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A NOTE ON SYNONYMY: SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC

Introduction

It is not at all difficult to agree with Kittay (1987:236) that among all affinity relations the relation of **synonymy** has probably exercised both linguists' and philosophers' attention most.[1] In the existing literature the problem of synonymy is discussed in its various aspects and to varying degree and depth. The origins of synonymic clusters (e.g. native *waiter* vs. borrowed *assistant* onomasiologically related to the conceptual category **SERVANT**), the life of synonyms associated with different conceptual categories (e.g. *boy, brat, boyo* linked onomasiologically to the category **YOUNG MALE HUMAN BEING**), the differences between semantically correlated words, as well as their stylistic associations (e.g. *incoordination, muddle, chaos, anarchy, ectopia* related to the conceptual category **DISORDER**) are all absorbing objects of linguistic discourse and analysis.

What those who study synonymy traditionally have in mind while talking about synonyms are **synchronic synonyms** as opposed to **diachronic synonyms** as understood and analysed by Kleparski (1996,1997) and Grygiel (2005); the three studies dedicated to historical synonyms linked to the conceptual categories **BOY** (Kleparski 1996), **GIRL/YOUNG WOMAN** (Kleparski 1997) and **MAN/MALE HUMAN BEING** (Grygiel 2005) that offer in depth analyses of the corpora of relevant diachronic synonyms linked onomasiologically to the conceptual categories in question.

This paper neither makes claims to completeness nor is it intended to revolutionise the well-established view of synonymy in any way; rather the aims set to it are to systematise the main aspects of the problem of synchronic

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[1] Therefore, it is surprising to see that such recent introductions to linguistic science as Croft and Cruse (2004) ignore the problems of synonymy altogether.

synonymy and to bring to the fore the relevance of the frequently ignored and neglected phenomenon of diachronic synonymy which – in our belief – can hardly be discounted in any exhaustive study of the historical changes affecting an onomasiological dictionary associated with any conceptual category.

Synonymy and the Onomasiological Perspective in the Study of Meaning

One of the shortcomings of the componential approach to meaning analysis that dominated the linguistic scene in the 1960s and 1970s has evidently been its failure to account for the relations between the lexical categories which seem to be related to the same or related area in certain conceptual spheres. An example that may readily be quoted is the synonymic cluster *farmer, peasant, rustic, bumpkin, yokel*, *hick, dirt farmer,* related to the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY** that may be viewed either from the semasiological or onomasiological point of view.[2] Let us now concentrate on the distinction between **semasiology** and **onomasiology**.[3]

Broadly speaking, while semasiology consists in analysing the semantic relations between words from form to meaning, and is thus concerned with polysemy, onomasiology concentrates on analysing the relation from the opposite direction, that is from meaning to form (see Polański (1995:370) and McArthur (1992:727)). While a typical semasiological study addresses the question of what the senses of expressions are, onomasiology-oriented analysis seeks to answer the question of what names are linked with a particular conceptual category, that is the relation holding between the concept and synonymous expressions associated with this concept.[4]

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[2] In a critical review of Kleparski's (1986) componential account of pejorative developments relating to the conceptual macrocategory **HUMAN BEING** in English, Geeraerts (1987b:230–231) says that: *Another reason for going beyond the present descriptive framework is the necessity to incorporate onomasiological data into the description. In order to determine whether the change relating to boor is a conceptual change affecting the concept* **PEAS-ANT/COUNTRYMAN** [capitalised bold ours]*, or whether it is a lexical change affecting only the word boor, the development of all the synonyms and near-synonyms of boor should be investigated [...]. In short, it is not immediately clear whether a description of how pejorative changes take place can be entirely adequate if it does not combine the onomasiological with the semasiological approach.*

[3] The notion of **onomasiology** was introduced into linguistic science by Tappolet (1895).

[4] The distinction is clarified by Geeraerts (1997:17) in the following manner: *Given that a lexical item couples a word form with a semantic content, the distinction between an onomasiological and a semasiological approach is based on the choice of either of the poles in this correlation as the starting-point of the investigation. Thus, the onomasiological approach starts from the content side, typically asking the question 'Given concept x, what lexical items can*

To illustrate the distinction between semasiology and onomasiology, let us take a look at the polysemous noun *beldam* on the one hand, and the cluster of synonymous expressions linked to the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY**. Historically, the semantics of *beldam* includes the following senses:

1) 'a grandmother',
2) 'a remote ancestress',
3) 'an old woman',
4) 'a hag, witch'.

