

# On the Cyclicity of Meaning Alterations in English Historical Synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**

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## 1. Introduction

It seems fairly obvious that if we accept the claim that semantic change is a cognitively motivated process, we should expect the development of meaning across different conceptual structures and domains of language function to replicate similar patterns and predictable tendencies.<sup>1</sup> If it is true that semantic change operates along the same lines as the cognitive processes within our mind, its application must result in fairly regular and universal shifts from one linguistically coded meaning to another. Such regularities should be observable in the semantic development of conceptually related lexical items irrespective of time, space and language. The aim of this paper is to illustrate this phenomenon taking as an example the cyclicity of meaning alterations in English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**. The discussion will be limited to a small selection of lexical items representing each of the conceptual domains taking part in the process of semantic change as well as a cursory analysis of the semantics of *man* which should be considered as a central representative of the category.

In what follows I will be trying to show that the likely candidates for synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** are words whose semantic structure is related to such conceptual domains as **PROPER MALE NAME, ANIMAL/HUMAN, OCCUPATION/PROFESSION, WARRIOR/SOLDIER, MASTER/LORD, COMPANION/FRIEND, HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE, FOOL/STUPID PERSON, PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE**. All of them seem to play a crucial part in the shaping of the semantics of the lexical item *man*.

Assessing these conceptual domains as possible sources and targets for the semantic development of synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** provides an evolutionary track which languages are likely to follow. These paths of semantic change can be used both for evaluation, ruling out semantic reconstructions which demand a different evolutionary track, and for prediction, since we may follow the development of a lexical item back along this track to earlier stages than those that are historically attested, or derivable by standard methods of diachronic reconstruction. However, a note of caution must be expressed here since even if we know the general direction of semantic change, this does not mean that change will actually occur. Furthermore, it needs to be pointed out that exceptions to these principles are acknowledged to take place, so that they are best seen as tendencies rather than laws and the network of change should be perceived as a prototype structure rather than a formal paradigm.

## 2. The Scope and Methodology of the Study

Tracing semantic developments within a very large corpus of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**, it becomes evident that some senses related to this group seem to appear more often than others and their meaning alterations resemble a cyclic process, as the same or very similar patterns of semantic change can be evidenced in various periods in the history of English

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<sup>1</sup> The thesis that semantic change is a cognitively motivated process was advanced by, for example, Sweetser (1990), Kleparski (1997), Györi (2002) and Grygiel (2004), while the issue of the regularity of semantic change has been recently postulated by Traugott and Dasher (2002).

as well as other languages. The corpus of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** comprises lexical items that at a certain stage in the development of English possessed the meaning “man, male human being”. This onomasiological dictionary was compiled on the basis of numerous lexicographical sources such as thesauri (e.g.: *Historical Thesaurus of English*, *Thesaurus of Old English*) and dictionaries (e.g.: the *OED*, *CASD*, *CDS*). Only words attested in this way as synonyms of “man, male human being” could be included, which is why many lexical items associated with conceptual domains related to the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** such as **MASTER/LORD**, for example *hlaford* or *cyning*, which did not develop the sense “man, male human being” had to be excluded from the scope of the analysis. Since the results of various studies seem to indicate that semantic change is a bi-directional and sometimes even multi-directional phenomenon (see, for example, Kleparski 1997, Grygiel 2004), I was interested not only in senses from which the meaning “man, male human being” was derived, but also senses that immediately followed the sense “man, male human being” and those that existed in parallel with “man, male human being” as a part of a polysemous cluster.

Acting upon the conviction that semantic change is a cognitively motivated panchronic process, my decision was to adopt the conceptual instead of the chronological criterion as the main parameter in the classification of the linguistic data at hand. The hypothesis advanced in this study is that actuation of semantic change originates in the cognitive mechanism of conceptual blending, and the context dependent formation of occasion-bound meanings constitutes the first stage of a semantic development (see Grygiel 2004). Consequently, any permanent alteration in the semantic structure of a given lexical item would not be possible without the intermediate phase of polysemy (see Sweetser 1990).

