gold; While there's a world, it's a woman that will govern it*. Let us have a look at some anti-proverbs reflecting the qualities discussed above:

Where there's a woman, there's a way—and she usually gets it. (OPND 334) {Where there's a will, there's a way}

Man proposes, then woman imposes. (OPND 212) {Man proposes, God disposes}.

As it is portrayed, stubborn women, even being familiar with facts, might simply ignore them, when necessary. This is why we might smile reading what a 'sweet' stubborn woman is called by her partner:

In Cincinnati there lives a man who calls his better half Fact because she is a stubborn thing. (OPND 145)
{Facts are stubborn things}

For many centuries, the main goal of females has been to get married—and they are still portrayed as quite artful in achieving this, see the transformations of the proverb *Give a man enough rope and he will hang himself*, and there are many more transformations to this effect in our corpus:

Give a man enough rope and he skips; give a woman
enough rope, and she makes a marriage knot. (OPND
152)

Give a girl enough rope and she'll ring the wedding bell.
(OPND 152).

Whenever a chance is given, a woman "makes a marriage knot". The two anti-proverbs above show the eternal struggle between two sexes emphasized by the metaphor of the rope. According to these examples the rope connects the women's dominance and the man's acceptance of it, even in spite of his strong resistance.

The fight for power and dominance remains one of the most important aspects in a wife-husband relationship, all the way through their marriage. Since men are afraid of losing their power and dominance not surprisingly a number of anti-proverbs picture bossy, dominant wives who rule. The three examples below even employ the words "boss" or "bossed":

If experience is the best teacher, how is it that some hus-
bands still think they're the boss of the family?
(OPND 145) {Experience is the best teacher}

'Tis better to have loved and lost than to marry and be
bossed. (OPND 191) {It's better to have loved and lost
than never to have loved at all}

A bachelor is a rolling stone that gathers no boss. (OPND
74) {A rolling stone gathers no moss}.

As we can see from the last two examples, the figure of the bachelor is treated with envy, contrary to the one of the spinster, who is primarily viewed in our material as an unfulfilled and unhappy woman who deserves pity.

Other proverb alterations demonstrating wives' dominance and power over their husbands follow. In the first example a poor man is surrounded by two bossy women: his wife and his daughter who, in line with the proverb *Like mother, like daughter*, possess qualities similar to those of her mother:

No man can serve two masters, unless he has a wife and
grown-up daughter. (OPND 237) {No man can serve
two masters}

A man's home is his wife's castle. (OPND 71) {A man's home is his castle}

Behind every successful man is a wife who tells him what to do, and a secretary who does it. (OPND 104) {Behind every successful man there's a woman}.

Even food preparation, one of the most stereotypical female activities, might be delegated by bossy women to their husbands and become their duty, especially if they wake up early. Hence two transformations of the proverb *The early bird catches the worm*:

The early bird gets up to serve his wife breakfast in bed. (OPND 281)

"And remember, my son," said the father of the groom, "the early husband gets his own breakfast." (OPND 280).

The proverb transformations below clearly state that wives' wishes have to be accomplished without any disputes or arguments, otherwise there might be a problem for most husbands. Experienced husbands supposedly know it too well:

To most husbands: A word from the wives is sufficient. (OPND 81) {A word to the wise is sufficient}

Experience teaches wisdom: the experienced husband has learned to think twice before saying nothing. (OPND 306) {Think twice before you speak}.

How can women achieve dominance and exercise their power? According to the anti-proverbs anything goes, as far as women's **achievement of goals** is concerned, for example, tears, flirting, lies, woes, sex appeal, beauty, young looks, and so on. Women are so artful and cunning in getting what they want that men must always be on the alert, as pointed out by the proverb *A woman's in pain, a woman's in woe, a woman is ill when she likes to be so* and a number of anti-proverbs below.

