

THE LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY TRADITION IN THE FUNCTIONAL AND STYLISTIC STRATIFICATION OF THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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One of the most obvious features of the English lexical system is that it can be described in terms of its constituent sub-systems traditionally called "common", "literary", and "colloquial" words with their further subdivision into technical, scientific, foreign, archaic, dialectal, vulgar, and slang items (SOED 1980:X). Thus it seems easy to imagine vocabulary to be a whimsical cake wherein every layer with its colour, smell, and taste whether mild, neutral or strong, sweet, sour and sometimes even spicy stands for one of the mentioned word strata. The aim of this article is to understand how an initially uniform dough became the stratified cake; in other words – to analyse the process of functional and stylistic stratification of the English word-stock into the lexical sub-systems, each with its distinct assignment in communication. In the belief that studying the formation of only one of the above-mentioned sub-systems (or strata) it is possible to find regularities typical of the English vocabulary stratification as a whole, I have chosen to focus my attention on lexical archaisms. In other words, I will try to answer the question of how a commonly used word grows archaic.

1. English lexical archaisms

By archaic is understood a lexical item, whether a whole word or its separate sense, that once used to belong to the common and stylistically neutral vocabulary but was then ousted to its periphery where it is retained today almost exclusively as a means of stylistic and expressive nomination. For instance, *hapless* coined from the fairly productive in Middle English noun *hap* "chance, fortune", is employed now only as an archaic synonym of *luckless*:

Her hapless admirer, Osman the clown, who had been following her at a distance along the dusty potato track to Chatnapatna, told the villagers that a breeze got up and blew dust into his eyes; when he got it out again she had 'just gone'
(Rushdie 1988: 234).

Semantic, structural and communicative properties inherent in archaic words have been described in great detail and in many languages (Gans 1979, Klinkenberg 1973, Stuckas 1981, Yamakawa 1970, Zumthor 1967). I will only specify that the principal feature that serves to distinguish archaisms (phonetic, derivational, grammatical or lexical proper) from all other non-archaic categories of words is the semantic component called 'antiquity'. By my accounts, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* contains more than four thousand words or word meanings labelled archaic. In their totality they present a lexicological category characterized by a number of common features that define status of lexical archaisms in the system of Modern English and their many functions in communication. (For a detailed treatment of these see Shevchuk 1986)

2. Obsolescence

It is a very common and popular view to regard archaization simply as the first stage of the phenomenon that consists in ousting of words from the living language and that is often referred to as obsolescence. First, a common word is pushed from everyday use, becomes archaic, surviving in the far regions of the contemporary language, then it inevitably lapses into general oblivion or becomes obsolete (Yalysheva 1971). But are these really two consecutive states of one and the same object or are we but hypnotized into thinking so by the etymology of the terms 'archaic' and 'obsolete'?

As becomes evident from the study of the vocabulary, obsolescence affects all the categories of words, namely: 1) once highly recurrent items that used to be part of the very core vocabulary of English; 2) items that, in their happier days, served as terms of various domains of human knowledge; 3) foreign borrowings; 4) bookish lexis; 5) nonce-words, coined by various authors; 6) slangy items and jargon; 7) words that were once employed as archaisms; 8) poetic words; 9) dialectal and regional words. (These groupings of obsolete items are described in greater detail in Shevchuk 1988). In fact there is hardly a category of lexis that has no solid representation among obsolete words, which means that this tendency affects the whole of the lexico-semantic system. Besides, in this case quality goes very well together with quantity: judging from the evidence furnished by the *OED*, its obsolete part counts more than 52 thousand items (Barnhart 1979: 46). Therefore obsolescence should be treated as a universal tendency, affecting all the categories of the English word-stock.

