

REVIEW

The concept of 'joy' in Old and Middle English. A semantic analysis. By Małgorzata Fabiszak. Pp. 104. Piła: Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu. 2001.

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Małgorzata Fabiszak's book is devoted to the semantics of the words associated with the "relatively poorly described" (p. 1) concept of 'joy' in Old and Middle English. As the theoretical side of the study is couched within the tradition of cognitive linguistics, it might be of interest to lexical semanticists, historical linguists and cognitive linguists. As it deals with emotion words, its findings are also relevant to psycholinguistics and the psychology of emotions.

Indeed, recent developments in semantics have made it necessary not only to embrace in one's research several branches of the science of language, but also to correlate one's analysis with the findings of other sciences, notably psychology and cognitive science. In spite of the fact that Fabiszak's book is rather short (just over a hundred pages), the author manages to do just that: analyze actual language data as well as offering general observations on the nature of semantics, emotions and the semantics of emotions.

The volume consists of four chapters, plus an introduction and conclusions. The first two chapters provide a theoretical background to the analysis: Chapter One surveys linguistic approaches to lexical semantics and Chapter Two presents various approaches to emotions, as well as previous linguistic analyses of words which express them. Then, analytical chapters follow: Chapter Three is a semantic analysis of 'joy' words in Old English, and Chapter Four – of the concept of 'joy' in Middle English. The shift from the semasiological to the onomasiological perspective is purposeful, as Fabiszak makes clear in the Introduction (p. 1). The lexical items analyzed in Chapter Three (*bliss*, *blipnes* (*blife*), *dream*, *glædnes* (*glæd*), *gefea*, *liss*, *mirph* and *wynnsumnes*) is dictated by their central, core position in the category of 'joy' words (according to the *Old English Thesaurus*; Roberts, Kay and Grundy 1995) and the number of quotations in the *Microfiche Concordance to Old English*; Healey and Venetzky 1980¹) (an exception is the word *mirph*, which does not appear in the first of these sources in the same category but the contexts in which it occurs in the second are parallel to those of the other items). Further developments of the semantics of all of these words but one (*gefea*) is continued in Chapter Four (as

¹ It is a pity Fabiszak uses abbreviations in the main text, such *OET*, but lists these publications under the names of the authors or editors, which makes it tricky for the reader to identify a given work in the bibliography, even if the *OET* is a widely known source for historical linguists.

Middle English *bliss*, *blithe*, *dream*, *gladnes*, *liss*, *mirth* and *wynn*), which is supplemented with an analysis of four Old French borrowings (*cheer*, *delight*, *gainness* (*gay*) and *joy*).

The analyses of individual words are followed, in each of the two analytical chapters, by cognitive-oriented models of the concept of 'joy': the structure of the concept in OE and its typical scenario in Chapter Three, the evolution of the semantic field of 'joy' from OE to ME in Chapter Four.

Due to the cognitivist orientation of the study, the presentation of the different lexical semantic traditions (Chapter One) progresses from semantic fields, via models of componential analysis (the approach being subjected to criticism), generative semantics, to culminate with a discussion of cognitive semantics. However, at one point Fabiszak fails to present it adequately: she goes a little too far when she says that in cognitive semantics "the referential link is denied any significance" (p. 16). After all, in his discussion of the semantics of *roe* vs. *caviar* or *the morning star*, *the evening star* and *Venus*, Ronald Langacker, one of the founding fathers of contemporary cognitive linguistics, says that "the semantic value of an expression is [...] *not exhausted* by specifying its designatum and listing the inventory of domains in its matrix" (1987: 165; emphasis added). The notion of the designatum and its contribution to the semantics of an expression is thus taken to be one of the aspects of the latter.

Having dealt with lexical semantics, Fabiszak goes on (Chapter Two) to discuss the various approaches to emotions. These are considered from three perspectives: psychological, linguistic and socio-historical. A question is also raised whether emotions have a bodily (physiological) or a mental nature, as well as what role cognition plays in their emergence and shaping. A reference is made to Krzeszowski's (1997) work on axiological semantics and his conception of the basic nature of the good-bad scale. Other scales relevant in the sphere of emotions (pleasure-displeasure, dominance-submissiveness, and the degree of arousal) are treated as derivative of the basic scale but are mutually uncorrelated. Fabiszak (pp. 21-22) links this view with Langacker's idea that structures have the potential to become conventionalized, which, in turn, goes hand in hand with the latter's view of conceptual and semantic structure, semantic structure being a conventionalized variant of conceptual structure (cf. Langacker 1991: 102). Thus, emotions are treated in a way consistent with the general outlook on language fostered in cognitive grammar, which could be said to be an unquestionable asset of the book.