Tears are considered to be the inborn attribute of the "weaker sex" which are used to exercise their power and gain whatever they wish (see also the proverbs *A woman laughs when she can but cries whenever she wishes; As great a pity to see a woman*

weep as to see a goose go barefoot which are a clear warning that women's tears should not be trusted). As we can see from the examples below, tears are supposedly used by the most "successful" representatives of the "weaker sex" whenever other ways of manipulating or controlling don't have influence:

Ladies, to this advice give heed—
 In controlling men;
 If at first you don't succeed,
 Why, cry, cry again. (OPND 175) {If at first you don't succeed, try, try again}.

Another possible way of influencing men might be to **flirt**:

A flirt is as strong as her weakest wink. (OPND 59) {A chain is no stronger than its weakest link}.

Lies and woes might also help women a lot:

Figures don't lie, unless they are women's. (OPND 148)
 {Figures don't lie}
 All the world's a stage, and some women are always rehearsing their woes. (OPND 86) {All the world's a stage}.

Sex appeal, beauty, young looks, or partial nakedness might also be used by women in managing all their affairs:

Girls often wear bathing suits with bare midriffs because the way to a man's heart is through the stomach. (OPND 295) {The way to a man's heart is through his stomach}.

7. "A word to the wise is sufficient, a word to the wife never is"

And now comes an eternal topic in the battles of the so-called weaker and stronger sexes, the subject of intelligence. While in life, as well as in proverbs and anti-proverbs, beauty is being associated with women, intelligence is with men. According to a number of our examples, women do not have brains or bright minds, in line with the proverb *Long hair, little brains*. Moreover, men don't like women be smarter than they; what's more, one proverb even points out that *It takes a smart woman to be a fool*. Therefore, if a really smart woman wants to exercise her power over a man of her

choice, she sometimes has to pretend to be stupid and even look like a *dumb blonde* (a stereotype of a stupid and sexually promiscuous woman, very frequently being the butt of dumb blonde jokes):

Never judge by appearances: the girl who looks like a dumb blonde may really be a smart brunette. (OPND 233) {Never judge by appearances}

Women's **stupidity**, **silliness**, **foolishness**, **craziness**, **mindlessness** and **ignorance** are portrayed in a number of Anglo-American proverb transformations and wellerisms:

“Two heads are better than one,” quoth the woman when she had her dog with her to the market. (OPND 320) {Two heads are better than one}

In the wellerism above a parallel is brought between the head of the woman and the head of her dog. Since it is the woman herself who equates her dog's intelligence to hers, we might presume that her remark in the form of a proverb is not what she really thinks but shows her sarcasm in her own regard and ability to use self-disparagement, self-depreciative humour.

A woman in the role of wife is frequently depicted as possessing the negative qualities discussed above in this section (the first one also refers to females' revengefulness, a quality to be discussed in section 8):

“Tit for tat,” quoth the wife when she farted at the thunder. (OPND 310) {Tit for tat}

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, especially when your wife has it. (OPND 66) {A little knowledge is a dangerous thing}.

A woman, especially when cast in the role of a nagging wife (characteristics discussed below, in section 8), might be viewed as lacking in **wisdom**, that is, “wise” is antonymous with “wife”, reflected in numerous transformations of the proverb *A word to the wise is sufficient*:

A word to the wife is never sufficient. (OPND 81)

A word to the wise is sufficient, a word to the wife never is. (OPND 81)

One word to the wife is sufficient: say “Yes.” (OPND 82).

Especially the generic *old woman* and the *young girl* (frequently referred to as *the old lady* and *the young lady* in our corpus) are those whose intellectual capacities, wit and wisdom are belittled as much as it is possible. Young females might lack such qualities due to their age and lack of experience:

Why ought very young ladies mind their P’s and Q’s?

To enable them to discover the difference between being Polite and Quiet, and being Pert and Quarrelsome. (OPND 218-219) {Mind your p’s and q’s}

Early to bed and early to rise is the way of a girl before she gets wise. (OPND 134) {Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise}.

