Review article


The study under investigation falls into three parts: part one, “Methodology and theoretical framework”, including primary sources (1–26), part two, “The Synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Old English” (51–86), part three, “The Synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English” (87–132) and “The Synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English Dialects” (133–145). The results of the study will be examined in some detail.

Chapter One “Introduction” (1–26) explains the purpose of the study (1.1) which “is to investigate and account for the lexico-semantic changes affecting the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN”. The author enumerates five points: (a) “tracing the diachronic developments within the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN”; (b) “categorizing items within the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN (…)”; (c) “establishing conceptual domains relating to the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN”; (d) “investigating and explaining the process of the loss of native vocabulary and its replacement by borrowings from French (…)”; (e) “investigating the distribution of items within the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN in Old and Middle English texts and dialects.” (p. 1)

The subchapter “Methodology and theoretical framework in the study” (1.2/1–2) tells the reader: “The present study adopts the findings of cognitive
linguistics as a theoretical framework.” More precisely, the author opts for “prototype theory” (p. 2). These points are being treated more in extenso in the following chapter. In addition, a list of sources consulted appears under the same chapter (1.2.a–h/2). All these sources are being discussed and presented in what follows (1.3–1.5/3–18). Old English primary texts (1.4/4–9) and Middle English primary texts (1.5/9–18) are conveniently listed in tables which give date, title and manuscript of the text in question.

The last subchapter, “The synonyms of hill and mountain in Medieval English: a preliminary investigation” (1.6/19–26), introduces the conceptual domains HILL and MOUNTAIN, referring to the distinctive feature HEIGHT (p. 19). The fossilized members of the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN are listed in Table 14 (p. 21), while Table 15 (p. 22) displays eight peripheral items. There remain “thirty-five items attested in Old and Middle English literature, whose meaning ‘hill, mountain’ persisted for some time or survived until Modern English” (listed in Table 16, pp. 22–23). The data from Table 16 are graphically represented in Figure 1 (p. 24), which documents their first (and eventually last) attestation.

Chapter Two deals with “Semantic and lexical change in English” (27–50) from a theoretical viewpoint. The discussion comprises the following subchapters: 2.1 “Lexical semantics and semantic change” (27ff.); 2.2 “Pre-structuralist approaches” (29ff.); 2.3 “Structuralist approaches” (33ff.), 2.4 “Semantics within generative grammar” (35ff.), 2.5. “Componential analysis” (37ff.) and 2.6 “Cognitive semantics” (40ff.) is certainly not meant to be exhaustive. For a discussion of the two approaches, see Leonhard Lipka, “Prototype semantics or feature semantics: an alternative.” [In:]. Festschrift Hüllen, vol. 1 (1987), 282–298. As far as componential analysis of verbs in general is concerned, see C. Kay and M.L. Samuels (1975). “Componential analysis in semantics: its validity and applications” [In:] Transactions of the Philological Society, 49–81, may be worth quoting.

Referring to Kleparski’s approach (1997: 128), the author aptly illustrates the functioning of various CONCEPTUAL DOMAINS which are to determine the semantic development of ModE wench (Figure 3/p. 44). On the following page Figure 4 shows the conceptual integration network for <BOY>/<SERVANT> ‘boy in service’, which is taken from Grygiel (2008: 58). The present reviewer earlier dealt with the related lexical fields BOY/GIRL – SERVANT – CHILD in Middle English (1985), 328–336.

Under subchapter 2.7.2, “Diachronic onomasiology” (47ff.), we read as follows: “The basic onomasiological mechanisms include word formation and word creation processes, blending, ellipsis, folk etymology, borrowing of foreign words or elements.” (p. 47). As the discussion of the integration of the French loanword mountain, which ousted native bergh (< OE beorg), in Chapter Four (pp. 105–106, 108) shows, the author seems to lay more
emphasis on the latter category (i.e. on borrowing) than on the preceding ones.

The summary (2.8/50) very briefly restates the author’s choice of “diachronic prototype semantics, formulated within cognitive linguistics (...),” as “the most useful tool in accounting for changes in meaning.”