I identified sources as well as targets of historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** with the following conceptual domains: **PROPER MALE NAME**, **ANIMAL/HUMAN**, **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**, **WARRIOR/SOLDIER**, **MASTER/LORD**, **COMPANION/FRIEND**, **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE**, **FOOL/STUPID PERSON**, **PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE** as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Some of the most prototypical types/classes that could be identified with conceptual domains representing the primary senses of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**.

**OCCUPATION/PROFESSION:** *esne, ceorl, gumðegen, sealc, hind, tulk, slave, child, knave, groom, harlot, sergeant, merchant, chap, customer, cuss, sport, cookie, doc,*  
**WARRIOR/SOLDIER:** *beorn, hæle/hæleð, guma, rinc, freca, wiga, secg, son of a gun, galoot,*  
**MASTER/LORD:** *eorl, herra/hearra, freomann, sire, sorrey/sorry, hathel, baron, gentleman, mister, master, boss,*  
**COMPANION/FRIEND:** *mæcga/mæcg/mecg, mate, copesmate, guest, fellow, brother-man, brother, buddy, pal, dude,*  
**PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE:** *wæpned/wæpnedmann/wapman/wæpenmann, dildo, dick, prick, pissier, fucker, beezee, basher,*  
**HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE:** *wer, heme,*  
**FOOL/STUPID PERSON:** *guffin, cuffer, cully/cull, cod, josser, mug, mush,*  
**PROPER NAME:** *carl, johnnie/johnny, jack, jock, joe, guy, jeff, jasper, jazzbo, charlie, roger,*  
**ANIMAL/HUMAN:** *hund, horse, hoss, stud, stallion, bull, bird, buck, dog, cat, rat.*

The semantic development of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** provides evidence that a given sense of a word is a region of semantic space corresponding to a specific configuration of conceptual domains or mental spaces whose predominance has been highlighted through frequent activation to the point of becoming conventionalised. One must remember, however, that because of the richness of contextual factors, words do not usually activate restricted, small areas, but rather larger regions of semantic space and as a result historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** normally become associated with several of the above-mentioned conceptual domains instead of just one. For example, the lexical item *wæpned/wæpenmann*, clearly associated

with the conceptual domain **PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE**, is also linked to the domain **WARRIOR/SOLDIER** from which it was derived.

The term *conceptual domain* will be defined here as an experiential category against which mental spaces and semantic structures take shape. Thus, as in cognitive linguistics in general, a domain is any knowledge configuration that is relevant to the characterisation of meaning.<sup>2</sup> To a large extent I am here following Klepanski (1997: 37), according to whom lexical items get their meaning by highlighting a particular location within a conceptual domain. Since conceptual domains are dynamic prototype structures, not all of them have equal status. Some will be more central, more intrinsic to the concept than others and their reciprocal relations are by no means fixed. If we take the word *man*, for example, its meaning will be typically defined against the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**. However, in some contexts the word can refer to the higher conceptual domain **ADULT HUMAN BEING**, while in others it will have to be characterised relative to more specialised conceptual domains such as **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**, **WARRIOR/SOLDIER**, or **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE**. Still, in particular situations the word can function as a designation for a specific person, and in these cases the meaning of *man* will depend on a unique configuration of conceptual elements within a mental space.

A mental space—in contrast to the conceptual domain—has a somewhat more ephemeral status as it is activated for a specific situation. Fauconnier and Turner (1998: 184) define it as ‘a relatively small conceptual packet built for purposes of local understanding and action’. A mental space typically recruits information from more than one conceptual domain to develop its own structure, frequently smaller than the structure of the input domains. For example, within the conceptual domain **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**, one can distinguish mental spaces such as **<SERVANT>**, **<MERCHANT>**, **<SAILOR>**, which can be further specified by being fed with information from other conceptual domains like **AGE**, **SEX**, **CHARACTER**, etc.

There is one more reservation to be made at this point, namely, the number and type of conceptual domains identified with the sources/targets of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** is by no means finite or conclusive. The above-mentioned conceptual domains can be perceived as the most prototypical cores serving as input spaces in the conceptual blending operations leading to the rise of the sense “man, male human being”.<sup>3</sup> In the following I will try to illustrate the process with selected cases of semantic development coming from my research on English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**.