Old women in our corpus, however, might be considered as those who have already lost all their intellectual abilities. Consider the examples below (all in the form of wellerisms) all of which might be also a good indication of women’s ability to look at themselves with sarcasm and to use self-disparagement, self-depreciative humour in regard to themselves:

As the old lady said, “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.” (OPND 327)

“Every little helps,” as the old woman said when she beat up a dead fly in her currant cake. (OPND 141) {Every little (bit) helps}

“Good blood will always show itself!” as the old lady said when she was struck by the redness of her nose. (OPND 109) {Blood will tell}

Representatives of some professions and occupations might be considered to be ignorant and foolish:

Waitress: A girl who thinks money grows on trays. (OPND 222) {Money doesn’t grow on trees}.

Despite the stupidity, foolishness, ignorance and lack of wisdom associated with the “weaker” sex, women are very skillful in

making men entire fools (in line with the proverb *Any wise man can be fooled by a foolish woman*):

Nature makes some men fools all of the time but women make all men fools some of the time. (OPND 340)
 {You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time}.

In particular, extracting money is one of the ways to fool old men by their young lovers:

Old playboys giving fur coats to young mistresses:
 There's no fuel like an old fuel. (OPND 301) {There's no fool like an old fool}.

8. *Miscellaneous*

Similarly to the proverbs *There was never a conflict without a woman; Women and dogs cause too much strife; There's hardly a strife in which a woman has not been a prime mover*, a number of Anglo-American anti-proverbs reflect a **quarrelsome, conflicting, fighting**, and **reprimanding** nature of women (especially if they are portrayed in the role of a wife):

A word to the wife is sufficient—to start a quarrel. (OPND 80) {A word to the wise is sufficient}
 It is the late husband that catches the lecture. (OPND 280)
 {The early bird catches the worm}
 Make love, not war.
 I'm married, I do both. (OPND 211) {Make love, not war}.

As it has been emphasised in section 6, numerous anti-proverbs depict women as bossy, ruling, powerful, and dominant creatures. However, it is not always the case. Contrary to the anti-proverbs mentioned above, many additional anti-proverbs emphasize women's **submissiveness** (examples of sexual submissiveness have already been demonstrated earlier, in section 5) and absolute **lack of power**:

On the matrimonial sea, the hand that rocks the cradle
very seldom rocks the boat. (OPND 285) {The hand
that rocks the cradle rules the world}.

Women are considered to be species of a **second sort** by some
men:

Some men treat all women as sequels. (OPND 85) {All
men are created equal}.

Females are often depicted as **demanding, nagging, com-
plaining** and **critical**, especially when they are in the role of wife.
Observe also the numerous transformations of the proverb *Behind
every successful man there's a woman*:

Behind every famous man there's a woman—telling him
he's not so hot. (OPND 103)

Behind every successful man is a woman who wants to go
on another cruise. (OPND 104)

Behind every successful man there's a great...nag, nag,
nag. (OPND 105).

When husbands can't provide their wives with what is, in their
opinion, the best, the most expensive, the most luxurious, if they
can't compete with their colleagues, friends or neighbours, their
wives become dissatisfied, which leads to their constant complaint
and criticism:

Behind every successful man is a woman who is trying to
keep up with the Joneses. (OPND 104)

Behind every successful man is a woman who keeps re-
minding him that she knows men who would have
done even better. (OPND 104)

Behind every successful man is a woman complaining she
has nothing to wear. (OPND 104).

One can always have a number of reasons for complaining,
and thus, simply by their nature, women are seen as those **never
satisfied with anything**; this idea is exemplified in the proverb *Is
a woman ever satisfied? No, if she were, she would not be a wom-
an* and the joke below:

Wife (heatedly)—“You're lazy, you're worthless, you're
bad-tempered, you're shiftless, you're a thorough liar.”

Husband (reasonably)—“Well, my dear, no man is perfect.”¹⁰ (OPND 239) {No one is perfect}.

Women’s endless criticism and **opposition** to whatever a man around says are reflected in the following three anti-proverbs about mothers-in-law who are uniformly depicted in our material as a man’s biggest enemy:

Man proposes, and a mother-in-law opposes. (OPND 212)

{Man proposes, God disposes}

No man is a hero to his mother-in-law. (OPND 237) {No man is a hero to his valet}

Love is blind, but your mother-in-law isn’t. (OPND 206) {Love is blind}.