Archaization, on the contrary, is only a particular trend in the functional and stylistic stratification of lexis, that stands no comparison with obsolescence in terms of either scale or quality. Structural, semantic, and etymological analysis proves that archaization tends to be highly selective to the object of its influence for there are words more, less, and not at all affected by it. There are also items organically incapable of developing archaic properties even in favourable circumstances because their semantics appears incompatible with the stylistic and expressive connotations inherent in archaisms. A vast majority of English archaisms are formerly employed as common or bookish, denoting contemporary referents, words of a more general conceptual meaning. It is an extremely rare occasion to encounter a former term, unassimilated foreign borrowing, vulgarity or a slangy word among contemporary archaisms of English. Besides it has never been proved that archaisms grow obsolete in greater amounts and within a shorter period of time than, for example, terms, slang or neologisms. So long as all this remains true there are no reasons to think that archaisms are more inclined to fall into disuse than any other lexicological category.

Though there exists no direct linkage between archaic and obsolete words, it is essential to remember that archaization as a type of vocabulary changes is hardly possible without a certain preparatory stage that a word is bound to undergo. This stage consists in a number of metamorphoses associated with the deadly effects of obsolescence. A diachronic survey of the corpus of material in hand points out to such regular changes that, taken together, make up the necessary prerequisite of archaization. They consist in: a gradual and progressive narrowing of the word's functional sphere to highly specified situations of literary, bookish or dialectal employment; a parallel dramatic decline of the word's frequency in speech; complete obsolescence of some of the senses of an initially polysemantic word; a considerable reduction of the word's combinatorial power. Every would-be-archaism evolves in the outlined direction at this or that point of its development. Given the chance of progress these changes would inevitably lead to the conclusive point whereafter the word is no more a fact of the contemporary language.

However, at this moment, obsolescence is effectively counterbalanced by another powerful factor whose influence on the historical evolution of the English lexical system is still very far from being adequately investigated. I mean here the linguistic and literary tradition.

3. The linguistic and literary tradition

Generally speaking, tradition presents a certain type of relations between consecutive stages of the object in progress when the "old" is preserved in the "new" as a kind of productive beginning. The linguistic tradition involves a handing down from one generation to the other a sum of certain phonetic,

morphological, syntactic, lexico-semantic, stylistic, and other features. As such it necessarily presupposes a kind of background, a system of values that dictates the choice of forms, variants, and synonyms. Every epoch is characterized among all else by some cultural, aesthetic samples that come to be viewed as exemplary for imitation and desirable of reproduction at a new stage of evolution. Tradition may greatly precondition the transference of one and rejection of other traits and is traceable every time when a given trait, whether linguistic or literary has a reasonably long standing.

In the present study the linguistic tradition is regarded primarily in its relation to the written varieties of speech, to what can be called a premeditated cultivated speech as opposed to a spontaneous oral communication. Therefore it overlaps with the literary tradition in those spheres where language and literature interact, where there has evolved an interdependence between lexical usage and particular generic and stylistic varieties of literature (drama, poetry, theological prose, Bible translations, etc.) or schools of writing (Classicism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism, etc.). By the linguistic tradition I mean here a much narrower region of overlap and interaction between actually two very wide phenomena – on the one hand, that of the linguistic ascendancy in all of its possible forms and at all levels of the language hierarchy, not only lexical, and on the other hand, that of handing down through the ages of literary formulae, canons, themes, and many other features that in their totality make up the tradition of English literature.

Texts, works of letters have various life spans: some hardly ever cross the boundaries of one or two generations appearing at best as objects of professional interest. Others prove to be of the artistic, aesthetic, and linguistic value that far surpasses their time and epoch and serve as a source of knowledge, education, and inspiration for many generations to come. One has every reason to attribute to such texts *Beowulf*, writings by G. Chaucer, Ch. Marlowe, E. Spenser, W. Shakespeare, J. Milton, and many others that have come to symbolize today the very best of English literature. It is essential to take into account cultural models that served as a point of departure in evaluating the influence exercised by the text upon the lexical usage of a given period. Thus tracing the effects of Old English poetical practices upon the poetry of Alexander Pope or else Samuel Johnson, for instance, seems to be a rather difficult, if not futile, enterprise, whereas some time later, in a completely different epoch, the rediscovery of Old English brought about the conscious imitation of its linguistic idiosyncracies by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and W. A. Auden (Alexander 1983: 224).