Another debatable issue mentioned by Fabiszak in her survey is the universality of emotions and/or the names for them. A possible solution to the problem is to link emotions with their causes, so that a positive or negative reaction to stimuli would be treated as a universal phenomenon, as opposed to the actual, culture-specific emotions. (The author's answer to the question is that the determining factor is the "degree of generalization" one strives for and attains in one's analysis (p. 93).)

Fabiszak looks at the treatment of emotions in a variety of linguistic schools of the cognitivist type. For example, she discusses the notion of prototype and its relevance for the study of terms of emotion, but also devotes significant comment to Wierzbicka's Natural Semantics Metalanguage. The author of NSM has frequently expressed her critical attitude towards an indiscriminate use of the notion of 'prototype' (cf. Wierzbicka 1990 and 1996, Chapter 4) as an excuse for analytical sloppiness and the lack of rigorous methodology. However, she does refer to prototypes when it is justified: she views emotions as culture-specific, complex in their mental structures and associated with prototypical scripts or scenarios.

Fabiszak takes a somewhat critical attitude towards Wierzbicka's model. According to her, NSM does well in "cross-cultural comparison of general terms" but is not sufficiently fine-grained to analyze a specific field, in which case the definitions become too long and awkward (p. 30).² Also, Fabiszak says, NSM may be a fine tool for cross-linguistic comparison, but it does not facilitate our understanding of a given word. Rather, one must be trained to be able to apply the metalanguage, which could be argued to fare no better than a logical calculus in this respect. People simply do not think or formulate their thoughts with semantic primes but in the natural languages they speak.³

Wierzbicka's approach is compared to Bamberg's (1997) constructionist model, the similarities between them being contrasted with the second author's critical comment on NSM. His own theory, however, is also found to be inadequate and psychologically implausible. The controversy concerns the fact that people talk about themselves as experiencing different emotions simultaneously, which Fabiszak interprets as an attempt to introduce order, by means of language, to emotional chaos. Fabiszak's interpretation may be seen as a corroboration of Langacker's view on conceptual and semantic structure, the latter being a conventionalized (and thus more rigorously structured and organized) variant of the former (cf. above). However, Bamberg's concern with links between causes, emotions and reactions to them (e.g. crying, but also the use of language), is shared by Fabiszak in her modelling of OE and ME data in Chapters Three and Four.

Other linguistic approaches to emotions discussed in the book include Jackendoff's model and Lakoff's (1987) (Lakoff and Johnson's, Lakoff and Kövesces's) metaphors and ICMs. Fabiszak views the latter as valuable but not very useful for

² It is not difficult, though, to envisage Wierzbicka's probable reaction to that criticism, points that she has repeatedly made: (1) the NSM definitions are not for practical use, a lexicographic metalanguage yet to be derived from NSM (Wierzbicka 1996: 286); (2) it is often advisable, but indeed harmless for the theory, to formulate certain portions of NSM definitions using terms more complex than semantic primes (cf. the definitions in which the word *God* is used; *ibid.*, Chapter 9).

³ Wierzbicka's potential response is slightly more difficult to predict here. She might say that any logical calculus has very different status than NSM, which is "carved out of" natural languages. Besides, the gains of learning how to formulate definitions in terms of NSM might far outweigh the difficulties. Still, Fabiszak's objections are not to be easily dispensed with if the NSM theory is to hold its ground.

analyzing individual lexical items (Lakoff's material consists of larger units, e.g. idioms).⁴ Having made that reservation, Fabiszak goes on to use the model in her presentation of the structure of the concept of 'joy' in OE (Chapter Three), which, as she later explains, is an extension of Lakoff and Kövesces's method (p. 88).

In Chapter Three, the author also discusses emotions from the historical and social perspective. She mentions a few factors which cause changes in the understanding and attitude to emotions over time. Two major factors are: (1) economic and social changes, which bring about a change in the perception of self in the society; (2) developments in religious life, philosophy and science, which might cause changes in the accepted hierarchy of values. A few specific examples follow, to do with changing attitudes to anger, love and jealousy, adding credibility to these divagations.

This final section of the chapter allows the author to pass smoothly to the historical analyses of 'joy' words (however, a diachronic discussion of the development of the semantic field in question comes only in Chapter Four).