### 3. Semantic Development of *churl*

The OE *ceorl*, which at least for much of the Anglo-Saxon period did not convey the condition of servility implied by ModE *churl*, has been variously rendered in modern translations as “peasant”, “freeman”, “commoner” or “husbandman”, but also “man”. In Middle English the sense “man” started to mingle with other meanings such as “peasant, countryman, rustic or boor”. The change of meaning from “man” to “peasant” facilitated further pejoration of the term. Soon it acquired the meaning “rude, low-bred fellow” which was, in turn, easily transformed into “villain”. One of the senses developed by *ceorl* immediately after the Norman conquest was also “serf, bondman or captive” when *ceorls* were reduced to the position of tenants in pure villeinage.

As a matter of fact, the semantic development of *churl* cannot be perceived as a linear process if we realise that at each stage of its evolution, *churl* exhibited the properties of a polysemous category with a cluster of meanings that were often at odds with one another. Thus, in Old English, *ceorl* was already used not only in the sense “peasant”, “man”, but also “husband” and the adjective *ceorlæs* referred to unmarried women. Non-linearity of semantic change can also be illustrated by the fact that some senses developed by *ceorl* in Old English may be considered contradictory. Although the primary meaning was “freeman of the lowest class” and *ceorl* appeared in compounds such as *ceorlboren* “low-

<sup>2</sup> Taylor (2002: 339) defines a domain as ‘any “background” knowledge configuration which provides the context for the conceptualisation of a semantic unit’.

<sup>3</sup> The prototype theory was successfully applied to the study of semantic change by, for instance, Geeraerts (1997), Lozowski (2000) Koivisto-Alanko (2000) and Molina (2000).

born, not noble”, or *ceorlfolc* “common people”, in a number of Old English contexts, for instance, King Alfred’s translation of Gregory’s *Pastoral Care* or alliterative poetry, *ceorl* assumed the meaning “hero” and “noble man” (see *CASD*). This, however, falls into line with the model of panchronic sense development where the domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** is conceptually linked not only to the domain **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**, but also **MASTER/LORD**.

In this respect, the semantic history of Old English *ceorl* overlaps with that of other historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** related to the conceptual domain **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**. Kleparski (2003: 53), analysing the semantics of MidE synonyms of “man”, comes to the conclusion that ‘very frequently the historical appearance of the sense “man” is either preceded or followed by the rise of the sense “servant”’. This observation can in fact be generalised even further when we take into account a larger range of linguistic material. And so, the etymology of historical synonyms of “man” seems to indicate that it was not only the mental space <**SERVANT**>, but also the mental space <**SLAVE**> as well as a number of particular jobs that served as either source or target in the process of semantic change. Consequently, a broader conceptual domain—**OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**—could be postulated for the purpose of accounting for the integration process that gave rise to a number of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**.

Notice that similar paths of sense alteration, parallel to those of English *churl*, can be found in a number of other, often geographically and culturally divergent languages. For example, in Polish a synonym of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**—*chlop*—developed meanings such as “servant”, “peasant”, “man”. Also, the Japanese word *samurai* throughout its semantic development acquired senses such as “servant”, “peasant”, “soldier”, “man” “noble man”, “hero”, “master”, while Turkic *uglan/ohlan* assumed meanings such as “young man” in Turkish and “servant”, “noble warrior” in Tatar. The Turkic word *uglan/ohlan* was also borrowed into Polish as *ulan* with the meaning “cavalryman” and became deeply rooted in the patriotic tradition of fights for independence, very much like a whole range of synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** related to the Teutonic Heroic Age represented in Old English by, for example, *beorn*, *hæle/hæleð*, *guma*, *rinc*, *freca*, *wiga*, *secg*.

