Studies in Language Variation and Change 2

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Shifts and Turns in the History of English

Edited by

Elise Louviot and Catherine Delesse

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INTRODUCTION

English is by far the most studied language in the world today, both as a tool of communication for foreign learners and as the object of scholarly analysis, and has been so for some time. And yet there is still much left to discover. Not only is English continuing to spread and evolve in multiple directions around the globe today, but its history is hardly set in stone. Over the past decades, new editions have made manuscript texts available to a larger audience for the first time, new corpora and corpus-based projects have facilitated systematic analysis, and new approaches have offered thought-provoking insights. Historical linguistics is alive and well, and the present volume reflects the diversity and dynamism of the field, with studies dealing with a variety of topics in morphology, semantics, syntax, phonology and language contact, ranging chronologically from Proto-Indo-European times to the present day.

It might arguably have been possible to organize this volume according to such subfields of historical linguistics. However, given that linguists do not work in isolation from each other, and that many of the papers presented here combine insights from different subfields in order to shed light on important linguistic phenomena, any form of grouping along those lines would necessarily be artificial.

We have chosen to open this volume with a paper by the late **Xavier Dekeyser**, who, regrettably, passed away in 2016 and will be sorely missed. The paper explores instances of *many*, *much*, *few* and *little* in the Helsinki Corpus of Old English and the Middle English Dictionary to explain how English came to develop a set of quantifiers differentiating countable and uncountable nouns. In particular, it is shown that both *much* and *little* were originally grounded in the logical domain of extent, which explains why they were more often used with uncountable nouns from the outset, even though it is only in the Modern English period that their use with countable nouns disappears.

Robert Kiełtyka uses cognitive semantics to shed light on a particular subtype of semantic evolution: how a lexical item denoting an animal body part (*tail*) can come, through a complex interplay of metaphorisation and metonymisation processes, to be used to describe certain types of human being or certain types of action typically performed by human beings. On the basis of several dictionaries (in particular the Oxford

English Dictionary and the Middle English Dictionary, but also a number of dictionaries of English slang) he traces the development of the numerous relevant meanings the word *tail* came to convey between the Middle English and the Present-Day English periods.

Marion Schulte's aim is to investigate semantic change in an area where its presence has not always been acknowledged: that of derivational morphology. Linguists working on various languages have expressed doubts regarding whether derivational affixes are likely to show significant semantic evolution over time, but Marion Schulte shows that the English native nominal suffixes *–hood*, *–dom*, and *–ship* all undergo some degree of semantic change between Middle English and Present-Day English, even if the nature and extent of that change varies significantly from one suffix to another.

The next two papers are concerned exclusively with Old English. **Oxana Kharlamenko** offers an empirical analysis of inanimate nouns which have been assigned different genders in Old English dictionaries to determine which show genuine gender variability and which reflect other phenomena, in particular disagreement, which may reflect the dissolution of the grammatical gender system towards the end of the period. **Elżbieta Sielanko-Byford** examines three competing constructions used to express a proper noun with a rank or title (of the types *Ælfred cyning*, *Ælfred se cyning* and *se cyning Ælfred*), to determine how the competition between the three structures played out over time and which factors determine the structure that will be favoured in a given text. Her analysis is based on the earlier and later entries of Manuscripts A and E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which span the period from the late 9th to the early 12th century.

The two following papers are concerned with phonology, albeit from very different perspectives. **Elena Even-Simkin** studies the evolution of internal vowel alternation in English verb forms to account for the resilience of the phonological phenomenon even though it has come to be viewed as irregular. She argues that systematicity and iconicity account for its persistence today. **Thomas Kettig** looks at Labov's vowel-shifting framework to find out to what extent it explains the recognised (or presumed) changes in the English low vowel space from Proto-Indo-European to the present day. In particular, he examines interesting contemporary data provided by the ongoing Canadian Shift, which have implications for the understanding of Labov's model, particularly regarding how the notion of peripherality should be construed.