Of course, any adequate analysis of the semantics of *beldam* must account for the existence of the senses listed above if we adopt the semasiological view-point. Consider, in turn, the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY** and the cluster of the seven synonymous lexical categories onomasiologically related to it, that is:
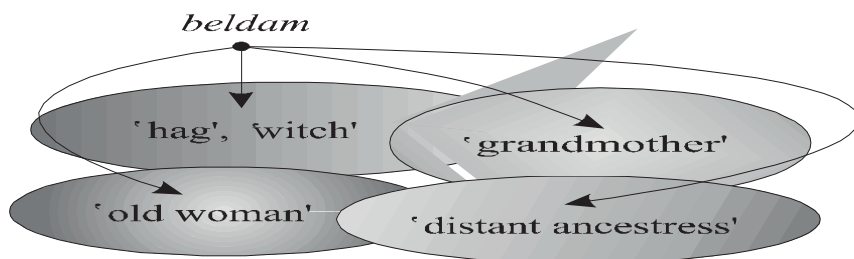
farmer	=	'a country-born man who operates a farm'
peasant	=	'an inhabitant of the country, a farm labourer'
rustic	=	'one who lives in the country, esp. a country person of simple manners and character'
bumpkin	=	'an awkward, unmannered rustic'
yokel	=	'a contemptuous name for a country bumpkin'
hick	=	'a man of country origin characterised by clumsy and unsophisticated manners'
dirt farmer	=	'a poor, unsophisticated, unmannered man of the country'

Depending on the intended stylistic/expressive and/or evaluative content, one can use one of the several synonymous categories listed above. If, for instance, one chooses to convey the idea that a given man of the country is unlearned, uncouth and rough, the expressions *yokel, hick, bumpkim* or *dirt farmer* will be used. If a less pregnant name is intended, the expression *rustic, peasant* or *farmer* or even the evaluatively neutral phrase *man of the country* may be employed. What we are dealing here with is the onomasiological problem, that is the encapsulation of various aspects of the same conceptual category **MAN OF**
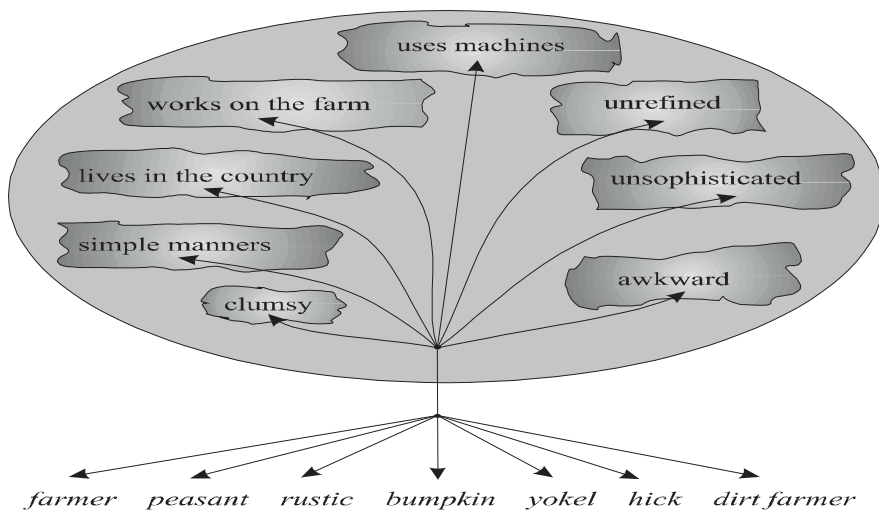
it be expressed with?' Conversely, the semasiological approach starts from the formal side, typically asking the question 'Given lexical item y, what meanings does it express?' In other words, the typical subject of semasiology is polysemy and the multiple applicability of a lexical item, whereas onomasiology is concerned with synonymy and near-synonymy, name-giving, and the selection of an expression from among a number of alternative possibilities.