#### 4. Regular Patterns in the Semantic Development of Synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**

The semantic development of *jack* proves that although the lexical item was originally a male proper name, its use expanded owing to the change in the specification of the conceptual element “relation” where “specific reference” was replaced by “generic reference” as a result of the conceptual blending between the mental spaces <**MALE PROPER NAME**> and <**MAN**>. Thus, after the meaning “man, male human being” had been shaped, *jack* could continue its semantic evolution by becoming associated with numerous mental spaces such as <**SPORTSMAN**>, <**PEASANT**>, <**WASHER**>, <**LABOURER**>, <**SAILOR**>, <**SOLDIER**>, <**POLICEMAN**>, <**DETECTIVE**>, <**THIEF**>, <**PENIS**>, <**GENITALS**>, <**FOOL**>, <**NERD**>, all of which are derived from the conceptual domains **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**, **PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE** and **FOOL/STUPID PERSON**. It should be noted, however, that at each stage of its semantic development *jack* preserved the primary meaning “proper male name” which, as in the case of OE *ceorl*, proves that semantic change has a non-linear character and conceptual blending is mostly an on-line, ephemeral and omnipresent process which very rarely results in permanent and irreversible shifts in the semantic structure of lexical items.

As indicated by the *OED*, ModE *mate* is a cognate with ModDu *maat* related to MLG *mate* which are the shortened forms of earlier *gemate* derived from ProGer \**gamaton* “companion, mess-mate, sharer of meat”. Notice that the OE word *gemetta* also meant “partaker of food, companion at table”. In this respect, the etymology of *mate* resembles that of *companion* related to Lat. *companion* where *com* means “together, with” and *pan-is* “bread” and Goth. *gahlaiba* “mess-mate” derived from *hlaifs* meaning “bread”. Since the late 14<sup>th</sup> century until ModE *mate* has been employed in the sense “habitual companion, an associate, fellow, comrade; fellow-worker or partner” as shown in the following *OED* quotations:

**c1380** Florippe sayde: ‘Maumecet my *mate* y-blessed mot þou be for aled þow hast muche debate to-ward þys barnee’.

**1966** A 17-year-old boy said ‘I haven’t got a real *mate*. That’s what I need.’

In the LMidE and EModE periods *mate* acquired the sense “fellow, chap, man” evidenced by the selected *OED* contexts:

**a1380** He [sc. Be fend] made a mouwe, þat foule *mate*, and seide [etc.].

**1612** These Iesuits are cogging *mates*.

Other senses that *mate* developed are also of vital interest for our analysis as they seem to indicate typical meaning alternations displayed by other lexical items that at some stage of their semantic development became associated with the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**. And so, another sense thread leads to the conceptual blending “partner in marriage” resulting in the rise of meanings such as “one of a wedded pair”, “husband or wife”, “counterpart or parallel”. The mental space <SERVANT> is also represented in other senses of *mate* where it assumed the meaning “assistant to some functionary on board ship, esp. (now *hist.*) to a warrant officer in the navy” as in *boatswain’s mate*, *carpenter’s mate*, *cook’s mate*, *gunner’s mate*, *sail-maker’s mate*, etc.<sup>4</sup> Another direction in its development brought the semantics of *mate* close to the conceptual domain **WARRIOR/SOLDIER** and the mental space <SAILOR> in particular, as can be observed on the basis of nautical senses listed in the *OED*, namely “officer of the navy, next below a warrant-officer, who is not in the line of promotion” and “officer who sees to the execution of the commands of the master or commander, or of his immediate superior, and in the absence of the master takes command of the ship”.

Considering *mate* to be one of the key words in the traditional Australian culture, Wierzbicka (1997) claims that the main shift in the semantics of Australian English *mate* involved a transition from an emphasis on sharing work, out of necessity, resulting in sharing company and sharing experiences, to an emphasis on sharing company and experiences. Thus, this change in meaning seems to be the direct consequence of the blending that takes place between the mental spaces from the conceptual domain **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION** and the conceptual domain **COMPANION/FRIEND** where the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** acts as a generic space. The integration was made possible by the emphasis on equality and on the specifically inter-male character of the relationship that remained unchanged in the blend. Wierzbicka (1997) observes that although in the past the word *mate* was occasionally applied to women, the modern sense presupposes the obligatory maleness of the term.