The four papers concluding this collection share a common interest in the nature and impact of contact with Romance languages on English. **Richard Ingham** questions the conditions of language contact between

French and English in post-Conquest England, arguing that there is considerable evidence for the continued use not just of written but also of spoken French in England in the 13th and 14th centuries, which helps explain the strength of French influence in that period and why that influence sharply declined shortly after, when users of French in England became fewer in number and less proficient. **Mareike Keller**, on the other hand, considers another type of bilingualism in the same period, that between English and Latin. Applying a model designed originally for present-day data, Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model, to macaronic sermons from the 14th and 15th centuries, she finds that for the most part the corpus confirms the validity and the predictive power of the model for historical data, even though some of the apparent idiosyncrasies of the corpus need to be accounted for. In particular, the pressure to write "correct Latin" in some social contexts might explain why Latin case marking is found where the model predicts its absence.

The last two papers of this collection are concerned not so much with the conditions of bilingualism in general as with the impact of French borrowings in specific lexical domains, though **Louise Sylvester & Imogen Marcus** take into account the question of code-switching in their analysis. They demonstrate how the Bilingual Thesaurus of Medieval England can be used to track the penetration of French vocabulary in Middle English texts pertaining to specific occupational domains, focusing especially on the sub-domains of metalworking and woodworking, and travel by water. Finally, **Julia Schultz**'s paper is also concerned with French borrowings, but at a much later date. She looks at the borrowing of French culinary terms in 19th century English, showing that most of the items borrowed are still part of the English lexicon today and have only minimally adapted to the phonological, morphological and orthographical systems of English, even if many of them have seen their meaning change over time.

While the individual contributions featured here will doubtless be of interest to those working within the specific fields concerned, it is also hoped that the diversity of the topics and theoretical approaches illustrated by the papers in this collection, taken together, will serve to shed new light on some of the numerous shifts and turns which have marked the history of English, affecting the syntactic, morphological, phonological and lexical patterns which make up the language.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Xavier Dekeyser.

—THE EDITORS

CHAPTER ONE

WHY ENGLISH USES DIFFERENT QUANTIFIERS TO EXPRESS UNCOUNTABLE AND COUNTABLE MULTEITY AND PAUCITY: MUCH VS. MANY AND LITTLE VS. FEW[1]

XAVIER DEKEYSER †

"Non multa sed multum"

1. Introduction

Quantifiers that express multeity or paucity can function either as pronouns or adnominal elements: *I cannot see much* vs. *I cannot see much light*. Seeing that this double syntactic function does not generally involve semantic differences, we prefer not to take it into account in this paper; for convenience' sake, most of the examples I have selected exemplify the adnominally used quantifiers.

2. How the concept of multeity is expressed in English

2.1. The Old Germanic languages normally used a quantifier related to Pre-Germanic **pelu* (cf. Greek *polus*); see OED sub *fele.* This root underlies Old English *fela*, Middle English *fele*; in Present-Day Dutch (*veel/vele*) and German (*viel/viele*) still occur as the most important multeity expressions.

[1] I am very grateful to my colleague Fabienne Toupin (Tours), who volunteered to read my paper at the conference in Troyes in my absence. My thanks also go, once again, to my daughter Kris, who helped me bring the format into line with the requirements of the style sheet. Computers can be very tricky!

It can be inferred from the great number of examples in the *Helsinki Corpus* that *fela,* expressing both countable and uncountable quantification, must have been very frequent in Old English discourse. It could be used as an indeclinable word, usually governing a following noun in the genitive, if any; see Bosworth 1898, 274 and Campbell 1959, 261.

(1) swa **fela** swa he habban wolde. (*Helsinki Corpus*: 850–950, Chron. A WS 74)
as many (hostages) as he would have.

(2) Ne forlæt þu þæs blodes to **fela** on ænne siþ. (OED, c 1000 Sax. Leechd. II.208)
Do not let too much blood on one side.

In Middle English *fele* was used either as a pronominal quantifier, sometimes governing a noun in the genitive (3), or as an adnominal element (4–5); in a few cases it was part of a doublet with *many,* as in examples (3–4), which proves both quantifiers to be (broadly) synonymous.

(3) Monie and **feole** oþre godere werke (gen.). (MED and OED, a 1225 *Lam.Hom*. 9)
Many other good works.

(4) Þer beþ briddes mani and **fale.** (OED, c 1305 *Land Cokayne 95*)
There are many brides.

(5) Hu **fele** pines ai sal þou fele. (OED, a 1499 (1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) 1 18268)
Ay! How many pains you will feel!

