

*'Living with One Man, Dreaming of the Other.'* *The Textual Representation of Men  
in Two Contemporary Popular Flemish Women's Magazines*

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Abstract

Women's magazines address all kinds of issues: beauty, health, love, work, sex and, overtly or between the lines, men. It is highly interesting to look at the way men are represented in these magazines and to find out how the women readers' role towards men is being defined. The main goal of this study is to examine the textual representation of men in two contemporary popular Flemish women's magazines, Flair and Libelle. These are the two most read weeklies for women in Flanders. This paper makes use of the linguistic framework of naming analysis. Naming analysis examines which textual and linguistic resources are used to name men and how these choices contribute to the representations.

## **I. Introduction**

Women's magazines address all kinds of issues: beauty, health, love, work, sex and, overtly or between the lines, men. As they are defined as 'journals (that) help to shape both a woman's view of herself, and society's view of her' (Ferguson 1983, p.1), it is highly interesting to look at the way men are represented in these magazines and to find out how the women readers' role towards men is being defined.

The main goal of this study is to examine the textual representation of men in two contemporary popular Flemish women's magazines, *Flair* and *Libelle*. These are the two most read weeklies for women in Flanders. Since 'research on the media coverage of various events is conducted on the assumption that news media do not mirror the real world, but they construct versions of reality' (Stamou 2001, p.653), this paper makes use of the linguistic framework of naming analysis. Naming analysis examines which textual and linguistic resources are used to name men and how these choices contribute to the representations.

## **II. Methodological framework: naming analysis**

Naming analysis examines the different names that are used to refer to (social) actors or events within a given text (Trioen and Temmerman 2009, p.74). As such, naming analysis examines *onomasiological variation* (Geeraerts *et al.* 1994). This type of lexical variation refers to the fact that the same kind of referent may be named by various semantically distinct lexical categories. Onomasiological variation is a form of conceptual (or "semantic") variation: it involves differences in categorization. It takes its starting point on the level of semantic values and describes how a particular semantic value may be variously expressed by means of different words (Geeraerts *et al.* 1994, pp.3-5).

Since 'the vocabulary one is familiar with provides sets of preconstructed categories, and representation always involves deciding how to "place" what is being represented within these sets of categories' (Fairclough 1995, p.109), we adopt the view that every linguistic representation brings along a specific meaning, based on a specific viewpoint. Naming analysis is concerned both with form and meaning. One of the basic principles is that 'meanings are necessarily realized in forms, and differences in meaning entail differences in form. Conversely, it is a sensible working assumption that where forms are different, there will be some difference in meaning' (Fairclough 1995, pp.57-58). Therefore, naming is a powerful ideological tool (Clark 1992, p.209).

The main objective of our study is to find out which names are used to represent men and, consequently, to figure out how these names contribute to the magazines' overall representation of men. Our application of naming analysis starts with a quantitative phase, examining how often a name is used, followed by a qualitative study of the selected names.

## **III. Corpus**

The corpus consists of 12 randomly chosen issues of both *Flair* and *Libelle* from the year 2008. From these issues, we have analysed all articles in which men are

represented. The full corpus contains 45 articles: 21 from *Flair* and 24 from *Libelle*. Most articles are made up of testimonies by women or pieces of advice given by experts, professors and therapists. The reporter of the article combines these different utterances into one comprehensive whole and provides it with background commentary, thus creating the overall meaning of the article.

Taking into account this polyphonic organization of discourse that enacts different *voices* (Roulet 1996), the articles will be subdivided into three categories, according to the *author* (Goffman 1981). In the category Testimonies, women-interviewees testify about a given topic (e.g. unfaithful men). The category Experts & Figures contains opinions and pieces of advice given by therapists, experts and professors. Finally, the category Introductions & Titles consists of all the introductions and titles of the selected articles (this is pure editorial copy).

The distinction between these categories is not without significance: we expect that experts will represent men in a different way than women readers do. Moreover, this distinction is far from absolute. After all, the way in which *all* speakers represent men still gives us an idea about the way these magazines construct the overall meaning of the concept 'man'. Therefore, all results are combined in the discussion and conclusion.