Notice that a similar type of development took place in the contents of the Lithuanian word for “bosom-friend”, that is *bičiulis* originally meaning “bee-keeper”. *DSSPIL*, providing a possible explanation for the semantic change, points to the fact that the bee-keepers of a neighbourhood are bound together in close friendship and form a kind of “bee-fraternity”. Along similar lines, Polish *towarzysz* “companion” is derived from *towar* “goods, wares”, so that the original meaning was the name of a profession, probably “someone buying and selling goods, merchant”. However, the mental space <COMPANION> could also be blended with other mental spaces that took part in the integration of historical near-synonyms of *man*. For example, Lithuanian *draugas* and Serbian *drug*, both meaning “companion”, are etymologically related to Goth. *driugan* “to do military service”, Goth. *ga-drauhts* “soldier”, ON *drott*, OE *dryht* and OHG *truth* “multitude, people, army”, while its Polish equivalent *druh*, apart from the sense “companion, friend”, is also used to designate a member of a scouting, paramilitary organisation.

As mentioned in the foregoing, various historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** have acquired at some point of their semantic evolution the sense “husband”. In English the process can be observed in the sense alterations of lexical items such as *mate* or *fellow*. *DSSPIL* also notes that

<sup>4</sup> Consider, for example, the following *OED* contexts:

**1702** Carpenters *Mates*, Boatswains *Mates*, Gunners *Mates*, ... Quatermasters *Mates*.

**1867** *Mate* generally implies adjunct or assistant.

words for “husband” are most commonly formed out of those originally meaning “man”. On the other hand, *DSSPIL* claims that ‘probably in every IE language the word for “man” may be used for “husband” at least in colloquial or vulgar speech, as it is true even in ModE “my man”’. Beyond doubt, the fact clearly gives additional evidence to the bi-directionality of semantic change.

## 5. Conceptual Domain HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE as Both the Source and Target in the Semantic Development

The data from other languages seems to indicate that there are close ties between the conceptual domains **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** and **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE**. For example, the Polish counterpart of ModE *husband* is *mąż* and in OPol its original meaning was “man” whereas Serbian *muž*, just like Dutch and Swedish *man*, may refer to both “man” and “husband”. To take another example, Spanish *marido* derives from Lat. *maritus* “husband” which originated from Lat. *mas/maris* “man, male”. Notice also that the “husband” sense was developed by Latvian *virš* clearly related to Lat. *vir*, “man, husband, hero, warrior, soldier”.

We may hypothesise that the shift in meaning originates in a singular event where the speaker sets up a frame of reference in which the conceptual domain **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE** and the lexical item associated with it is projected onto the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**. As a result, a new sense becomes integrated. The emergent structure of the newly blended sense thread develops a structure of its own although sharing many of its conceptual elements with the input spaces from which it was integrated. The hybrid may continue its evolution in the direction of the target domain and—with the passage of time—its semantic structure becomes fully entrenched within the new concept. Since the two conceptual domains, that is, **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE** and **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**, seem to be closely related conceptually, their integration is a natural consequence of overlapping semantic structures. Notice that being a husband presupposes being a man and every unmarried man can be perceived as a potential husband.

The OE *wer/were* is a cognate with the Lat. *vir* and both lexical items—OE *wer* and Lat. *vir*—are primarily associated with the sense thread “man, male human being”. As shown by the quotations below, the OE *wer* often occurs next to *wif* “woman” which proves its central position as an OE synonym of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**. The OE *wer* is also related to OFris, OSax, OHG *wer*, ON *verr*, Goth. *wair*, OIr *fer* (Gaelic *féar*), Lithuanian *vyras*, Skt. *vira* “man, hero”. The OE *wer* used in the sense “man, male human being” can be illustrated by the following citations extracted from the *OED*:

**c900** Gif oxa ofhnite *wer* oððe wif.

**c1250** And on ðe sexte hundred ger wimmen welten *weres* mester.

Although the second context given above is the last attestation of *wer/were* in the original sense “man, male human being”, the remnants of this sense can still be traced in some compounds such as, ModE *werewolf* “man who was capable of transforming himself into a wolf”, *were-jaguar* “in Olmec mythology, a creature partly human and partly feline”, and also *wergeld*, whose last attestation comes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, meaning “the price set upon a man according to his rank, paid by way of compensation or fine in cases of homicide and certain other crimes to free the offender from further obligation or punishment.” In most of the compounds, however, such as *wer-had* “male sex”, *wer-ðeod* “nation”, *werbeam* “warrior”, *folcwer* “man”, *wer* was either replaced by *man* in the MidE period or the form disappeared entirely.