The decreasing number of attestations in the MED for Late Middle English suggests that *fele* was falling into disuse. Actually, the last OED quotations date from the 15th and early 16th century. I will briefly address the question of the demise of this multeity quantifier (or lexical loss) in the last section of this paper.

2.2.1. In Modern English the usual quantifier to express the notion of multeity is *much,* used throughout the history of the language, together with *many***,** which is dealt with in 2.2.2 below.

Starting from Taylor's innovating approach to metonymy and metaphor (Taylor 1992, Chapter 7), it was argued in Dekeyser 1994, 289–291 that the quantifier *much* originates in the EXTENT-MULTEITY schema.

Historically the prototypical meaning of this quantifier was "extent"; it derives from the Indo-European root **meg–*; see Greek *megalo–* with lengthened stem, or Gothic *mikils*. In Old English the usual form is *micel* with assimilated /k/ (OED sub *michel*). It should be noted that *micel* continued to be used in Middle English as a morphological variant of *much(e)*; however, this does not result in semantic divergence, so we do not need to take it into account.

Here are a few randomly selected citations:

(6) Þonon on anne **micelne** stan (OED: *michel*, c 825 in Burch *Cortul. Sax*. 1.542)
from there on (to) a large stone.

(7) An **muchel** dune, þe hatte Syon. (MED, a 1200 (c1200) *Vices & V*. (1) 103/12)
A large hill, which was called Syon.

(8) A **mychel** tre. (OED: *michel*, a 1400 *Cursor Mundi* (Trin. Cambr.) 1320)
A big tree.

(9) In that cuntre arn two mounteynes, so **mechel** and so heye… (MED, a 1450 *Mandev.* (3) 11/6)
In that country there are two mountains…. so big and so high…

Interestingly, the concepts of "extent" and "quantity" could be inextricably linked from the very beginning. Indeed, we can find numerous examples in the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*, the OED and Bosworth & Toller, where "extent" shades off into "multicity", or where the latter tends to be ascendant. In (10) the notion of *large/big* undoubtedly comes to the fore while at the same time the amount of light generated either by the sun or the moon is (covertly) involved.

(10) God geworhte twa **micele** leoht, þæt mære leoht to þæs dæges lihtinge, and þæt læsse leoht to þære nihte lihtinge. (B & T, *Gen.* I, 16)
God made two great lights, the greater light for the day's lighting, and the smaller light for the night's lighting.

Conversely, the concept of multeity or quantity is prominently present in the following example:

(11) On þison geare on þære wucon Theophanie wæs anes æfenes swyþe **mycel** lightinge. (*Helsinki Corpus*, *Chron.* E 1050–1150 WS/X248)

In this year in the week of Theophany (there) was very much (? great) lightning one evening.

The extent-multeity schema is also ideally instantiated in (12) from *Brut*:

(12) a1225 (? A1200) Lay. *Brut* 136: **Muche** lond he hem gef.
He gave him a large piece of land → He gave him much land.

Examples (11) and (12) are instances of metonymy: two contiguous concepts are associated. However, the more the literal meaning of "extent" recedes into the background, the more the logical domain of "multeity" as a metaphor comes into play. As usual, there is a twilight zone between these two domains.

(13) ... wæs swa swiþe ungemetlice **mycel** wind. *(Helsinki Corpus* & MED, a 1121 *Peterb.Chron.* (LdMisc 636)
... was in the same way excessively much/strong wind.

(14) Ge sawaþ **micel** sæd and ripaþ litel. (Latin: *sementem multam*) (B & T, *Deut*. 28, 38)
You sow much seed and reap little.

(15) Þa wæs geworden **mycel** stefn of heofonum. (B & T, *Blickl. Homl*. 145, 14)
Then there was/sounded a loud voice from heaven.

Ever since Early Middle English, *much,* either as an adnominal quantifier or a pronoun, has been the typical quantifier to express "multeity" in a variety of more or less related meanings; see OED sub *much.*

When *much* is used with collective nouns, the concept of "a large number" emerges: such nouns refer to entities that usually consist of a number of discrete items. There are a lot of examples throughout the Old and Middle English periods: ***micel*** *shiphere* ("large or numerous fleet", *Helsinki Corpus*: Chron. A, 850–950 WS 98), ***micel*** *here* ("numerous multitude, army", Ibid.), ***micel*** *folc* ("many people", Ibid.), *swa* ***much*** *folc* ("so many people", MED: a 1225 (? A1200) Lay. *Brut* 53 29), ***myche*** *puple* ("many people", Ibid.: c 1425 *Bible SNT (1) Deeds11.24).* Typically, the notion of "extent" is underlyingly present in all of these examples: LARGE is NUMEROUS; *micel here*, "a numerous army", basically conceptualizes "extent", as such an army is large in area.