#### **IV. Analysis of the data**

In a first phase, we will investigate how many times a certain name occurs. In a second round, the different names are compared with each other. Names which could only be traced a few times, but which convey a significant meaning, will also be examined thoroughly, inspired by the research method of Trioen and Temmerman (2009).

In what follows, we will give an overview of the different names *Flair* and *Libelle* use to refer to men. By selecting a form out of a range of other possible forms, a particular way of representing the named referent is foregrounded (Trioen and Temmerman 2009, p.74). Therefore, it should be stressed that, strictly speaking, 'neutral names' as such do not exist. Rather, the traced naming practices are to be considered under a range of possibilities, each having its own place on a horizontal axis. To situate each name on this axis, we start from Trioen and Temmerman's (2009, p.79) continuum with a tripartite division in neutral, meaningful and evaluating names. However, for this study, these categories are introduced in a new scheme, adjusted to the names we found in our corpus (cf. fig. 1).

The horizontal axis consists of three categories. Neutral names refer to the named referent in the most general way: they can be considered as naming practices that do not provide evidence of a certain approach or an evaluation. The names in the categories 'characteristic' and 'role/relationship' approach the named referent from a particular point of view. The category 'characteristic' consists of naming practices that make use of a characteristic of the named man to represent him (e.g. 'blonde'). In the category 'role/relationship', those names can be found that attribute a certain role to the named referent (e.g. 'father'). Names that describe a kind of relationship

between the named referent and another referent<sup>1</sup> (e.g. ‘husband’) are also included. It should be noted that, in many cases, the boundaries between these different groups are fuzzy.

However, the categorization on the horizontal axis is not sufficient. To cover the particularity of each naming practice, the names in the categories ‘characteristic’ and ‘role/relationship’ need to be specified further. For this reason, the horizontal axis intersects with a vertical axis that indicates a gradation: on the top of the vertical axis, those names can be found that give an evaluation of the named referent. The neutral names on the horizontal axis are not specified further since there are, strictly speaking, no gradations of neutrality possible. In this study, we only consider three naming practices as strictly neutral: the personal pronoun *hij* (‘he’), the proper name of the man and the name (*de*) *man* ((the) man). It should be noted that the name *man* (‘man’) can also be categorized in the category ‘role/relationship’: when preceded by a possessive pronoun as *jouw* (your) or *mijn* (my), *man* (man) refers to the role of the man.

*Insert figure 1 about here.*

We can expect that the category Experts & Figures on the one hand, and the categories Testimonies and Introduction & Titles on the other hand, show some important differences: it can be assumed that the former category contain more neutral names than the latter, since experts usually stick to the naked facts, while testimonies tell personal, emotionally biased stories and editors are often very creative in their use of words. The naming analysis can give a decisive answer about that.

### *1.1 Naming men in Flair*

#### *1.1.1 Testimonies*

##### *A. Neutral names (742 out of 813 names)*

Names without a certain approach or evaluation make up the vast majority of the names in this category. The personal pronoun *hij* (‘he’) occurs most often. This pronoun only appears when the man in question has already been mentioned before. The use of the name *een/de man* (‘a/ the man’<sup>2</sup>) and the proper name of the man can also be considered as neutral. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the addition of an adjective or a relative subordinate clause can give a certain meaning to a neutral name. Example (1) illustrates this:

Ex. (1):           ‘Hoe kon die **lieve** Pieter in zo’n harde en koele man veranderd zijn?’  
                      (How could that **sweet** Pieter change into such a harsh and cold man?)  
                      (F15-56)

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, we only consider relationships and friendships between a man and a woman. There are some testimonies about lesbian relationships present in the corpus, but since they don’t affect the results of this study, no special attention will be paid to them.

<sup>2</sup> In the translation of the naming practices, we try to approach the original meaning as closely as possible.