Even though section 4 has demonstrated the calculating, financially-hungry type of woman, in our corpus we can also find—although very rarely—the female being depicted as romantic, as Juliet dreaming about her Romeo:

To a romantic girl, all roads lead to Romeo. (OPND 85) {All roads lead to Rome}.

Women are inherently considered by proverbs to be **bad, ill-natured, wicked**, and even **evil**, for example, *Women are the root of all evil; Women are necessary evils; The world is full of wicked women*. Here are the transformations of the proverb *Of two evils, choose the lesser* which reinterpret the word of the text of the original proverb “evil” by referring it to a female:

Of two evils, choose the one with the better-looking legs. (OPND 243)

Of two evils, choose the prettier. (OPND 243).

Although the stereotype of an ideal woman (especially a wife) is that of a hardworking bee, working diligently, looking up to her husband, not all women in our anti-proverbs can fit it. On the contrary, some females are shown as quite **lazy**:

Advice given to a rather lazy girl: ‘Marion, haste and repent at leisure!’ (OPND 216) {Marry in haste and repent at leisure}.

And even if such a lazy woman hurries up and gets married, she might remain lazy. When she does anything at all, even something insignificant (for example, a little sewing), her husband might be more than bemused:

A stitch in time is a surprise to many a husband. (OPND 77) {A stitch in time saves nine}.

Women are shown as **revengeful furies with terrible outbursts of anger**, see the numerous variations of the proverb *Hell¹¹ hath no fury like a woman scorned* in which a woman's place is not "the house", indicated by the traditional proverb *A woman's place is in the house*, but something worse—"hell", the Devil's dwelling place:

Hell hath no fury like a woman at a bargain counter. (OPND 164)

Hell hath no fury like a woman driver. (OPND 164)

Hell hath no fury like a woman who has waited an hour for her husband on the wrong corner. (OPND 164).

Additional anti-proverbs demonstrating women's anger and revengefulness:

When angry with her husband, a wise woman always counts ten—but not over him. (OPND 329) {When angry count to ten}

A Chicago man calls his sweetheart Revenge because she is so sweet. (OPND 265) {Revenge is sweet}.

Women's **curiosity** and **nosiness** to find out more about their men's (primarily husbands') business is reflected in the three variations of the proverb *Half the world doesn't know how the other half lives*:

What every wife wants to know: how the other half lives. (OPND 159)

Half the world doesn't know how the other half lives, but that isn't the half that's made up of women. (OPND 158)

Half the world doesn't know how the other half lives: the women can't keep track of the men. (OPND 158).

A few further examples—all referring to **other** (negative) **aspects of female nature** not discussed earlier:

infidelity:

When the husband comes in at the door, the lover flies out of the window. (OPND 331) {When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window}

An oriental wife gave birth to a white child and explained: “Occidents will happen.” (OPND 82) {Accidents will happen}

When the husband is away, the wife will play. (Schipper 2003: 221) {When the cat’s away, the mice will play}

greediness:

Beware of the girl who likes to eat her cake and have yours too. (OPND 344) {You can’t eat your cake and have it too}

Her motto is, ‘Every man for myself.’ (OPND 142) {Every man for himself}

An old maid was attending a wrestling match when one of the wrestlers was thrown in her lap. She refused to give him up and kept yelling, “Finders keepers!” (OPND 148) {Finders keepers}

inability to get ready (or to be somewhere) in time:

A woman on time is one in nine. (OPND 77) {A stitch in time saves nine}

A man is judged by the company he keeps, a woman by how late she keeps company. (OPND 69) {A man is known by the company he keeps}

incapacity of saving money:

Some women don’t believe in saving up money for a rainy day, because that’s the worst day for shopping. (OPND 267) {Save for a rainy day}

Save your pennies, and your wife’s dressmaker will take care of the pounds. (OPND 273) {Take care of your pennies and the pounds [the dollars] will take care of themselves}

Money makes the mare go...and woman makes the money go. Old postcard. (OPND 227) {Money makes the mare go}

lack of thriftiness:

In women's hosiery, what's sheer today is gone tomorrow. (OPND 165) {Here today, gone tomorrow}

strangeness, weirdness:

Another thing stranger than fiction is woman. (OPND 315) {Truth is stranger than fiction}

As Naomi admitted later, "Ruth is stranger than fiction." (OPND 315)

exaggeration:

The wife who makes a mountain out a molehill probably has a husband who makes a molehill out of a mountain. (OPND 131) {Don't make a mountain out of a molehill}.