As a quantifier associated with "number" *much* also used to combine with plural nouns: ***mycele*** *tacna* (*multa signa*, "many signs", B & T 683: Jn. Skt. II, 47), ***muche*** *moncum* ("many monks", MED: a 1225 (? A1200) Lay. *Brut* 23204), ***much*** *horrible deeds* (OED: 1532 T. MORE *Confut. Tyndale* in *Wks*. (1557) 714), ***much*** *other guests* (OED: 1664 Pepys *Diary* 17 July). It is arguable that *much,* or its Old English ancestor *micel*, originated in phrases with collective nouns in which the extent-multeity schema is realized and was then analogically extended to plural nouns as well. In this context it should be noted that in Middle English phrases with the unmarked plural *thing* were particularly common, as in the following example from Chaucer:

(16) Ye han seyd **muche** thyng right wel. (MED, c 1395 Chaucer *CT. Fri* D 1273)
You have said many things right well.

It can be inferred from the data in the OED sub *much,* 3a and 2e (the OED describes it as "archaic" and "nonstandard") that there was an increasing constraint on the use of the multeity quantifier *much* with collective nouns and nouns in the plural in Early Modern English. This also appears from the large-scale surveys of 18th and 19th century grammatical prescriptivism in Leonard 1929 and Dekeyser 1975. Indeed, *much* with a collective noun or a plural noun was mentioned nowhere by these grammarians, obviously because this structure did not occur in actual standard usage. And this leads us to the next section dealing with *many.*

2.2.2. Due to this constraint on *much, many,* which had been in use since Old English to express the concept of "numerous", became the universal marker of countable multeity in Modern English. This quantifier occurred in most Germanic languages as well; see OED. In Present-Day Dutch it appears as *menig*; it is mostly used with a singular noun: *menig boek* ("many books") and is virtually confined to formal written language.

Unlike *much*, *many* (Old English *manig*) has always expressed number. Syntactically, this quantifier occurred with plural nouns (17–18) or even a singular noun as in (19) and (20).

(17) Þæt he sende Agustinum & oþre **monige** munecas mid hine. (OED sub *many*, a 900 tr. *Beda's Hist.* I. XIII. 54)
That he sent Augustine and many other monks with him.

(18) ... and drenshede **meny** townes. (MED, a 1387 Trev. *Higd.* 7. 411)
…. and flooded many towns.

(19) Þæt Estland is swyþe mycel & þær biþ swyþe **manig** burh. (OED, c 893 K. Aelfred *Oros.* I, i, & 23:)
The Estland is very large and there is many a fortified place.

(20) Affrikk ... es þe toþer parti. **Mani** cuntre þer-in es. (MED, a 1400 (a1325) *Cursor* 2111)
Africa … is the other part. There are many countries in it.

In the course of Middle English, the phrase *many* + singular noun was gradually replaced by the present-day structure with an indefinite article; the OED only has a few quotations for the use with a singular noun in Late Middle English, while there seems to be only one attestation for Modern English. Example (21) below is one of the first occurrences with the article that we have come across:

(21) Ich aue hy go **mani a**myle. (MED, c1300 *Horn* (Ld) 66/1215)
I have gone many a mile.

3. How the concept of paucity is expressed in English

3.1. As we have seen in the previous section, we can accurately trace the semantic development of the extent-multeity schema in Old English and Early Middle English. *Mutatis mutandis*, this also holds for the emergence of *little* as a paucity quantifier.

Again we start from a semantic schema: SMALL IN SIZE–SMALL IN QUANTITY. Both meanings are attested as early as Old English. On the analogy of *much*, we regard "small in size" as the prototype, from which the concept of paucity is derived. Here are a few examples for the logical domain "small in size" both for Old English (22–24) and Middle English (25–26):

(22) Se **lytla** finger. (B & T, L. Alf. 60)
The small/little finger.