A common feature of the texts created by past generations of speakers (further called simply 'old text') are words that grew obsolescent or are extremely seldom employed in contemporary speech. Being reproduced in their respective old texts these words get attached to a particular type of texts, to

a limited or comparatively limited inventory of narrative topics, and even to their immediate contextual surrounding. For some time, an obsolescent word occurs exceptionally in the old texts so that it not only comes to be associated with a given functional style but also semantically imbibes distinctive features of its traditional context, its mood, its overtones. Thus as a result of its recurrent use in generally similar communicative situations such a word specializes its semantics in one particular direction. Contextually motivated shades of meaning are generalized in the speaker's consciousness and moulded into a specific semantic component of the word (Petrishcheva 1984: 38). For later generations such obsolescent, though not yet archaic, words became the linguistic attributes that made their respective old texts tainted as compared to the contemporary writing, where these words are no more used. All this had a double effect upon the evolution of words pushed to the periphery of the language. On the one hand, it prevented their complete and ultimate obsolescence, on the other – made it easier for the word to acquire an antiquated semantic patina.

The influence of the linguistic and literary tradition on lexical usage in general, and archaization in particular, is manifest in what may be regarded as a fairly typical situation, when a generation of writers would look up at their great precursors as at the paragons of stylistic excellence. The history of English literature has witnessed many schools of traditionalist writing. It is a well known fact, for example, that E. Spenser openly imitated the language of G. Chaucer and to a lesser extent that of J. Lydgate:

"Dan Chaucer well of English vndefyled" (*The Faerie Queene*, IV. ii. 32). Naturally one of the most conspicuous peculiarities of Chaucer's diction were antiquated and forgotten good old words (Burnley 1983: 184). Spenser borrows dozens of Chaucer's archaisms many of which became already obsolete and breezes a new vitality into them. It is to Spenser that today's English owes such archaisms as *behest* n., 'order, will', *tribulation* n., 'grief, sorrow', *hight* v., 'call, name' (now only in pa. pple.), *whilere* adv., 'before', and the negative particle *ne* 'neither, nor' all of which were once obsolete (Bolton 1982: 222). Spenser's suit was followed by many other, though by far more discreet, lovers of linguistic antiquity and tradition. The above-mentioned words, for instance, once revived, were picked up by J. Milton, J. Dryden, W. Thomson, S. Coleridge, J. Keats, Lord Tennyson, W. Morris, A. Swinburne, W. Scott (Jespersen 1982: 216-17).

The re-animation of an obsolete word that is influenced by the tradition of older usage can be regarded as a creative word borrowing based on two kinds of attitude. First, the borrower re-affirms and accepts what has been put into the lexical item by his predecessor(s) in terms of the phonetic and morphological structure as well as the referential, connotative meaning, sphere of

application, etc. It is also true, however, that the borrowed item is almost always re-evaluated, so that some of its old features are rejected, some remain, and some novel ones are added. Examples illustrating the re-animation of forgotten or half-forgotten words are plenty. R. Burchfield furnishes but a couple of particularly interesting instances:

"That separation seems more *offensive* (V. Nabokov, 1970; only otherwise in Shakespeare). [...] It seems likely that Nabokov dredged up *nymphet* in this way – the word was used by Drayton and William Drummond of Hawthornden in the seventeenth century. Other withdrawals from the past are found at every turn in modern literary work;

"To *herit* [inherit] the tradition of a proper breeding (James Joyce, 1922; only otherwise in XVI and XVII-century contexts). "There is... no light in your inwit (E. Pound, 1955; also in James Joyce and other writers, drawn from the medieval work "Ayenbit of Inwit") (Burchfield 1985:65).