Many more features of the female character exemplified in anti-proverbs (for example, unreliability, irresponsibility, irrationality, changeability, fickleness, unpredictability, arrogance, egoism, naughtiness, opportunism, mysteriousness, and many others) could be considered in the present article but I must come to a conclusion now.

Summary

Let us summarize here how a woman's nature is revealed through Anglo-American anti-proverbs. As has been demonstrated above, a number of anti-proverbs focus on the exaggerated importance placed on women's appearance and on their vanity. In fact, women are obsessed with their age, sex appeal, and weight. They work hard on enhancing their looks, and their beautifying inventiveness sometimes has no limit. Therefore, they are constantly criticized for their hard work on their appearance, as well as high expenses invested in clothes, jewellery, slimming diets, hairdressers, beauticians, and so on. Women are frequently reduced to the status of sexual objects, being depicted as promiscuous and lustful. They are mainly shown as dependent on men economically; moreover, they are also seen as materialistic and hungry for money. The more they have, the more they want; not sur-

prisingly, their greediness might lead to breaking many a man. While traditional proverbs dream of submissive, powerless, silent women who quietly perform their duties in the home, who, looking up to their husbands, serve them with smiles and admiration, who bring up the children, and do all possible household jobs, in the corpus of our anti-proverbs, women (especially wives) are rather shown as powerful, dominant, manipulative and bossy creatures. Both in proverbs and anti-proverbs women have the reputation for being awful chatterboxes and gossips; women's talkativeness is contemptuously set against their deeds. Similarly to traditional proverbs, anti-proverbs also deny the "weaker" sex keen intelligence and wit, and also reflect women as stupid, silly, foolish and ignorant. Especially critical in this respect are anti-proverbs treating old women or women in the role of wife. Women in our corpus are also portrayed as quarrelsome, ill-natured, curious, and overcritical, and never satisfied with anything. Last but not least, a woman's 'anti-proverbial' reputation includes the following qualities as well: infidelity, greediness, anger, revengefulness, inability to get ready in time, incapacity to save money, weirdness, and lack of thriftiness.

As we have just seen, similarly to traditional Anglo-American proverbs in general (for example, *A woman, a cat, and a chimney should never leave the house; A woman, a dog and a walnut tree: the more you beat them, the better they be; Women and dogs cause too much strife; Women are saints in church, angels in the street, devils in the kitchen, and apes in bed; Women are the devil's net; Women are the root of all evil; A whistling girl and a crowing hen always come to no good end*), the overwhelming majority of proverb parodies in our corpus are also antifeminist and demeaning to women. The fact that females in our corpus are depicted as primarily possessing negative stereotypical qualities might show once again that not only proverbs but also anti-proverbs tend to be created primarily by men, in the male dominant world.

Why are women constantly assigned inferior or abnormal qualities? Why are they still shown as species of a second sort? One of the possible answers to these questions might be: men create and use the anti-proverbs in order to provide themselves with a sense of their own worth and, therefore, feel better about them-

selves, enhance their own self-esteem and superiority. The following quotation—although it refers to proverbs, and not anti-proverbs—might prove this thought:

One of the richest sources of proverbs is [a] man's fears and hatreds of his fellow man, his xenophobia. [A] Man is always willing, even eager to characterize, deride, spoof his fellow man, especially if in doing so he thinks he is raising himself in the eyes of the world or in his own. In such proverbs there are of course numerous examples of [a] man's earliest objects of derision, women—antifeminism, fear and hatred of women, especially wives." (Coffin 1968: 201).