Under Chapter Three the author begins to investigate “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Old English” (51–86). On p. 51 (and on the following pages) OE hlaew ‘hill, burial mound’ appears without a length-mark on the vowel; see in particular subchapter 3.2.4 (73–74). In fact, Old English records two variants: hlaew and hlæw (Holthausen 1974: 162). However, its Middle English continuation loue ‘hill, mound’ (Southern English low) can only go back to the latter variant. This is also true of Scottish law, both archaic in Modern English (see subchapter 4.4.2 Loue/108–110).

The problem of a possible etymological relationship of beorg ‘hill, mountain’ and cognate beorgan ‘to protect, shelter’ on the one hand, and burg ‘(fortified) town, stronghold’, surviving as ModE borough, on the other hand, is being discussed by the author, who refers to conflicting scholarly views. Following Kluge/Seebold (24th edition 2002), s.v. Burg, a definite solution does not seem to be at hand.

In fact, there is a certain imbalance between Chapter Three “The Synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Old English” (51–86) and the ensuing part of the study which deals with Middle English, namely Chapter Four “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English” (87–132), to which Chapter Five “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English dialects” (133–145) is to be added. Some 35 pages for Old English may have to stand up against 58 pages for Middle English. The concluding remarks (146–148) give a brief summary of the results of the present study.

Chapter Four deals with “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English” (87–132). In the course of the discussion of the prototypical members of the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN (4.3/90ff.), the author rightly states: “Summing up, the data in Table 28 clearly show that the core of the onomasiological structure of the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN underwent a significant change in Medieval English.” (p. 94). In fact, ME bergh (< OE beorg) radically declined in frequency and was no longer used in its original meaning during the 15th century (see Table 28, p. 92). Being one of the prototypical members of the conceptual category in question during the Old English period (see Chap. 3/ p. 54, Table 18), it had to give way to mountain, a borrowing from French.

A well-founded distinction is made between Old and Early Middle English munt (see 3.2.2/67–71), which is a direct borrowing from Lat. montem obl.sing. of mons ‘mountain’, which was mainly restricted to the names of
mountains in biblical texts, and ME *mount* (from the same Latin etymon) which was re-borrowed from Anglo-French (4.2.3/97–98). ME *mount* was at first more or less synonymous with *mountain* and attained an unusual high frequency during the 15th century (Table 28, p. 92). In Modern English, *mount* is no longer used as a synonym of *mountain*, but usually precedes names of mountains, though it may still occur as an independent lexeme in poetical texts.

From the Corpus Manuscript of the Ancrene Riwle/Wisse (a1200?/c1230; ed. Bella Millett 2006: 414a), *munt* ‘hill, mountain’ (2.846, etc.), as well as *Munt Caluaire* ‘Mount Calvary’ (4.1147–1148) and *Munt of Muntgiw* ‘Mount Mountjoy’, i.e. ‘the Alps’ (6.457n), may be added to the examples quoted by the author (4.2.3/97–98).

The reasons for the demise of ME *bergh* (< OE *beorg*) are being discussed under subchapter 4.4.1 (pp. 105–106, 108). Since there are more examples when French loans ousted native core members of a lexical field in medieval English, I doubt whether a teleological approach advocated by Adamska-Sałaciak, quoted on p. 108 (72), will tell the whole truth. Baugh – Cable (2006; chapter 6, paragraphs 123ff./pp. 163ff) give some areas of daily and public life, which aptly illustrate the extent of French influence on (Middle) English vocabulary.

Following OED: *mound* n.2 (LME – 15th century), this lexeme could be added to the peripheral material such as *hillock, holme, mote* (4.4.4/pp. 112ff.). The author has given MOUND the status of a conceptual category both for Middle English (4.2/p. 89, Table 11) and Old English (3.1/p. 53, Figure 5).

One wonders whether ME *hoge* ‘hill’, one of the peripheral nouns of the conceptual categories HILL/MOUNTAIN (13th–15th c.), attested only once (4.4/p. 102, Table 29; see also 4.5.4/p. 113) is identical with Northern ME *hough* 4.5.2/pp. 121f., a rarely attested word of difficult origin. While *hough* and *ogh* may well continue OE *hoh*, ME *howis* ‘hills’ may go back to OE *hoge* and show the vocalization of the voiced back spirant (p. 121, 87a, b).