(23) On swa **lytlum** fæce. (B & T, Lk. Skt. 12,32)
On so small a space.

(24) Se nowent rihte þæt **lytle** ærene scip þe wiþhindan þam maran scipe gefæstned wæs. (OED, Wærferd tr. Gregory *Dialogues* (Corpus Cambr.) 1900 iv.lix. 347)
The sailor steered the small brazen ship that was fastened to the bigger ship at the back.

(25) On Cornwale syndon vii **lutle** schire. (MED, a 1300 *Hundreds Engl.* (Jes-0 29) 36)
In Cornwall there are vii small shires.

(26) A **little** hill Man calles mont oliuete. (OED, a 1400 (a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 14939)
A small hill that people call Mount of Olivet.

As pointed out at the beginning of this section, we can, once again, draw on interesting contextual evidence to demonstrate that the shift from "small" to "little" (not much) is a gradual one. To begin with, we will take a quotation from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Laud), anno 1106:

(27) ... he (i.e. se steorra) wæs **litel** geþuht and deorc, ac se leoma þe him fram stod wæs swiþe beorht. (OED)
... it seemed to be small and dark, but the beam of light that shone from it was very bright. (see Garmonsway 1972, 240)

The OED and the MED (sub *litel)* interpret *litel* as "small in size". However, in my opinion, the context also suggests the concept of "little" (not much): the light is dark as contrasted with the bright beam shining from it: SMALL is LITTLE.

Gradience is also clearly involved in the following example:

(28) Þæt **lytle** þæt he erede, he erede mid horsan. (B & T, Ors. i, I)
The little that he ploughed, he ploughed with horses.

As contiguity between two domains is involved here, examples (27) and (28) are instances of metonymy. See also (12) above (*mycel*) and the comment added.

In the following examples from the OED the metaphorical dimension is reached, with the literal (prototypical) meaning fading away or disappearing entirely:

(29) Ac ic secge get þæt me ne þyncþ nauht **lytel** good þisses andweardan lifes gesælþa, ne eac nauht **lytel** yfel ungesalþa. (OED, King Aelfred tr. Boethius *De Cons. Philos.* (Otho) (2009) I. xxviii. 515)
But I say further that it does not seem to me at all that the joys of this present life are a small good / not very good (literally "little good"), nor that its miseries are a small evil / not very evil (literally "little evil").

(30) God wimman (sic) scæ wæs, oc scæ hedde **litel** blisse mid him. (? a 1160 *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* (Laud) (Peterborough cont.) anno 1140)
She was a good woman but she enjoyed little happiness with him.

(31) Of Þe whiche Þinges our **litel** konnynge migte nougt take knowleche. (a 1387 J. Trevisa tr. R. Higdin *Polychronicon* (St. John's Cambr.) (1865) I, 5)
Of which thing our little wisdom may not take knowledge.

3.2. The domain of quantity, or lack of it, can also imply number: SMALL = NOT NUMEROUS. Hence it is not surprising that *little* also occurs with collective nouns (32–33) or even nouns in the plural, just like *much* (32–36); see above. The OED, once again, stigmatizes such use as colloquial or nonstandard.

(32) Þemperour ... Wille hunnte to morwe ... Wiþ **litel** folk & nought wiþ miche. (OED, c1330 (c1300) *Guy of Warwick* (Auch) l. 2468)
The emperor ... will hunt tomorrow ... with few people & not with many.

(33) Cleomenes... With **litel** peeple made his foon to flee. (OED, ? a 1439 LYDGATE tr. *Fall of Princes* (Bodl. 263) V. l. 332)
Cleomenes ... chased away his enemies with few people.

(34) Þa nolde he him geceosan welige yldran. Ac þa þe hæfdon **lytle** worldspeda. (OED, *Blickling* Homilies 23)
He did not choose wealthy parents, but those who had few (little?) goods.