Every student of English knows what a great impact on the evolution of the English work-stock and phraseology W. Shakespeare had. His vocabulary has to a conspicuous extent defined the present day make-up of the English archaic lexicon. Many an archaism still lingers in the passive vocabulary of the so-called average Englishman simply by virtue of the fact that it is used in the verses and famous soliloquies that he studied or even learnt by heart at school. Fairly illustrative of this is the development of one sense of the noun *coil* "noisy disturbance, row" which today is perceived as archaic. Shakespeare employed this word as an epithet of life in the famous soliloquy of Prince Hamlet:

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. [...] (III. i. 66-68).

It is due to the force and impact of the linguistic and literary tradition that this meaning initiated by Shakespeare's creative genius eventually developed into a separate sense in the semantic structure of the word *coil* that is registered in the most authoritative dictionaries. The entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* leaves no room for any additional comments:

Coil – arch. & dial. of unknown origin; now familiar mainly in *mortal coil* [...]; mortal coil – the bustle of this mortal life, a Shakespearian expression which became a current phrase.

The workings of the linguistic and literary tradition have kept afloat the noun *coil* (in this particular sense) through many centuries, ever since it was used for the first time. Writers would use it as part of the expression *mortal coil*, so that it has occurred in speech at various times until today:

When the night suspends this mortal coil (Ch. Churchill)
Where rest from mortal coil the mighty of the Isles (W. Scott)
The Christian has waited in the coil of mortality (I. Taylor)

This analysis would be incomplete if I failed to at least mention another powerful tradition of lexical usage that has left perhaps the most vivid

impression on the contemporary structure of the English archaic lexicon. This tradition is vested in the English translations of the *Bible*:

It has been reckoned that 90% of Tyndale's translation stands unaltered in the King James Version of 1611 ("The Authorized Version") and some 80% or more in the Revised Version of 1881 and 1885. [Tyndale is therefore often considered to be] the man who more than Shakespeare even or Bunyan has moulded and enriched our language.

(Coggan 1963:19).

I have taken only two most vivid examples of the phenomenon that we have every reason to regard as a general tendency, a regular and powerful impact of the linguistic practices of old on the evolution of not only archaic words but also many other categories of lexis. The linguistic tradition is a complex and ambivalent factor whose results are frequently hidden from a direct observation. It has a far-reaching effect. In the domain of our specific interest alone there can be quoted many instances where a modern writer turns to the half-forgotten or seemingly lost linguistic treasures of his grim ancestors. He can do it consciously or without taking account of such an influence. Even the most chronologically distant texts are potentially part of this movement of lexis from the past to the present. Who could expect certain features of the Anglo-Saxon tongue to spring to life in the writings by such innovators as Lewis Carrol, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and James Joyce (McChesney 1968:209-12).

Like Milton, Joyce had an instinct for animating the dead languages that lie buried in our own, and for arousing us to their presence. While murdering a lot of clichés, he roused moribund words to new life, stirring tired phrases and faded formulations to fresh vitality (Adams 1977: 63).

A very recent instance of such an influence can be found in the novel *Under the Eye of the Clock* by Christopher Nolan, a brandnew literary celebrity from Ireland. His vocabulary is lavishly adorned with the alliterated compounds and phrases that in one case bring to mind lexical idiosyncracies of G. M. Hopkins, J. Joyce, W. B. Yeats, and even D. Thomas, and in the other case, are perceived as a distant echo of the Anglo-Saxon poetic tunes and airs, e.g.: ViVid-Voiced loVe (58), Nebulous-Nymphed (70); Freed now, he Frescoed Far-sighted Fame (76); silent Frescoed Fore Fathers (78); Defeated DyeD Death and Bestowed Breath (92); Heather- Hued Heath (122), Windowed-Wisdom (93). As if to leave no doubt as regards the traditional sources of his linguistic technique, Ch. Nolan also resorts to lexical and grammatical archaisms, doing it with the taste and discretion of an artist:

...hell *hath* no fury like scorn for spastics... (152); ...handsome Eamonn Cambell *donned* the comic's robe (9); Writhing from the sting of rejection and smelling the wax from his melted wings he *erstwhile* assumed a wait-and-see attitude (13); ...the watchman *waketh* but in vain (25); ...he *oftentimes* sensed from her fingers that her battle was similar to his (27); ... they *verily* died at birth and asked for nothing but fond love (26).