Another sense developed by *wer/were*—“husband”—appears at the same time as “man” which suggests that the two were interrelated. The meaning “husband” is also well documented in the *OED*, for example in the following historical material:

**c893** Heora wif ... sædon ... hie him woldon oðerra *wera* ceosan.

**c1275** Go and clepe þine *were* and cumeþ hider y-mene.

Historical evidence shows that the word *wer/were* functioned as the most important lexical item to express the sense “husband” until it was replaced by the borrowing from ON *husbondi* “master of the house”. Blair (1956) accounts for this lexical change by the fact that when the Norsemen settled in Anglo-Saxon England, they would often take Anglo-Saxon women as their wives; it was then only natural to refer to the husband using the Norse form and to refer to the wife by her Anglo-Saxon designation, *wif* “woman, wife”.

The use of *wer/were* in the sense “husband” is also attested by the semantics of some morphologically related OE derivatives such as, for example, *werleas* “without a husband” or *werlic* “marital”. In the OE alliterative poetry, on the other hand, *wer* acquires the sense “hero, warrior” which can be interpreted as a natural consequence of the conceptual overlap between the conceptual domains **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** and **WARRIOR/SOLDIER**. The conceptual ties between the two domains can be additionally illustrated by the related collective noun *wered* which, according to *CASD*, developed the sense “band, company, throng, multitude”, but also the specific “army, troop, legion”.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. Semantic Variability of English *man*

The universal dimension of semantic changes affecting the historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** observed in the variety of often unrelated languages finds its reflection in the history of English. Thus, the data examined suggest that a large number of conceptual domains differentiated above participated in the rise of English synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** at all stages in the history of English. For instance, even at the earliest period in the development of English one can find semantic changes involving conceptual domains such as **PROPER MALE NAME** (e.g., *carl*), **ANIMAL/HUMAN** (e.g., *hund*), **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION** (e.g., *esne*), **WARRIOR/SOLDIER** (e.g., *freca*), **MASTER/LORD** (e.g., *eorl*), **COMPANION/FRIEND** (e.g., *mæcga*), **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE** (e.g., *wer*), **PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE** (e.g., *wæpned/wæpnedmann*).

The central position of these conceptual types within the panchronic structure of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** is also verified by the variability of the semantics of *man* which is the most important lexical item attached to the conceptual domain in question. In mediaeval allegories or in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, for example, *Man* is the name given to one of the characters representing the whole of human race which shows that the lexical item can change its domain of application and function as a proper name. In other circumstances, *man* can be used as a form of address towards an animal conceptualised as a human. Thus, the sentence *Oh, man, you don’t know how hard life is* can be uttered to a dog.

With reference to the conceptual domain **OCCUPATION/PROFESSION**, *man* denotes a “servant”, “servile follower or attendant”, as documented in the selected *OED* and *OALD* quotations:

**1377** Ac þis maister ne his *man* no manere flesshe eten.

**1870** Another functionary of a country parish is usually called the minister’s *man*.

**OALD** My *man* will drive you home.

The *OED* also informs us that *man* enters into an almost unlimited number of phraseological collocations in which it is connected by a preposition with another noun denoting an occupation, or profession, e.g., *man of office*, *man of letters*, *man of business*. Similarly, according to the same source, with a prefixed noun *man* can be used to designate a “trader, or manufacturer”: *ale-man*, *coal-man*, *milk-man*, “one who uses or is skilled in the use of an implement” in such compounds as *axe-man*, *hammer-man*, *swordsman*, “one who is connected with a certain profession”: *postman*, *railwayman*, *salesman*, *barman*, *policeman*.