THE COUNTRY by means of different, often stylistically/expressively and/or evaluatively laden synonymic variants. The emerging difference between the semasiological and onomasiological perspectives can thus be captured by means of the following diagrams taken from Kleparski (1997: 66–67):

SEMASIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

beldam

'hag', 'witch'

'grandmother'

'old woman'

'distant ancestress'

ONOMASIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
MAN OF THE COUNTRY

uses machines

works on the farm

unrefined

lives in the country

unsophisticated

simple manners

awkward

clumsy

farmer   peasant   rustic   bumpkin   yokel   hick   dirt farmer

Notice that in both cases we are dealing with complex structures viewed from different points of view. Because both the semantics of *beldam* and the onoma-siological cluster of synonymous expressions related to the conceptual category MAN OF THE COUNTRY have been extended in the history of English, onomasiology and semasiology may be viewed – to a certain extent – as the

opposite sides of the same coin. Originally, the category *beldam* was used in the sense 'grandmother or distant ancestress', before there developed currently archaic sense 'hag, witch'. As far as the semantics of synonymous categories that are associated with the conceptual category MAN OF THE COUNTRY is concerned the cluster involves such lexical categories as *farmer* 'a country-born man who has a farm', *peasant* 'an inhabitant of the country, a farm labourer', *rustic* 'one who lives in the country, especially a country person of simple manners and character', *bumpkin* 'an awkward, unmannered rustic', *yokel* 'a contemptuous name for a country bumpkin', *dirt farmer* 'an unsophisticated, unmannered man of the country' and *hick* 'a man of country origin characterised by clumsy, unsophisticated manners'.[5] *Hick,* one of the additions to the onomasiological dictionary associated with the conceptual category MAN OF THE COUNTRY, was originally a familiar by-form of the personal name *Richard* (see also *Dick* and *Hob* for *Robert* and *Hodge* for *Roger*), before it became associated with the conceptual category MAN OF THE COUNTRY during the course of the E.Mod.E.

On Synchronic Synonymy

The question of synonymy has always been a hotly disputed area in which different linguists have proposed a multiplicity of – not infrequently – contradictory claims and hypotheses. Already in the 19th century Reisig (1890:25–26) dealt with synonyms, stressing the significance of a new branch of study called **synonymology** viewed as the theory underlying the study of synonyms.[6] In present-day linguistics most linguists such as, for example, Rayevska (1979:183) assume a somewhat generalising standpoint that identifies synchronic synonyms with words different in *sound but identical or similar in meaning*. Along similar lines, Burkhanov's (1998:230–234) fundamental assumption regarding synonymy may be reduced to the dictum that *synonyms are linguistic signs connected by the paradigmatic relationship of sameness or strong similarity of meaning*. Naturally, a number of features may be attributed to clusters of synonymous expressions. Burkhanov (1998:230) lists the following ones:

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[5] The list presented here provides but a sample of the wide spectrum of terms used with reference to rural residents. The expression *hick* is a pet form of *Richard*. In addition to *hick,* there are many names and nicknames that have been used disparagingly with respect to inhabitants of the country. These are, for example, *hodge* (< *Roger*), *jake* (< *Jacob*) and *jasper* (< *Caspar)*. Also, as observed by Rawson (1991:193), just as different nationalities can be insulted by their favourite food, those who live close to the land tend to be demeaned in terms of what they grow hence, we have such expressions as *apple-knocker, grass-comber, hay-shaker, turnip-sucker* and many others.

[6] For further information see Nerlich (1992:40).

1. Two and more lexical items that belong to the same part of speech and are related onomasiologically to one and the same conceptual category (e.g. **MAN OF THE COUNTRY)**, or various aspects of the same conceptual category (e.g. country-born, simple-mannered) are called synonyms, e.g. *farmer/dirt farmer*.

2. The term synonymy may also denote a cluster of lexical items belonging to the same part of speech and designating the same concept (e.g. **MAN OF THE COUNTRY**), but different in expressive meaning, e.g. *peasant* (evaluatively neutral) *yokel* (derogatory).