The conventional nature of lexical archaisms makes it easy for a writer to pick up an obsolete word or half-forgotten archaism and insert it in the context of the contemporary. One can never know what will come out of this: will the word become another of many mannerisms quickly forgotten by the linguistic community or a revived brand-new archaism. A telling example of this are experiments with antiquated or even obsolete words by the English novelist John Fowles. In his works of the 1960s and 1970s he showed no particular liking for the archaic. In the 1980s his tastes curiously turned to the linguistic rarities. Thus he takes an obsolete noun *mantissa* and uses it as the title of his 1982 novel. Taking it from the *OED* Fowles, like Spenser in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, supplies the obsolete word with its dictionary explanation: "...an addition of trivial importance especially to a discourse". Fowles's fascination with the archaic and obsolete found its most graphical expression in his novel *A Maggot* (1985). The writer's own comment helps to reveal some of the individual incentives that feed the workings of the linguistic tradition:

A maggot is the larval stage of a winged creature; as is the written text, at least in the writer's hope. But an older though now obsolete sense of the word is that of whim or quirk. By extension it was sometimes used in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century of dance-tunes and airs that otherwise had no special title ... Mr. Beveridge's Maggot, My Lord Byron's Maggot, the Carpenter's Maggot, and so on.

(Fowles 1985:5)

The novel is in fact an homage to Daniel Defoe, one of the few English novelists who has had a major influence on Fowles. Its text abounds in archaisms of all denominations: graphical, grammatical, and lexical, for the author has tried to keep closer to the language of the described period than most of the historical novels do (Fowles 1985: 455). All this would hardly be worth mentioning if John Fowles were not a man whose writing enjoys a worldwide acclaim. His impact on the lexical usage might also be of a considerable weight.

The linguistic tradition created the situation when obsolescent words were reproduced in contemporary speech either in the old texts or employed on purpose for various stylistic reasons in newly created texts. Thanks to this the word lingers in some peripheral layer of the vocabulary acquiring a novel component of meaning, the component by which it comes to be recognized as a trait inherent in the language of the past as opposed to the present, in other words, it comes to be recognized as an archaism. Such specific occurrences of the word in speech enhance its growing confinement to a respective style of language. This confinement is still another factor that imparts to the word's semantic structure an original (in this case antiquated) expressive and stylistic colouring. Thus the totality of functionally oriented employments in the course of time took the shape of a recognized lexi-co-semantic norm.

Words have a certain stylistic colouring, produce a certain stylistic impression upon us not due to some inner mystical quality of theirs, but only because they connote, they signalize to us their traditional distribution, the linguistic surrounding wherein we grew accustomed to come across them.

(Skrebnev 1975:21)

There are also deviations from the mainstream movement of lexical archaization. One of them is what can be termed as the archaism by analogy. Any obsolescent or obsolete word can be picked up and inserted in a contemporary text depending on how well its referential meaning agrees with the subject-matter of the text. What is important to the author is not so much the tradition of usage standing behind the word, as that the inserted dead word produces the effect of time distance. Thus the re-animated item suddenly appears in the role of archaism. This gives birth to the so-called pseudo-archaisms, i.e. words having but very little in common with classical archaisms of a long-standing linguistic reputation so to speak. Unlike the general tendency (for a detailed study of semantics of English archaisms see Shevchuk 1986), they have highly concrete meanings that liken them to technicalisms and terms, e.g., arch. *to barm* "leaven, rise in fermentation", they name referents of the historical past, e.g., *damoiseau* "a young man of gentle birth not yet made a knight", they have a much shorter life-span than is typical of regular archaisms, e.g., pseudo-arch. *gavel* "to divide land according to the practice of gavel-kind" is only about 170 years old compared to the average age of archaisms of 400-600 years and more. Many pseudo-archaisms, though registered in the *OED*, remain scarcely more than just a stylistic quirk, a maggot.