*B. Naming practices that refer to a characteristic, role or relationship of the named referent (71 out of 813 names)*

The names *mijn/jouw man* ('my/your man'), *echtgenoot* ('husband'), *partner* ('partner') and *lief* ('love') all refer to the fact that the witness has a relationship with the named man. The name *vriend* ('friend') can be interpreted in two different ways. Example (2) shows that it may refer to the lover of the reader:

Ex. (2): 'Mijn vriend en ik leerden elkaar kennen in de les.' (My boyfriend and I met each other in class.) (F6-58)

Secondly, it may refer to the friendship between the reader and a man. Example (3) illustrates this:

Ex. (3): 'Jarenlang was hij mijn beste vriend.' (For years and years he was my best friend.) (F18-64)

The name *ex-vriendje* ('ex boyfriend'), on the other hand, highlights the fact that the relationship between the witness and the man in question is over.

Names that attribute a certain role to the named referent are *minnaar* ('lover') and *papa* ('daddy'). The name *papa* (daddy) emphasizes the fact that the man in question takes up a responsible role regarding his children. It should be noted that *papa* (daddy) refers to the partner of the reader, and not to her father. Names that do refer to the father of the reader have not been taken into consideration.

In some cases the reader does not only talk about her own partner, but also about another man who's involved in the story. She then usually uses the proper name of the man or, sporadically, *een ander* ('someone else').

The name *jongen* ('boy') makes use of the rather young age of the man to represent him. This meaning clearly comes forward in example (4):

Ex. (4): 'Hij was een jongen van vijftien toen zijn moeder verongelukte en zijn vader wat later een nieuwe relatie begon.' (He was a fifteen-year-old boy when his mother had an accident and his father started a new relationship.) (F7-63).

Names that give an **evaluation** of the named referent can also be found in the testimonies. The name *soulmate* ('soul mate') evaluates the man in question on the basis of his close friendship or relationship with the witness. Example (5) illustrates this:

Ex. (5): 'Algauw besepte ik: dit is mijn soulmate, de échte man van mijn leven.' (Soon I realised: this is my soul mate, the real love of my life.) (F15-57).

The name *beste maatje* ('best mate') is closely related to that, although the relationship between the witness and the man is less tight.

The name *machoman* ('macho man') characterizes the man as someone who behaves in a very manly way. Example (6) is an illustration of that:

Ex. (6): 'Allemaal machomannen, het testosteron droop ervan af.'  
(They were all macho men, they oozed testosterone.) (F6-58).

Names as *billenman* ('bottom man') and *borstenman* ('breast man') approach men by means of the female part of the body they like the most. This meaning is also emphasized by the context in example (7):

Ex. (7): 'Danny houdt van diepe decolletés. [...] Danny is een echte borstenman.' (Danny loves low necklines. [...] Danny's a real breast man.) (F9-66).

The name *toffe gast* ('good guy') evaluates the character of the man, while the name *pathologische leugenaar* ('pathological liar') characterizes the man on the basis of his lies. Names that evaluate the looks of a man and frame him as handsome are *knappe vent* ('good-looking boy') and *stuk* ('hunk'). The name *de man met wie ik mijn leven wilde doorbrengen* ('the man whom I wanted to spend my life with') is evaluating as well.

### 1.1.2 Experts & Figures

#### *A. Neutral names (19 out of 44 names)*

In the category Experts & Figures, almost half of the names is neutral. In contrast with the neutral names in the category Testimonies, these names are seldom accompanied by an adjective or a relative subordinate clause. That way, neutrality is maintained. Furthermore, the names are considered in a generic way: instead of referring to one specific man, they refer to 'the man' in general.

The personal pronoun *hij* (he) is often placed in opposition with *zij* (she), as in example (8):

Ex. (8): 'Hij zal alles doen om de vrouw te behagen en zich steeds meer als een kind gedragen, zij krijgt steeds meer macht over hem.'  
(He will do anything to please his wife and he will behave more and more like a child, while she gets more power over him.)  
(F7-64).

#### *B. Naming practices that refer to a characteristic, role or relationship of the named referent (25 out of 44 names)*

In most cases, these names are used in a generic way. The names *mijn/jouw man* (my/your man), *partner* (partner), *lief* (love) and *vriend* (friend) all refer to a relationship between the named man and another referent.

The name *de ander* (the other) refers to another man, while the name *minnaar* (lover) puts the secret, extramarital and generally sexual character of the relationship in the forefront. The name *geliefde* (beloved) emphasizes the loving relationship with the man in question. Finally, the name *iemand uit het verleden* (someone from the past) indicates that the named man is an old friend. In this category, there are no evaluating names.