3. The term *synonymy* is also used in reference to syntactic constructions that can be characterised in terms of the same – or almost the same – semantic features, e.g. *They kept tabs on the Negroes/The Negroes were kept tabs on.*

Let us now dwell for a while on the origins of the synonymous expressions. Rayevska (1979:196–197) proposes a detailed account of the sources of synonyms and discriminates between the following etymological types:

1. Clusters of synonymic expressions which originate solely from the native element, mostly denoting different shades of denotational meaning, e.g. *fast/speedy/swift, handsome/pretty/lovely, bold/manful/steadfast.*

2. Clusters of synonyms the elements of which are to be sought in dialectal usage, e.g. *child/bairn* (Scot.), *long ago/langsyne* (Scot.), *mother/minny* (Scot.).

3. Clusters of synonyms the elements of which owe their origin to foreign lexical sources through crossing with other languages, such as *begin/commence* (Fr.), *eaven/sky* (Old N.).

4. Synonymic clusters the elements of which stem from the non-literal figurative use of words in pictorial language, e.g. *walk of life/occupation, star-gazer/dreamer, pins and needles/the creeps.*

5. Synonymic clusters the elements of which originate in euphemistic and vulgar use employed for stylistic purposes, such as *drunk/elevated, die/to pass away/to kick the bucket, steal/shoop.*

Most of the students of language who tackle the issue of synchronic synonymy recognise the existence of two major categories, that is **absolute (perfect) synonyms** as opposed to **quasi (partial) synonyms**. And so – by definition – the concept of absolute synonymy covers those clusters of expressions that share one and the same set of semantic features, i.e. their descriptive, social and affective meanings are identical, and hence such synonyms are interchangeable in all possible contexts. The prevailing view among linguists of various

linguistic provenance is that such absolute synonyms are either an extremely rare occurrence or – according to the majority of linguists – their existence is altogether questionable.

And so, on the one end of the scale there are scholars like Bloomfield (1933) who went as far as to claim that absolute (perfect) synonymy is hard to obtain in language; the fundamental hypothesis of the great American scholar implies that each linguistic form has a invariable and definite connotation. Many other linguists felt equally pessimistic about the existence of absolute synonymy. One of the Nida's (1965:151) principles in his illustrative inquiry of words is that no morphemes or combinations of morphemes are identical in meaning and hence there are no real synonyms. To illustrate this Nida (1975) discusses the collocational range of *peace* and *tranquillity*; they are regarded as synonyms, but they are hardly identical in meaning. One may speak of a *peace conference*, but the expression *tranquillity conference* is certainly not an identical equivalent.

Already for many of the 19th century linguists such as, for example, Trench (1890:248–249), the study of synonyms was identified with the investigation of the essential, not entire, resemblances in meaning. In fact, for Trench (1890 [1851]:258–259) there can never be absolute synonymy, for the following reason:

> *Men feel, and rightly, that with a boundless world lying around them and demanding to be catalogued and named, and which they only make truly their own in the measure and to the extent that they do name it, with infinite shades and varieties of thought and feeling subsisting in their own minds, and claiming to find utterance in words, it is a wanton extravagance to expend two or more signs on that which could adequately be set forth by one – an extravagance in one part of their expenditure, which will be almost sure to issue in, and to be punished by, a corresponding scantiness and straitness in another. Some thought or feeling or fact will wholly want one adequate sign, because another has two. Hereupon that which has been called the process of desynonymising begins – that is, of gradually discriminating in use between words which have hitherto been accounted perfectly equivalent, and, as such, indifferently employed. [...] This may seem at first sight only as a better regulation of old territory; for all practical purposes it is the acquisition of new.*

Along similar lines, Stern (1931:226) seems to be very pessimistic about the existence of clusters of absolute synonyms. He formulates the opinion that:

> *[...] synonyms may by defined as words with identical or partly identical referential rage, but different semantic ranges. That is to say, they denote the same referents, but each word denotes it in an aspect that somehow differs from the others. When a speaker wants to denote a referent, he is practically always seeing it in a peculiar context, into which one of the synonyms may fit, but not necessarily the others.*

Most frequently, present-day scholars rephrase what the old masters said earlier. Therefore, Burkhanov (1998:17) seems to be merely echoing earlier views when he says that the phenomenon of absolute synonymy is restricted mainly to the

domain of specialised terminology.[7] And so, for instance, such Polish terms *lingwistyka/językoznawstwo* 'linguistics' and Russian *jazykoznanie/lingvistika* 'linguistics' may readily be quoted as examples of absolute synonymy, since both terms in both pairs refer to the same branch of systematised knowledge and – therefore – they are practically interchangeable in any context. In fact, when we take a look at other sectors of the lexicon of any natural language that group specialised terminology we see that it does occasionally happen in technical nomenclatures, that synonyms which are completely interchangeable live and function side by side such as, for example English *spirant/fricative* in phonetic terminology, *caecitis/typhlitis* pair denoting an inflammation of the blind gut and Polish *oddział intensywnej opieki medycznej/oddział intensywnego nadzoru/oddział reanimacji/OJOM* all used in the sense 'intensive care unit'.