Thus we have come back again to the beginning of our linguistic inquiry, to the semantic trait that serves as a general marker of archaisms against the background of all lexi-co-semantic system of English.

4. The semantic component 'antiquity'

The same 'antiquity' is the basic linguistic feature that grants each and every lexical archaism its specific status in the lexical system of English. It is by this feature that an archaic word can be opposed to both its commonly used and its otherwise stylistically coloured synonyms. This same appears to be a result and a cause at the same time. It can be regarded as a reflex of diachronicity in the plane of synchronic state of the language, as a whimsical combination of two seemingly uncombinable beginnings, of two antinomies so often opposed in linguistics. Occurring as an accomplished fact, as a kind of a finale of the lexical evolution, this same curiously is the beginning as well. Taken in the plane of synchronicity it stands out as a starter in evaluating a separate sub-system of the Modern English vocabulary, that comprises more than 4,000 words.

The seme 'antiquity' took shape in the meaning of an obsolescent word due to the impact of the following factors:

- first, a commonly used word gets ousted from the active vocabulary to its ever distant periphery or, in other words, suffers initial stages of obsolescence so that it still belongs to the living language, surviving as an item that in contemporary dictionaries would be labelled as *rare* or *obsolescent*;
- second, the obsolescent word limits its functional sphere to the texts of old representing the English literary and linguistic tradition and still employed for various purposes by many coming generations of speakers;
- third, the seme 'antiquity' cannot take shape beyond the communicative situations that can be classified as the communication between the given language community and the world of their ancestors. This situation presupposes the introduction of elements of the material, spiritual, and, above all, linguistic culture of the past into the contemporary context. Situations of such a general description are recurrent for any language community, whether manifestly traditional or contemporary.

Taken in the hierarchy of the semantic structure of a word, the seme 'antiquity' is classified as a supplementary seme motivated by the linguistic properties of the sign proper (*signifiant*) as opposed to the semes motivated by the *signifié* (Nida 1975:37). It implies the following information about the linguistic peculiarities of a lexical archaism: 1) the word is employed only in high-flown, bookish style; 2) it has a low frequency of usage in the contemporary speech; 3) the word is a typical attribute of the language of passed generations; 4) it is connected with the linguistic and literary tradition in general, and often with the diction of a particular author (Spenser, the translators of the *Bible*, Shakespeare). The supplementary seme 'antiquity' belongs to a separate sense of a word and only thus does it enter into the semantic structure of the word as a whole. When this seme is identifiable in all of the word's meanings, such a word is a complete lexical archaism, e.g., 'wench v. Obs. exc. arch. 1599 [...] To associate with common women'. If the seme 'antiquity' is inherent in only some but not all of its meanings such a word should be classified as a partial lexical archaism. For instance, the noun *meat* in the sentence "A vegetarian is a person who eats no meat" is employed in its meaning 'the flesh of animals used for food', which is common and stylistically neutral. In the poem by G. M. Hopkins "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breeze" it appears in its archaic sense 'food in general; usually solid food in contradistinction to drink':

This needful, never spent,
And nursing element:
My more than *meat* and drink,
My meal at every wink;

(Hopkins 1979: 54-55)

The importance of the semantic component 'antiquity' for archaisms is best described by its functions, such as constitutive, differentiating, integrating and expressive. This seme constitutes lexical archaism as a particular lexicological category, with its specific place in the system of language, its functional orientation, its *raison d'être*. At the same time it presents a distinctive feature whereby an archaic sense is opposed to a non-archaic one within a partial archaism, whereby any lexical archaism as a whole is distinguished from any of its non-archaic synonyms, whether neutral or otherwise statistically marked. The seme serves to differentiate archaisms from all other categories of lexis containing the seme 'chronological information' and above all from historical terms and neologisms. In this case one can speak of its differentiating function. Inherent in more than 4,000 words the seme 'antiquity' along with their other structural and semantic properties brings these words together in a sub-system of Modern English word-stock with its original functional and stylistic orientation. This is its integrating function.