(35) No manner of shame that a head should be uncovered that has so **little** brains in it. (OED, 1735 LORD B – *Let*. 13 Sept. in Swift *Lett*. 1768 40)

(36) They had a real desire for evangelism, but very **little** resources. (OED, 2013 *Church Times* 29 Nov. (Gen. Synod Suppl.) 4/5)

In this context it should be mentioned that *less,* which can function as the comparative form of *little*, and is historically related to Old English *læs* with partitive genitive, was and still is sometimes used with plural countable nouns; *mid* ***læs*** *worda*, "with less (of) words" (OED, c 888 AELFRED tr. Boethius *De Consol. Phil*. xxxv. §5, 6); ***lesse*** *faults* (OED, 1580 J. LYLY); ***less*** *restrictions* (OED, 1971 *Guardian* 16 Dec.). Quirk (1985: 263) observes that the tendency to use *less* instead of *fewer* is "often condemned."

Overall, just as with *much*, the use of *little* with countable reference has never been firmly established in the grammar of Standard English, and the observation about *much* and prescriptivism at the end of & 1.2.1. above also holds for *little,* which means that once again a different quantifier is required.

3.3. *Few* is the quantifier used in English to express paucity with countable reference: NOT MANY. As a common Germanic quantifier it occurred as *feawa* as early as Old English. A few quotations may suffice here:

(37) Hit him þuhte **feawa** daga. (OED, Gen. 28.20)
It seemed to him few days.

(38) Mid **fæu** men. (OED, 1154 *Anglo-Saxon Chron*. (Laud) a 1138)
With few men.

(39) With words **fewne**. (OED, c 1140 *York Myst*. xxi.78)
With few words.

(40*)* Man that is borne of a woman, is of **few** days. (OED, *Bible* (King James) Job xiv. 1)

4. Multeity and paucity: The interface

The use of the indefinite article gives *littl*e and *few* a slightly positive meaning: some, but not very many. Semantically these quantifiers occupy an in-between position, yet markedly closer to paucity than multeity.

Paucity	Limited multeity	Multeity
Little	*a little*	*Much*
few	*a few*	*many*

Table 1-1: Multeity and paucity

Here are a few examples for *a little* (41–43) and *a few* (44–45):

(41) Nu hæbbe ic her **an lutel** ele þæt ic wolde þærmide lacnian þam Godes freond. (OED, lOE *St. Nicholas* (Corpus Cambr.) (1997) 92)
Now I have a little oil here with which I would heal the friend of God.

(42) **A lutel** ater bitteret muchel swete. (OED, a 1225 (*? Old English) *MSLamb.* in R. Morris *Old English Homilies* (1868) 1st Ser. 23)
A little bile makes much sweetness bitter.

(43) **A little** naturall philosophie ... doth dispose the opinion to Atheisme. (OED, 1598 BACON *Ess.* F. 25)

(44) Þe kyng with **a fewe** men hym-self flew at the laste. (OED, 1297 *R. Gloucester's Chron*. (1724) 18)
In the end the king himself fled with a few men.

(45) I pray you let me now and then have **a few** lines from you. (OED, 1550 Sir R. Morysine *Let.* 17 Dec. in Tytler *Edw. VI* I. 345)

It should be pointed out here that the use of the indefinite article has a similar effect in some other languages, notably *un peu* in French, *een weinig* in Dutch or *ein wenig* in German. The question why the expression of limited multeity can be achieved through the use of the indefinite article is outside the scope of this paper.

5. Conclusion

Old English *fela,* a common Germanic quantifier, got lost in the course of Late Middle English. With *much* developing its full potential as a multeity expression, it is plausible to ascribe this loss to semantic rivalry, and eventually redundancy.

The key idea of this paper is the EXTENT – QUANTITY schema. Both *much* and *little* are semantically grounded in the logical domain of "extent": LARGE = MUCH and SMALL = LITTLE (not much). Via the processes of metonymy and, more importantly, metaphor, the concepts of multeity and paucity gradually developed. Given their semantic roots, these quantifiers tended to be associated with uncountability. However, theoretically speaking, both countable and uncountable reference could be involved here as well. Indeed, *much* and *little* did occur in a countable context for a long time, but then they fell into disuse in more recent standard Modern English, which may be due to the availability of specific countable quantifiers: *many* and *few*.

All these data taken together account for the use of different quantifiers in English to express uncountable and countable reference.

QUOD ERAT DEMONSTRANDUM.