The bundle of distinctive features that characterise synonymy is that synonyms are used in similar contexts; they are linked to the same conceptual categories and they indicate the same/similar referents. However, it is almost universally acknowledged in present-day linguistics that in the majority of cases onomasiologically associated words used for the same reference never correlate in every particular and *the opposition between a more central, or stylistically neutral, component of meaning and a more peripheral, or subjective, component of meaning is a common place of discussion of synonymy* (Lyons 1977:175). While in some contexts words belonging to synonymic clusters may be used indifferently, in others they are hardly ever interchangeable. The selection of words suited to a given situation makes it possible to indicate subtle shades of either referential, emotive, stylistic or aesthetic tinges of associated meaning. Hipkiss (1995:13) says that:

The connotations of words distinguish supposed synonyms into discrete words that can only be properly used on certain occasions and in certain contexts. A synonym is in the majority of cases a synonym only more or less depending on when and where we attempt to supplant its equivalent.

In particular, the crucial role of the emotive element has been pointed out on numerous occasions. Already Ogden and Richards (1923) noticed that two words may have exactly the same referential meaning, but differ substantially in terms of emotive charge they carry, for instance such pairs as *horse* and *steed*.[8] Along similar lines, Brook (1958:168–169) goes as far as to claim that the emotive content of words is one of the main reasons why there are so few absolute synonyms in any language. Likewise, Ullmann (1957:108) considers emotive overtones as one of the main forces which mitigate against absolute synonymy.

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[7] There are obviously exceptions to this rule. Fromkin and Rodman (1993:113) give an example of *couch* and *sofa* that do not belong to any specialised terminology and yet seem to provide an example of perfect synonymy.

[8] As argued in Lyons (1977:175).

Therefore, it seems that it is probably the generally acknowledged role of emotive element in synonymy that prompted Rayevska (1979:187) to divide synonyms into two major categories, that is **ideographic (relative) synonyms** and **stylistic synonyms**. In short, the concept of ideographic synonymy implies contrasting shades of meaning or divergent degrees of a given quality, for instance *beautiful/fine/handsome/pretty*, *great/huge/tremendous/colossal*. Evidently, members of clusters of ideographic synonyms are almost equivalent in one or more denotational senses and, therefore, transposable at least in some contexts. A great number of ideographic synonyms have the same meaning in certain collocations and another one in other contexts. Words of this group belong to the same stylistic type, for instance when we consider a pair of synonyms *wild/savage* we see that we may say *wild berries* and *wild animals*, but we can hardly say *savage berries* or *savage animals*.[9] On the contrary, stylistic synonyms vary not so much in meaning as in either emotive value or stylistic sphere of application. Note that pictorial language often uses emotively charged poetic words as stylistic alternatives of neutral ones, for instance *billow/wave, vale/valley, woe/sorrow, eve/evening, lone/lonely, quoth/said.* Stylistic synonymy is not less distinctive in the substitution of a word by a group of words or vice versa, for instance *to win/to gain/to score a victory, to prefer/to show preference,* etc. [10]

Many authors, such as Crystal (1995) and Rayevska (1979) have attempted to list the factors that distinguish members of synonymic clusters. Crystal (1995:164) states openly that the search for synonymy may be altogether futile because it is usually possible to find either some nuance, which separates members of synonymic clusters, or a context in which one of the synonyms can appear, but the other cannot. The author presents detectable differences between synonyms, such as:

> 1. Dialectal difference – *sandwich/butty* are synonymous in Britain, but the former is standard while the latter is regional, *autumn/fall* are synonymous, but the former is British English while the latter is American English.
>
> 2. Stylistic difference – *salt/sodium chloride* are synonymous, but the former is an everyday standard word while the latter is technical, *insane/loony* are synonymous, but the former is formal while the latter is informal.