While examining a woman's nature as revealed through proverbs, that is, old pieces of wisdom, might be a way of looking back to "the tradition", examining a woman's nature in anti-proverbs, that is, proverb alterations, might be a way to look forward to the change in gender relationships in the modern world. As we have seen, despite modern enlightenment, women, in the overwhelming majority of our examples, are still frequently shown as subordinate to men, as people of a second sort, as a species who can constantly be ridiculed and made a fun of. A number of additional anti-proverbs, however, show that women, not always accepting their subordination, struggling with old stereotypes, demanding a place in the sun different from what is "prescribed" for them by men, create new truths, not always favourable to men, and not always accepted by men.

Even in spite of all the negative attributes and characteristics assigned to women in the Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the men portrayed in them are very far from avoiding the so-called "weaker" sex. As we can see from a number of examples, men don't want to give up women, even if it is needed for their health and prescribed by a doctor, as the following proverb transformation suggests: *Advice to the exhausted: When wine, women and song became too much for you, give up singing* (OPND 337) {*Wine, women, and song will get a man wrong*}. Whatever men might cynically say about the "weaker" sex, whatever sexist sentiments they might use in women's regard, however they might neglect or despise them, if men have a chance, they simply can't resist women's power and charm. The "rope" might not even be needed any

longer for a woman to tie a man to her. Based on his free will, he ties himself to her, as is expressed in the following anti-proverb: *Give a man a free hand, and he'll put it on a woman every time* (OPND 152) {*Give a man enough rope and he will hang himself*}!

Notes:

¹ I owe much gratitude to Fionnuala Carson Williams for her friendly help in proofreading the study, her critical comments, and suggestions.

² An earlier, shorter, version of this study, under the title *Women in Anglo-American Anti-Proverbs*, was delivered at the Europhras 2010 Conference in Granada (Spain) in June 2010.

³ Wellerisms are certainly considered to be anti-proverbs by Mieder and T. Litovkina and, therefore, are included in their collections of anti-proverbs (see Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006).

⁴ For the reader's ease all anti-proverbs are followed by their original forms, given in { } brackets.

⁵ Men, however, may not appreciate it when the tables are turned, and when they are used as sex objects:

My friends say their boyfriends use them as sex objects. I'm making it with my boyfriend and using him as a sex object.

...shame on you! Two wrongs don't make right! (OPND 321) {Two wrongs don't make a right}

Attention girls: Always save a boyfriend for a rainy day—and another one in case it doesn't rain. (OPND 266) {Save for a rainy day}.

⁶ For discussion on sexuality in Anglo-American proverb transformations, see Tóthné Litovkina 1999a, 1999b; T. Litovkina 2005: 87–99.

⁷ *Seinfeld* is an American television situation comedy (or *sitcom*) that originally aired on NBC from 1989 to 1998.

⁸ It has to be said here that money is also very important for men as well; naturally, it might also have an impact on men when they choose a wife: *The rich man and his daughter are soon parted*. (OPND 62) {*A fool and his money are soon parted*}.

⁹ A tongue (or woman's tongue) is metaphorically associated with a sword and other cutting objects or weapons in a number of Anglo-American proverbs, e.g., *The boneless tongue, so small and weak, can crush and kill*; *The tongue destroys a greater horde than does the sword*; *The tongue is not steel but it cuts*; *The tongue is sharper than the sword*; *A woman's tongue is the only sharp-edged tool that grows sharper with use*; *No sword bites so fiercely as an evil tongue*.

¹⁰ A similar example about women from the mouth of men: *I've got a new girlfriend. She reads modern novels, likes classical music and impressionist art*

and loves visiting museums. But then, nobody's perfect. (OPND 239) {Nobody's perfect}.

¹¹ In many other proverbs women are associated with the Devil (e.g., *Women are the devil's net; A woman knows a bit more than Satan; Tell a woman she's a beauty and the devil will tell her ten times; He that has a good wife has an angel by his side; he that has a bad one has a devil at his elbow; Women are saints in church, angels in the street, devils in the kitchen, and apes in bed*) or hell (e.g., *When a man takes a wife, he ceases to dread hell; The hell of women is old age*).

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