Sexless animates? Gender agreement with fixed gender nouns in German and French

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1. Introduction

Sexless animates?

[1] le sentinelle ‘the guard’ – le génie ‘the genius’
[2] des Opfer ‘the victim’ – die Waise ‘the orphan’ – der Bruder M ‘the brother’

- Can refer to females and males
- Grammatical or semantic gender agreement?

Gender agreement in superpartitive constructions (i-ii):
- For French: Sleeman & Ihssane (2016)
  - Class D nouns: only grammatical gender agreement (not verified by them)!
  - Class B/C nouns: semantic agreement possible (gender mismatch between set noun and subset noun accepted)

What about German?

Noun classes (adapted from Ihssane & Sleeman 2016)

Class A
- Suppletive forms: two distinct forms die Schwester F ‘the sister’ – der Bruder M ‘the brother’

Class B/C
- Related forms: suffix (B)/determiner (C) change die Studentin F ‘the student’
die F/der M Studierende ‘the student’

Class D
- Fixed-gender nouns: das Kind N ‘the child’

2. Sleeman & Ihssane’s analysis for French

Sleeman & Ihssane (2016) distinguish grammatical and semantic gender:

- Encoded where?
  - Gr...