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[9] All examples in this section are taken directly from Rayevska (1979:197).

[10] Among others, numerous stylistic synonyms are initiated by the process of shortening, e.g. *brolly/umbrella, lab/laboratory, trig/trigonometry.*

3. Collocational difference – *rancid/rotten* are synonymous, but the former is used only of butter or bacon, *kingly/royal* are synonymous, but the mail has to *royal* in the UK.

4. Difference of emotional feeling or connotation – *youth/youngster* are synonymous, but the referents of *youths* are felt to be less pleasant than those of *youngsters*.[11]

Because of the multitude of possible ways in which synonymous expressions may differ linguists tend to employ the term **quasi (partial) synonyms** to denote those expressions that are partially synonymous with another expression or expressions onomasiologically linked to a certain conceptual category. In other words, in modern linguistics the notion of absolute (perfect) synonymy is de-emphasised and replaced with a notion of quasi (partial) synonymy, that is – to put it in simple terms – synonymy to a certain degree (see Kittay 1987:238). As to the degree of synonymy, the greater the number of contexts in which two terms, *X* and *Y* may be substituted, preserving the relations of contrasts and affinity, the greater their degree of synonymy is.

As early as at the end of 19th century Breal (1897) argued that language users can hardly tolerate synonyms because the existence of synonymy contradicts the internal economy of the language system and, therefore, they spread them over different semantic domains and registers (see Breal 1897:31). For example, in Old French a number of synonymous derivatives could be formed from the verb *livrer* 'deliver', such as *livrage, livraison, livrance, livre, livrement, livée* but – subsequently – this superabundance was felt to be a mere *embarras de richesse* and was reduced to a single term *livraison.* In his seminal publication *Essai de sémantique* Breal put forward a linguistic rule termed the **law of distribution** that amounts to saying that linguistic expressions once synonymous are subsequently differentiated in various ways and thus cease to be interchangeable. Obviously, the process of differentiation may work in a variety of ways; it may either affect the actual content of the words involved, their emotive overtones or stylistic register or both.

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[11] Rayevska (1979:185) tabulates the most essential differences between synonyms along the following lines: 1. one term is more general than another: *man of the country/yokel,* 2. one term is more intense than another: *repudiate/refuse,* 3. one term is more emotive than another: *reject/decline,* 4. one term may imply moral approbation or censure while another is neutral: *hick/farmer,* 5. one term is more professional than another: *decease/death,* 6. one term is more literary than another: *passing/death*, 7. one term is more colloquial than another: *turn down/refuse,* 8. one term is more dialectal than another: (Scot.) *flesher/butcher,* 9. one of the synonyms belongs to child talk: *daddy/father.*

The question that may be asked in this context is: *Is the law of differentiation universal or is it merely a widespread tendency?* Sturtevant (1965:99) makes a straightforward statement when he claims that unless synonyms come to be differentiated in meaning at some point of their history, one of them is usually lost. The over-all generalisation formulated by Sturtevant (1965) finds justification in the development of many synonymic pairs in the history of English. And so, for example, English *yea* and *nay* were once distinguished in use from *yes* and *no*, but when the distinction broke down, *yea* and *yes*, *nay* and *no* became exact synonyms with the effect that *yea* and *nay* have become obsolete. The question may be asked at this point is: *Why do some of the competing synonyms drop out of the race and recede into more restricted semantic niches while other synonyms continue to thrive?* (cf. Nerlich and Clarke 1992:209). According to Nerlich (1992), the activity of **spreading** synonyms over different registers and styles can be seen as the outcome of an intervention from the meta-semantic expert system, which – on the other hand – can also give advice as to the production of synonyms which are either borrowed from other languages or produced intrasystemically by such mechanisms as, for example, euphemism. This device allows us to upgrade or downgrade words according to social requirements, e.g. *old car, used car, second hand car, preowned car*.