### 1.1.3 Introductions & Titles

#### *A. Neutral names (35 out of 101 names)*

Approximately 35 percent of the names is neutral. In the titles, the personal pronoun *hij* (he) is often used in a generic way, as in example (9):

Ex. (9): 'Zij een nieuw lijf, maar wat vindt hij?' (She has a new body, but what does he think?) (F9-62/63).

#### *B. Naming practices that refer to a characteristic, role or relationship of the named referent (66 out of 101 names)*

In this category, the majority of the names is meaningful. Many titles are quotes from the witnesses in the article. The possessive pronouns that precede the names indicate that, as example (10) illustrates:

Ex. (10): 'Mijn man slaat mij' (My husband beats me) (F4-64)

In this category too, the names *mijn/jouw man* (my/your man), *vriend* (friend), *ex-vriendje* (ex boyfriend), *echtgenoot* (husband), *partner* (partner) and *lief* (love) appear.

As in the other categories, the name *de ander* (the other) is used to refer to another man. One title makes an opposition between *de een* (one man) and *de ander* (the other):

Ex. (11): 'Leven met de één, dromen van de ander' (Living with one man, dreaming of the other) (F18-64/65).

In this title too, the names are used in a generic way.

The name *bekende* (acquaintance) emphasizes the fact that the referent is already familiar with the named man. The name *vreemde* (stranger), on the other hand, expresses the opposite: the man in question is an unknown person.

The name *collega* (colleague) refers to the professional relationship between the referent and the man, while the name *vader* (father) stresses the fact that the man in question has children. The name *jongen* (boy) emphasizes the rather young age of the named man. By use of the name *terdoodveroordeelde* (death sentenced man), the man in question is referred to as being sentenced to death. Example (12) shows that this rather exceptional perspective fits into an article about the relationship between a woman and a man who's sentenced to death:

Ex. (12): 'De Nederlandse Tasha heeft al jarenlang een relatie met een Amerikaanse terdoodveroordeelde. Sterker nog, vorig jaar trouwde ze met hem. Maar ze heeft haar man alleen nog maar achter glas gezien...' (For years and years now, the Dutch Tasha has a relationship with an American who's sentenced to death. More than that, she married him last year. But she's only seen her husband from beyond the glass...) (F14-59).

The names *ex-junk* (ex junkie) and *ex-verslaafde* (ex addict) also favour one meaning over another: the fact that the man in question was once addicted but now kicked the habit is used to name him. The use of the name *dader* (perpetrator) is based on the same argumentation: the fact that the man has committed a crime is used to refer to him. The name *heer* (gentleman) emphasizes the high rank of the named man.

In this category too, there are some **evaluating** naming practices. Names that evaluate men as deceivers are: *leugenaar* (liar), *vreemdganger* (unfaithful man), *overspelpleger* (adulterer) and *'nooit gedacht'-schuimmarcheerder* (never thought of him as an adulterer).

Other names refer to men on the basis of their good qualities: *rusteloze ziel* (restless soul) and *romanticus* (romantic). The name *waarheidspreker* (speaker of the truth) evaluates the man as someone who always tells the truth. Another name that assesses the man in question in a positive way is *grote liefde* (great love). The name *voorspelbaar type* (predictable type) evidently refers to the man as predictable.

## 1.2 Naming men in Libelle

### 1.2.1 Testimonies

#### A. Neutral names (778 out of 908 names)

Neutral names make up the vast majority of the names that could be traced in the testimonies. The most frequently occurring name is the personal pronoun *hij* (he). As in *Flair*, this pronoun only appears when the name of the man it refers to is already mentioned before. Again, neutral names can become meaningful when they are preceded by an adjective or a relative subordinate clause.

#### B. Naming practices that refer to a characteristic, role or relationship of the named referent (130 out of 908 names)

The names *mijn/jouw man* (my/your man), *partner* (partner), *echtgenoot* (husband), *vriend* (friend), *ex* (ex), *lief* (love), *een ander* (someone else), *de ander* (the other), *minnaar* (lover), *papa* (daddy), *vader* (father), *jongen* (boy) and *(mannelijke) collega* ((male) colleague) also appear in this category.