The analyses of individual OE words in Chapter Three concentrate on three types of collocational patterns: adjectival phrases, verb phrases and a given lexeme's co-occurrences with nouns. A few longer stretches of text are quoted for each word, emphasis being put on the source of the emotion. The collocations are supposed to show to what other concepts 'joy' is related. At this point, it seems, Fabiszak's work might benefit from some elaboration. The author openly admits she does not want to make any claims as to the nature of these "relations" (e.g. synonymy), treating them in the weak, "cognitive" sense (p. 43). This is enigmatic for two reasons: first, what is weak about the "cognitive" sense of a relation; and second, what does "cognitive" actually mean in this context? The question is legitimate because the term has sometimes been used in surprising and even misleading ways. One such case is Cruse's (1986: 88) conception of cognitive synonymy, formulated in terms of truth-conditional relations.⁵ This is obviously not what "cognitive" would mean to a cognitive linguist today, no reference being made to mental processing, categorization, or the imaginative and interpretive powers of the human mind. Also, it remains a mystery why the author declines from mentioning her full criteria for choosing the words for analysis in Chapter Three until as late as Chapter Four (p. 81). Specifically, it is only then that the criterion of common syntactic behaviour is mentioned.

Of the eight OE words subjected to analysis, I would like to mention three, with rather interesting comments proposed by the book's author. First, the word *dream* is

⁴ As a result of the exclusion of idioms from the realm of lexical semantics, Fabiszak's understanding of this branch of linguistics is narrower than for example that proposed by MacLaury (1996: 1), who defines it as "the analysis of linguistic meaning among words, affixes, and stock phrases".

⁵ "X is a cognitive synonym of Y if (i) X and Y are syntactically identical, and (ii) any grammatical declarative sentence S containing X has equivalent truth-conditions to another sentence S¹, which is identical to S except that X is replaced by Y" (Cruse 1986: 88).

observed to exhibit contradictory senses (acceptable earthly dream and the doomed dream of the hell-dwellers), both sometimes appearing in the writings of the same author. Fabiszak interprets the fact as underspecificity of the word's semantics, its value being determined by modifiers, and links it with the medieval dichotomy of body and soul (p. 49).⁶ Second, indeterminacy of lexical meaning is also manifested in the word *liss*, which can mean either 'joy' or 'mercy'. Fabiszak sees it as an indication of the correlation between the senses. Third, Fabiszak suggests that the reason why *mirhð* 'glory' often appears with *mærhð* 'reason' is stylistic (alliteration). (However, valid as this suggestion may certainly be, the distinction between style and conceptualization seems rather too sharp (as well as non-cognitivist in spirit): while the reasons for this collocational tendency may be stylistic, its consequences or effects are also semantic/conceptual.)

Generalizing her findings, Fabiszak identifies characteristic bodily seats of emotions (the heart and mind) and proposes a structure of the concept of 'joy' in OE in terms of conceptual metaphors: UP IS GOOD, BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS, EMOTION IS A CONTAINER (FOR THE EXPERIENCER) and EMOTION IS A COMMODITY. (One can only wish the division of these into "major" and "minor" metaphors came earlier than it does, which is on p. 81 in Chapter Four.) The conceptual metaphors – and this could be described as one of the finest observations made by the author – are found to correspond to what we know about Anglo-Saxon customs and social life. For example, the notion of safety in a container can be linked to the introduction of Christianity as facilitated by the values of fraternity and companionship or the importance of the meadhall and the leader (Christ could have been treated as the eternal leader and heaven as an everlasting meadhall). Or the metaphors JOY IS A COMMODITY and EMOTION IS A CONTAINER are conceptually linked and strengthen each other in the custom of exchanging gifts in the meadhall.

In her scenario for the concept of 'joy' in OE (reduced to three components: cause – emotion (experiencer) – reaction), Fabiszak identifies twenty-three causes of emotions and groups them into three categories: of religious nature, of social nature and of perception-related nature. Thanks to considerable overlap between these categories, the division is treated more like a schematic guideline than a strict classification.

Again, inquiries into Anglo-Saxon culture both corroborate and are corroborated by this proposed scenario. In the "social relationships" category especially important is the "reaction" element: specific facial expressions, embracing and kissing correspond to the notions of fraternity and friendship, valued by Anglo-Saxons very highly.

⁶ Also, due to the word's underspecificity, it is often difficult to decide whether it means 'joy aroused by music' or 'music' as such (cf. also Łozowski 2000 (esp. pp. 86-108) on the vague nature of the word's semantics).

References to cultural data are continued in Chapter Four, which deals with 'joy' words in ME. The chapter starts with a brief discussion of certain social changes between the OE and ME periods that undoubtedly contributed to semantic changes within the lexical field of 'joy'. These are: (1) the replacement of the leader-warriors relationship with that between a man and a woman; (2) the emergence of a new social group of warrior-companions; (3) the appearance of new kinds of entertainment (games, tournaments, hunting and hawking). Moreover, in literature one observes the emergence of romances at the expense of the heroic-epic poem. It seems that generally the mood of the times favoured earthly joy and pleasures much more than used to be the case in the OE period.