On Diachronic Synonymy

When we look at it from a diachronic angle, it becomes apparent that synonymy is closely related to the phenomenon of semantic change. Thus, for Haase (1874:128) one of the causes of semantic change, apart from pleonasm and ellipsis, was the existence of synonymic groups. Stern (1931:12–13) is on solid ground in stating that synonymy, comprehensively considered as an exclusively synchronic feature of language, is accorded a significant place in his investigation of diachronic semantics:

> *It is evident that the consideration of so many points of view makes a through investigation of the semantic history of a word or group of words a laborious undertaking. It is further evident that the investigation of a group of synonyms has a great advantage over the investigation of a single word, since in the former case we often find parallel developments, and a gap in the history of one word may be filled in on the basis of evidence from the others.*[12]

In search of the concept of diachronic synonymy let us go back to the earlier mentioned cluster of synonymous expressions related onomasiologically to the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY** such as *bumpkin, yokel, hick, dirt farmer, farmer, rustic, peasant*.

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[12] Quoted after Gordon (1982:65).
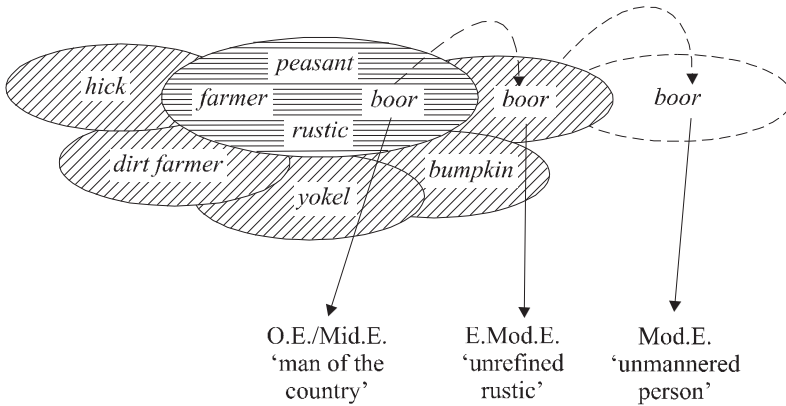
One will not fail to notice that, apart from the currently synonymous[13] expressions *farmer, rustic, peasant, bumpkin, hick, dirt farmer*, that are onomasiologically linked to the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY** the above diagram features the synchronically irrelevant lexical category *boor*. However, the category *boor,* which is defined by dictionaries of present-day English as 'an unrefined, unmannered man', may be qualified as a **diachronic synonym** in the sense of Bailly (1947) and – therefore – belongs to the panchronic onomasiological dictionary associated with the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY** of which – during the O.E. and Mid.E. period – it seems to have been one of the primary designating expressions. As the diagram above shows, the O.E. and Mid.E. semantic pole of *boor* may be placed close to the centre of the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY**, because the original documented meaning of the expression is that of 'a peasant, man of country origin' (see Kleparski 1990a:108). Later, during the E.Mod.E. period, *boor* developed a novel sense and started to be used with reference to rustics, with an indication of a lack of manners and general refinement. Further, at a later stage of its semantic evolution, the once clearly highlighted conceptual nuance (COUNTRY-BORN) became dissociated from the semantics of *boor*. The dictionaries of present-day English define its sense as 'an unmannered, unrefined person' with no indication that the person is country-born (see, for example, *DCE*). Therefore, synchronically, *boor* can hardly be qualified as belonging to the cluster of synonyms of *man of the country.*

One may say, following Geeraerts (1997:100), that *boor* was a derogatory denomination for peasants before the negative part of its semantic value became generalised to be used in the sense 'an unmannered, unrefined person'. Starting

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[13] These expressions are synonymous in the sense of Hock (1986:283).

from the E.Mod.E. period *boor* began its drift towards a more peripheral position of the conceptual category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY** that is comparable to the position occupied by Mod.E. *hick, bumpkin, yokel* and *dirt farmer*. With time, however, the semantic pole of the category *boor* has become dissociated from its original position and – at present – the systemic position *boor* occupies is to be sought somewhere else within the conceptual macrocategory **HUMAN BEING**, i.e., a position to which such other currently partial synonymous expressions as *ruffian, uncouth/tactless person* are related. However, in the panchronic perspective, we understand the conceptual values associated with the Mod.E. semantic pole of *peasant, rustic, yokel, dirt farmer,* etc., to bear a sufficient resemblance to the semantics of O.E. and Mid.E. *boor* to classify them as being diachronic synonyms historically related to the category **MAN OF THE COUNTRY**.

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