The expressive function of the seme 'antiquity' is manifested in the fact that every archaism can be employed in speech as a regular means of stylistic nomination, as a vivid stylistic and expressive device capable of creating a wide spectrum of effects, such as time distance, nostalgia, ornate and elevated diction, poetic refinement, as well as irony, humour, parody and so on.

5. Functional re-orientation of newly-born archaisms

From time immemorial the main function of a word has been considered as that of nominating things, qualities, concepts. Every would-be-archaism, when still in common use, was designed primarily to name, to denote. However, as we have seen, it later develops the ability to convey the information about its own linguistic properties. Thus the newly-born archaism curiously finds itself beyond competition with its former rivals, for the latter are simply not able to express, or, better to say, to connote what the archaism does. The archaism becomes a unique means of stylistic nomination. Its initial function of denotation and signification gets overshadowed by its newly-developed function of stylistic nomination. Using an archaism the speaker does not want so much to name (for there are more effective means of naming) as to draw attention to the very way the naming takes place. Archaization alters the obsolescent word's functional orientation in the lexico-semantic system of the language eliminating an unnecessary and very often confusing synonymic redundancy in the core vocabulary so far as one synonym is thus differentiated from the other. Besides it enriches and diversifies the expressive and stylistic arsenal of English. Becoming archaic the word stops growing more and more obsolete, securing its place at the periphery of the contemporary language.

Stylistic and expressive function becomes the one and only motivation of its employment in contemporary communication, and its new *raison d'être*. Therefore, having turned archaic, a word may remain in the language for decades and hundreds of years being on and off employed in its functional sphere or being dormant.

Spenser, for example, used in the function of archaism words that in his times were obsolete, e.g., *hight* "called", *whilere* "awhile before" (Bolton 1982: 222) ...that cursed wight from whom I scapt whilere (F. Q. I. ix. 26). The same word has since been used by many other men of letters such as W. Shakespeare, J. Milton, W. Scott, J. Payn and others (OED). Thus lexical archaisms remain in the language, provided that they are employed with a specific expressive and stylistic function that justifies their existence and resists the tendencies towards their ultimate and final obseletization.

6. Conclusion

Functional and stylistic stratification of the English wordstock can be regarded as a type of vocabulary changes influenced at once by the agents pertaining to the system of language proper and to its historical environment of both linguistic and extra-linguistic (literary) nature. The linguistic and literary tradition has exercised a decisive influence upon the historical process of formation of lexical archaisms as a specific category of the English vocabulary. Archaization draws on two major sources. A would-be-archaism experiences gradual and progressive narrowing of its functional sphere to highly specified situations of literary, bookish, and dialectal employment; a considerable decline of its recurrence in speech, obseletization of some, though not all of its senses; limitation of its combinatorial powers, – in other words, it undergoes the initial stages of obseletization. The obsolescent item develops the linguistic value of archaism by virtue of the fact that it belongs to the lexicon of the best samples of English literature in all its generic varieties, of the texts, that still preserve their artistic, aesthetic, cognitive, and linguistic value for the coming generations of speakers. As a result in the cognitive meaning of such a word, there appears a new semantic component, 'antiquity', that becomes its principal distinctive feature by which the archaism is opposed to all non-archaic categories of lexis.

Archaization and obseletization cannot be regarded as two consecutive stages of essentially one process of ousting of words from the living language. Archaization is only a particular trend in the functional and stylistic stratification of the vocabulary, highly selective to the object of its impact and

comparable by its role and meaning to the formation of bookish, poetic words, terminology, colloquialisms, slang, etc. Obseletization is an all-inclusive phenomenon affecting practically every category and grouping of lexis and can be compared to the appearance of new words and meanings.

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