The name *vreemde* (stranger) refers to the man as an unknown person. When using the name *eentje* (one), the man is not considered as a person, but more as an object, as example (14) shows:

Ex. (14): 'Niet dat ik per se een mooie man zoek, maar wel eentje die zich verzorgt.' (It's not that I'm looking for a beautiful man, but I do look for one that looks after himself.) (L4-87)

The name *type* (type) indicates that the witness usually falls for this kind of man. The name *kerel* (guy) frames the man as a sturdy, brave man, as in example (15):

Ex. (15): 'Fred is een schitterende kerel, maar succes in zaken is voor hem erg belangrijk, het is zijn motor.' (Fred is a brilliant guy, but success in business is very important for him, it's his driving force.) (L19-18)



Other names that make use of a characteristic of the man to refer to him are *een korte donkere* (a short, dark man) and *die blonde* (that blonde guy).

New in this category is the use of the origin or the occupation of the man to name him: *een leuke Luikenaar* (a nice inhabitant of Liège), *een Afrikaan* (an African), *een grappige fotograaf* (a funny photographer), *die nieuwe accountant* (that new accountant) and *een leraar* (a teacher). A similar name is *student* (student): the daily activities (studying at a university or college) of the man are used to refer to him. The name *crimineel* (criminal) emphasizes the fact that the man has a bad record.

The name *de eerste* (the first) refers to the first love of the witness. However, by putting it into a saying, the name is used in a more generic way, as example (16) shows:

Ex. (16): 'Voor mij was de eerste meteen de beste.' (The first one turned out to be the best one for me.) (L13-22)

Evaluating names can also be found in this category. The pet name *schat* (honey) indicates that the man in question is very dear to the woman speaking. With the name *zo'n exemplaar* (such a specimen), the man is considered more as an object. At the same time this name indicates that the named man is unique.

The names *mijn nummer één* (my number one), *de ware* (true love) and *Nieuwe Grote Liefde* (New Great Love) indicate what the man means for the witness. The name *eerste lief(de)* (first love) refers to the man as the witness' first real love. Another evaluating name is *jongere versie* (younger version). This name represents the man as a younger copy of a(n) (older) man. Example (17) illustrates this:

Ex. (17): 'Dat hij een jongere versie van die leraar is, heb ik pas na een tijdje begrepen.' (Only after a while I understood that he was a younger version of that teacher.) (L13-20).

With the name *goed gezelschap* (good company), the man is referred to as someone whom the witness likes to hang out with.

### 1.2.2 Experts & Figures

#### *A. Neutral names (25 out of 65 names)*

Almost 40 percent of the names is neutral. As in *Flair*, these neutral names are seldom accompanied by an adjective or a relative subordinate clause, so they do not lose their neutrality. Furthermore, they are often used in a generic way.

#### *B. Naming practices that refer to a characteristic, role or relationship of the named referent (40 out of 65 names)*

These names are often used in a generic way. As in the other categories, the names *mijn/jouw man* (my/your man), *partner* (partner), *vriend* (friend), *ex* (ex), *vader* (father) and *papa* (daddy) also occur in this category. The name *Adam* contrasts with *Eva*:

Ex. (18): 'Eva is materialistischer dan Adam en even ambitieus.' (Eva is more materialistic than Adam and equally ambitious.) (L21-110)

In this sentence, the name *Adam* is metaphoric for 'the man' in general. The name *dader* (perpetrator) frames the man as someone who has committed a crime. The name *stem* (voice) is noticeable: in the sentence 'En wat te zeggen van een stem die lieve woordjes in je oor fluistert?' (And what to say about a voice that whispers sweet nothings in your ear?) (L18-68), *stem* (voice) stands for 'man' (man). The name *stem* (voice) is thus a metonym of the pars-pro-toto type.

Finally, this category contains one evaluating name: the name *de persoon die jouw chemische boodschappen herkent als 'zijn' geur van welbehagen* (the person who recognizes your chemical messages as 'his' scent of well-being) stands out. Although the name *person* (person) is neutral, the combination of this name with the relative subordinate clause gives the phrase a particular evaluative meaning: the relative subordinate clause specifies the name *person* (person). Note that the possessive pronoun *zijn* (his) clearly indicates that the named person is male.