The analyses of actual words in Chapter Four, however, are different (and often richer) from those in the previous chapter in at least three respects: (1) the general approach is onomasiological rather than semasiological (see above); (2) it is both diachronic and synchronic, rather than only the synchronic; (3) the collocational patterns of words are often matched against the metaphors already identified in Chapter Three. The onomasiological perspective, i.e. taking into account borrowings from Old French, proves valuable. One of these (*delight*) turns out to be rarely used in a religious sense, which is an interesting development as it could be said to weaken the "hegemony" of OE religious contexts. The fact also confirms the tendency for the society to shift into one of a more secular nature, with earthly causes of 'joy' taking over (indeed, the emotion described as *delight* more often than not results from sexual pleasure (p. 81)). For these reasons the word is excluded from the "core" of the category (p. 82).

Another interesting observation provided by the author is that the word used to refer to the whole field in contemporary English (*joy*) is an OF borrowing rather than an OE word. The reason for its career (cf. p. 82) is that it is the only loan word assimilated into English relatively quickly, i.e. in the ME period. Moreover, it fully displays the syntactic behaviour of the core words in the field and exhibits a wide range of usage, from 'heavenly joy' to 'earthly joy'. It is not used in meanings other than 'joy',⁷ is most common of all 'joy' words and is associated with the greatest number of causes (13). In short, it seems undeniably suitable.

As in Chapter Three, Fabiszak lists causes of 'joy', linking them with specific 'joy' words. Three words are omitted: *dream* and *lisse* because the relevant meanings are lost, *wynne* because the whole word is lost. The changes between OE and ME arrangements are discussed, one of which is the rise of the very number of causes (from 23 to 34), and explanations again take into account developments in social structure, which seems to be a recurring and a very illuminating theme

⁷ However, the very comment reveals a terminological imprecision, namely a lack of a clear distinction (or an explicit rejection of its importance) between sense and meaning. Let us quote: "It [the word *joy*] is distinct from *cheer* and *gay* in that all its senses are related to 'joy' and it is not used in other meanings" (p. 83).

throughout the work. Later (p. 91) the causes of emotions expressed with ME words are regrouped relative to OE words.

The author also notes that out of all OE 'joy' words only *gladness* began to be used in reference to the new types of entertainment in the ME period. To her credit, she avoids haphazard conclusions and only mentions as "tempting" the hypothesis that new kinds of entertainments evoke new emotions and call for new words, i.e. OF loanwords, to describe them (p. 86).⁸

In her conclusions to the whole work, Fabiszak offers general observations on the nature of the semantic field in question but also contributes to the research on emotions on a more theoretical plane. She links Jackendoff's approach with the Berkeley school approach to semantics, proposing to describe the field in terms of one prototypical, though variously realized scenario: a cause-emotion-reaction chain. The author also discusses her data in relation to the three axes defining the nature of emotions, noting the pertinent limitations such as the insufficiency of linguistic material and other factors which make it possible to draw only tentative conclusions. She also mentions the "reversing" effect that the introduction of Christianity had on the positive-negative scale of OE values.

A few minor inadequacies of the book need to be mentioned at this point. One of them is the spelling of the OE words. As an example let us take the word *glædnes* (pp. 50-51). Fabiszak mentions several other spellings of the word (e.g. *glædnesse*, *glædnys*, *glædnysse*, *glædnis*, plus the adjective *glad* or *glæd*) but uses them inconsistently. For instance, in her discussion of a quotation with the word *glædnysse*, for no apparent reason she spells the word as *glædnes* and *glædnys*. It seems that the already existing orthographical chaos might be alleviated if Fabiszak stuck to just one spelling (except for quotes) and merely listed the others.

The remaining problems are either technical in nature or result from inattention. These include: careless formatting of the quotation on p. 27, a misused word (*forms* instead of, probably, *occurrences*) on p. 44 and a misused reference to a period in the history of English (OE *gladness* instead of the intended ME *gladness*) on p. 81 (footnote 34). These, however, are minor points that do not affect the value of the whole work.

For, indeed, the work could be described as making a valuable contribution to historical studies of English, lexical cognitive semantics and emotions research. Its merit stems especially from two of its aspects: the successful attempts to link the developments in the semantics of words of emotion with cultural and social facts of the English society in the OE and ME periods (see above) and the level of generality it attains (in the forms of conceptual metaphors or the prototypical scenario) in spite of the attention to detail necessary in the analyses of individual lexical items. The vol-

⁸ Another option she mentions (p. 86) is to attribute the exceptional behaviour of the word to the fact that it did not have a religious meaning in OE. This, however, is rather puzzling, as on p. 51 she says that *glædnes* "appears among the eight Christian virtues" and even provides an illustrative quote.

ume could be said to be of interest both to those dealing with the specific developments of English words of emotion, as well as to those seeking generalizations concerning the conceptual, cognitive or metaphorical aspects of language.

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