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CHAPTER TWO

ON THE METAPHOR-METONYMY INTERFACE IN ZOOSEMY: THE CASE OF *TAIL*[1]

ROBERT KIEŁTYKA

1. Introduction

The major objective of this paper is to cast further light on the intricacies of zoosemic metaphorics in English. Thus in the text that follows I will examine a subtype of zoosemy where lexical items that serve to name animal body parts undergo the processes of metaphorisation and metonymisation and are used either with reference to human beings or to actions typically performed by human beings. This subtype of zoosemy will be interpreted as the interface (in the spirit of Goossens' (1990) metaphtonymy) between a general metaphorical schema that may be formulated as <(PART OF) HUMAN BEING/ACTION PERFORMED BY HUMAN BEING IS (PERCEIVED AS) (PART OF) ANIMAL> and the metonymic mapping that may be formalized as (PART OF) HUMAN BEING FOR ACTION PERFORMED BY HUMAN BEING.[2]

[1] The author of the paper would like to express his gratitude to two anonymous reviewers and the editors of this volume for many insightful comments and suggestions that have been incorporated into the body of the text. The methodological framework adopted in this paper is one proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and followed by a number of other cognitive linguists, e.g. Kövecses (2002). The term *zoosemy* was coined by Rayevska (1979) and propagated by Kleparski (2002).

[2] In this paper I use the convention of marking conceptual metaphors with small capitals and enclosing them in <…> characters, while conceptual categories/domains, features and conceptual metonymies are marked with small capitals without <…> characters.

2. Zoosemy as Metaphor-Metonymy Interaction: An Overview

This paper is meant to offer a sample of an in-depth examination of a subtype of zoosemy which may be said to lie on the border between metaphor and metonymy: either because it is understood as an outcome of a metonymic projection of a sense acquired as a result of a conceptual animal metaphor (GCM), or, conversely, because it is interpreted as a case where metaphorisation is complemented by broadly understood metonymisation.[3] Specifically, I hope to be able to show that those lexical items that are primarily employed to name animal body parts frequently undergo the process of metaphorisation and come to be used with reference to human beings, and thus may be said to embody the general schema that may be formulated as <(PART OF) HUMAN BEING/ACTION PERFORMED BY HUMAN BEING IS (PERCEIVED AS) (PART OF) ANIMAL>. Furthermore—through the metonymic projection (PART OF) HUMAN BEING FOR ACTION PERFORMED BY HUMAN BEING—those same lexical items are employed to depict certain actions performed by human beings.

Thus, as hinted above, one may posit the operation of a special subtype of zoosemy whereby nouns—used literally as names of animal body parts—are, through the working of animal metaphor, used to name human body parts and, further (by metonymic projection) come to be employed with reference to human beings of mostly objectionable or intolerable appearance, behaviour or character. For example, the Polish complex noun *świński ryj* "pig's snout" is—through the mechanism of zoosemy—employed secondarily as a contemptible appellation denoting a person's face, not infrequently with more general aesthetic, behavioural and/or moral connotations. However, *świński ryj* "a person's face" may—by means of metonymic projection—be applied to a contemptible or aesthetically unattractive human being, as in the sentence *Ile/u świńskich ryjów przyszło na przyjęcie?* "How many pig's snouts came to the party?" In the latter case, *świński ryj* "a contemptible or aesthetically unattractive human being" is an example of metonymy (or synecdoche), because the whole individual human being is referred to by his body part, or—in cognitive terms—reference to one and the same conceptual domain or, to be even more specific, the same ICM is made: that of (unattractive, objectionable or contemptible) HUMAN BEING.[4] On the other hand, in

[3] *Great Chain Metaphor* (henceforth GCM) is discussed in detail by Lakoff and Turner (1989), Krzeszowski (1997), Kövecses (2002) and Kiełtyka (2008, 2016).