### 1.2.3 Introductions & Titles

#### *A. Neutral names (93 out of 125 names)*

Again, most names are neutral.

#### *B. Naming practices that refer to a characteristic, role or relationship of the named referent (32 out of 125 names)*

The names that occur most often are *mijn/jouw man* (my/your man), *partner* (partner), *vriend* (friend), *ex* (ex) and *lief* (love). The names *vader* (father) and *papa* (daddy) are often used in a generic way. The name *date* (date) refers to the person who has a date with the witness. The name *homo* (gay) appears once and refers to the man on the basis of his sexual inclination, while the name *jongen* (boy) stresses the young age of the named man. By using the name *acteur* (actor), the man in question is represented by means of his occupation.

Also here, there are some evaluating names. The names *de liefde van hun leven* (the love of their lives), *de ware* (true love), *iemand die wel eens De Ware zou kunnen zijn* (someone who could be The One) and *de Enige Echte* (the One and Only) evaluate men as a dream partners, while the name *een avontuurtje* (an affair) indicates that the relationship with the man was only short-lived. The names *foute prins* (wrong prince) and *de verkeerde* (the wrong guy) share the same meaning: both names represent the man as someone with whom it's impossible to have a relationship.

The name *vijand* (enemy) represents the man as an opponent. The name *twijfelaar* (doubter) indicates that the named man is very indecisive. In the title 'Die eerste liefde' (That first love) (L13-18), the name *eerste liefde* (first love) indicates that the article is about women's first true love.

## **V. Comparison between *Flair* and *Libelle* and general conclusions**

The naming analysis shows that both magazines represent men in a similar way; the differences between the magazines are rather small.

Most striking is the fact that, in general, the majority of the names in both *Flair* and *Libelle* is neutral. Although *Libelle* contains more neutral names (69,3 percent against 55,5 percent in *Flair*), we can say that both magazines prefer a 'neutral' representation of men.

Neutral names even make up the vast majority in the category Testimonies, where women talk about a given topic like unfaithful men. This is rather surprising: this category was expected to contain more names that provide evidence of a certain approach or an evaluation due to the sometimes emotional testimonies. The few names in the categories 'characteristic' and 'role/relationship' that do occur in this category are very different. This could somehow be expected, since these names are often an expression of a certain emotion and therefore unique.

Surprisingly as well is the fact that most names in the category Experts & Figures, in which experts give their advice on the subject of the article, provide evidence of a certain approach, since it was expected to contain more neutral names. However, the fact that most of these names are used in a generic way and they do not have an evaluating dimension can explain this unexpected result.

The category Introduction and Titles, which contains all the introductions and titles of the selected articles, shows some important differences between the two magazines. In *Flair*, most names belong to the categories 'characteristic' and 'role/relationship', while neutral names occur the most in *Libelle*. Moreover, in *Flair*, most of these names refer to the contents or subject of the article in which they occur. On the one hand, this is not at all surprising: an introduction or a title always describes what the article is about. Consequently, the names that are being used also refer to the subject of the article. This phenomenon is less clear in the category Testimonies, because these testimonies are always specific cases that are applied to one central theme. In the category Experts & Figures as well, this is less salient, because of the fact that most names are used in a generic way.

In opposition with *Flair*, the titles in *Libelle* hardly refer to men, and if they do, they do it by means of a neutral name. With respect to content, there are no apparent differences between the names used in *Flair* and in *Libelle*. However, with respect to the evaluating names in both magazines, we can say that the use of words in *Flair* is slightly more daring than in *Libelle*: provocative names as *billenman* (bottom man), *borstenman* (breast man), *stuk* (hunk), '*nooit gedacht*'-*schuimmarcheerder* (never thought of him as an adulterer) and *overspelpleger* (adulterer) only occur in *Flair*, while the evaluating names in *Libelle* more often refer to the stability of a good relationship: *de ware* (true love), *de Enige Echte* (the One and Only), *de liefde van hun leven* (the love of their lives) and *mijn nummer één* (my number one).

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**Figure 1** Visual conceptualisation of the different categories with examples from the corpus.