<sup>5</sup> This may be evidenced by the following *OED* quotations:

**971** Ac se heaprym þæs Godes hades þæm englicum *weorodum* simle ondweard wæs.

**c1000** Ealle þas þing se hælend spræc mid big-spellum to þam *weredum*.

The conceptual domain **WARRIOR/SOLDIER** is represented by the meaning “member of a fighting force”, or “the common soldiers as distinguished from the officers” rendered by the following *OED* quotations:

**c1205** þe king of his *monnen* monie þusend læs.

**1880** The English had lost more than 2,400 officers and *men*.

Additionally, the lexical item *man* became related to the conceptual domain **COMPANION/FRIEND** and started to be used in direct address to acknowledge a shared social or cultural identity. In *DAS*, on the other hand, *man* is glossed as “friend, buddy, not necessarily male” and the meaning is illustrated with the following quotations:

**DAS** Look, *man*, take it easy!

**DAS** Hey, *man*. That one’s mine!

Another conceptual type differentiated in the course of the analysis of synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** is **MASTER/LORD**, which also appears in the semantic development of the lexical item *man*. The *OED* provides evidence that *man* can be generally applied to designate a “person in authority” which in particular contexts is further specified into such sense threads as “prison governor”, “policeman or detective”, “one’s employer”, “boss” as shown in the examples below:

**1918** Any body in authority is ‘the *man*’.

**1970** ‘The *Man* is repressive. The *Man* is fascist ...’ To the bombers and kidnappers the *Man* is authority. He is every policeman. He is President Nixon. He is Prime Minister Trudeau.

Notice that the same analogy reappears in the case of the conceptual domain **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE**. Very much like the historical synonyms of *man*, the lexical item which also occupies the central position within the semantic structure of the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** remains simultaneously strongly linked to the conceptual domain **HUSBAND/MALE SPOUSE**. The meaning of *man* “husband” is documented by, for example, the following *OED* quotations:

**a1300** If fader saghs his sun þare, ... þe wijf hir *man* or *man* his wijf.

**1842** He ... often thought ‘I’ll make them *man* and wife’.

Finally, the conceptual domain **FOOL/STUPID PERSON** is set to work in such collocations as *man in the moon* or *man with a paper ass* which, according to *CDS*, refer to “fool” and “talkative fool” respectively. Of course, in these examples the sense “fool” is not fully lexicalised or encoded in the semantic structure of *man* but rather emerges from the context as a result of conceptual blending where *loon/loony* and *asshole* acted as integration triggers. *CDS* also provides evidence that the lexical item *man* took on the sense “penis” which once again illustrates the panchronic relation between the conceptual domain **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** and the conceptual domain **PENIS/MALE ATTRIBUTE**.

## 7. Conclusions

The examples discussed so far show that in the semantic development of English historical synonyms of **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING**, the meanings prior, concurrent, or subsequent to the sense “man, male human being” fall into a number of conceptual types which resemble a prototype structure. The changes in meaning are tendencies that are remarkably widely attested as shown also by other studies (see, for example, Sweetser 1990, Traugott and Dasher 2002 and Grygiel 2004). Comparing the English data with other languages as it was done in the case of Japanese *samurai* or Turkic *uglan/ohlan* and several other examples from IE languages, one may be tempted to conclude that such regularities are prototypical types of conceptual shifts that are replicated across times and



languages. They do not seem to be violated under particular, often social, circumstances ranging from changes in ideological values to specific cultural and historical characteristics of a society, though more comparative research is still needed to prove this.

The semantic development of the lexical items discussed above shows that the boundary line between the conventionalised sense alteration and polysemy is vague and the meaning variation is to be treated as a timeless phenomenon. Meaning alternations resulting from the process of conceptual blending and forming a radial network fully correspond to Fauconnier and Turner's (2002: 321) idea of the brain as 'a bubble chamber of mental spaces'. The interconnectedness of conceptual domains and the ease with which particular words change their meaning from, for example, "warrior" to "man" or "hero", proves that new mental spaces are formed all the time from old ones. Thus, Fauconnier and Turner's (2002: 321) claim that 'a culture, which includes a large collection of brains, is an even larger bubble chamber for evolving candidate blends, testing them, discarding or cultivating them, and promoting and disseminating some of them'. The prototypicality of some patterns of semantic change, like those sketched in the paper which are believed to be more salient than others, stems from the fact that meaning transformations are cognitively driven and panchronically verifiable and—as such—are universally grounded in human experience.

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