[4] The notion of *Idealized Cognitive Model* (henceforth ICM) was proposed by Lakoff (1987) for whom a domain is any kind of conceptualization underlying

colloquial Polish *d**upa wołowa* "cow's arse" is employed in the evaluatively loaded sense "a helpless/inadequate person", and as such may be said to involve the mechanics of the conceptual metaphor <HUMAN BEING IS (PERCEIVED AS) (ANIMAL) BODY PART>.[5]

In contemporary English slang usage, *turtleneck* or *turtle head*—by means of zoosemic extension—metaphorically stands for "An uncircumsized penis", e.g., *No baby, I'm not sporting a turtle neck, I'm Catholic.* (see *Urban Dictionary*[6]), while both English *ponytail* "a type of hairdo" (e.g. *to tie one's hair in a ponytail*), and Polish *koński ogon* "a type of hairdo" (e.g. *związać włosy w koński ogon* "to tie one's hair in a ponytail") are based on the metaphorical relation where a human body part is perceived as the animal (horse's) body part. In other words, the underlying schema set to work for this type of zoosemy may be be formulated as <(PART OF) HUMAN BEING IS (PERCEIVED AS) (PART OF) ANIMAL>.[7]

On the other hand, in the case of Polish *kurzy/ptasi móżdżek* "a bird's brain", metaphorically used in the sense "a person's (retarded) brain", as well as *barani łeb* "a ram's head", metaphorically interpreted as "a person's head", both of which—through metonymic projection—are used in the extended sense "a stupid person", the underlying relation involved takes a slightly different form. Namely, the pattern that may be phrased as <(PART OF) HUMAN BEING IS (PERCEIVED AS) (PART OF) ANIMAL> represents the mechanism of conceptual metaphor, while the mapping PART OF HUMAN BEING FOR KIND OF HUMAN BEING shows the working of conceptual metonymy.

One of the most interesting examples of semantic change in English based on the metaphor-metonymy interface discussed here is that of *trundle-tail*, whose literal meaning (1486>1820) may be defined as "a dog

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semantic structures, whereas the ICM is the idealized model of bringing a certain structure to reality. The classification of the so-called *content metonymies*, in which specific relationships are characterized by certain conceptual content, offered in Kövecses and Radden (1998), Radden and Kövecses (1999) and Kövecses (2002) results from the assumption that human knowledge about the world is organized by structured ICMs, which are perceived by people as wholes and parts.

[5] The convention of double asterisks is used to break the sequence of letters that make up words which may justifiably be considered vulgar.

[6] See http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=turtleneck&defid=4008039, accessed on 16 September 2016.

[7] Polish *kucyk* "pigtail" is also based on the schema <(PART OF THE) HUMAN (BODY) IS (PERCEIVED AS) ANIMAL.

with a curly tail; a low-bred dog, a cur". Consider the following *OED* contexts of use:[8]

1486 *Bk. St. Albans F* iv b, "Myddyng dogges. *Tryndel-tayles*, and Prikherid curris."

⇳

1820 Scott *Monast*. xxiv, "The very brutes are degenerated; our hounds are turnspits and *trindle-tails*."

As the *OED* shows, in the course of the 17th century (1625>1665), the compound noun narrowed its meaning to "a curly tail (of a dog)" and finally—still in the same century (1614>1706)—started to be used contemptuously of a person:[9]

1614 B. Jonson *Bart. Fair* ii. v, "Doe you sneere, you dogs-head, you *Trendle tayle*!"

⇳

1706 Phillips (ed. Kersey), "*Trundle-tail*, *Trundle-tail*, a Wench that runs fisking up and down with a draggled Tail."

The historical pattern of semantic change in the case in hand—which again involves metonymy-metaphor interaction—may be schematized by means of the formula (KIND OF) DOG FOR (KIND OF) TAIL (OF DOG) (whole for part) metonymy (synecdoche) followed by <(KIND OF) PERSON IS (PERCEIVED AS) (KIND OF) DOG> metaphor.

3. Nominal and Verbal Zoosemy: The Case of Metaphor-Metonymy Interface

In this pilot paper, which is merely a sample of a larger whole (see Kiełtyka 2016), an attempt is made to analyse in some detail several historical meaning alterations of the type animal/human-specific noun <> animal/human-specific verb which share the feature of being the result of various realizations of metaphor-metonymy interaction. One of the goals set to this analysis is to cast light on the complexity of the various links existing between the mechanisms of semantic change (metaphor and

[8] The historical evidence is, unless otherwise indicated, quoted from the *OED*.
[9] For example, the contexts: 1625 Fletcher *Love's Cure* iii. iii, Like a poor cur, clapping his *trindle tail* Betwixt his legs. > 1665 Ogilby *Æsop* 205, Rough with a *trundle Tail*, a Prick-ear'd Cur show the use of the narrowed sense.