The monograph under scrutiny may have its weaknesses after all. After a highly interesting first half of Chapter Four (Middle English), there follow a few subchapters (4.4.4/pp. 112ff.; 4.5/pp. 116ff.), which deal with items of extremely low frequency, some lexemes, such as above-quoted ME *hoge* ‘hill’, attested only once. A conclusion of the type “This single occurrence (of ME *lith*) is not sufficient to draw any definite conclusions regarding its meaning and use.” (4.5.5/p. 126) may well be applied to nearly all the items dealt with in this section.

There is only one reference to the so-called Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. cloud: O.E. *clud* ‘mass of rock,’ related to *clod*, a metaphoric extension (13c.) based on the similarity of cumulus clouds and rock masses. The Old English word for ‘cloud’ was *weolcan*. In Middle English, *skie* also originally
meant ‘cloud’. The verb is from the early 15th century. This passage was referred to by the author in connection with the discussion of the alleged shift from ‘a mass of rock/earth’ to ‘a mass of water vapour’ (4.5.2/ p. 120). In fact, the meaning ‘rock, hill’ is earlier attested than the meaning ‘cloud’ (see OED²: cloud). There may be indeed a change of the referent, obviously based on the assumed similarity.

Professor Anatoly Liberman, University of Minnesota, one of the leading etymologists (personal communication of 30 June 2011), states that cloud may well go back to the same root as the words clod/clot (and even clutter), which denote an undifferentiated mass.

The “Summary” (4.6/131–32) reads as follows: “(1) As a result of lexical enrichment, the number of loanwords in the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN “rose” (not “raised”), the source languages being Scandinavian (...), Romance (...) and Celtic.” (p. 131). (4) In view of the lexical and semantic changes, the items included in the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN were shuffled. The core of the semantic field in question changed, mainly as a result of the semantic narrowing of ME bergh and the introduction of F mountaine.” (p. 132).

Chapter Five, “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English dialects” (133–145) may be in need of some justification. It may well be intended to test some earlier conclusions on Middle English dialects.

Besides Chapter Three, “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Old English” (51–86), an additional chapter entitled “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Old English dialects” would not have made sense, as the bulk of the texts which survived were written in only one dialect: the so-called West Saxon dialect, which, until the Norman Conquest (1066), served as kind of scripta, i.e. a written supra-regional standard.

However, some arguments in favour of Chapter Five should be adduced. Indeed Chapter Five, “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English dialects” (133–145), follows upon Chapter Four: “The synonyms of HILL and MOUNTAIN in Middle English” (87–132). The Middle English legacy of texts and documents which have come down to us is much greater than the Old English one. Yet the study “suffers from certain unavoidable deficiencies caused by the uneven spread of the texts in the five dialects.” (5.0/p. 133). Anyway, as far as the material basis is concerned, there certainly may be some unavoidable overlap between Chapters Four and Five.

Some particular remarks may be called for. The author tries to make a case for the South Western dialect “revealing certain archaic flavour,” (5.3/ p. 139). The present writer wonders whether the differences between the East Midland and the West Midland dialects were really insignificant, as the author would have us believe (5.5/p. 140) referring to a study by Skeat, first published in 1912, reprinted 1973.
Later, the author refers to Professor Fisiak’s handbook (2000: 84) in connection with alleged late Middle English “prototypes” of the written English standard, as illustrated by some 15th century manuscripts (5.6/p. 142). Regarding the rise of (written) Standard English, she should have referred to the recent publication of essays on the subject by 14 scholars, edited by Laura Wright, *The Development of Standard English, 1300–1800. Theories, Descriptions, Conflicts.* (Studies in English Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Undoubtedly, it is a problem that may deserve a comprehensive investigation which lies well beyond the aims of the study under review.

The “Summary” (5.8/145) explains that “The four most frequent items are found in all five dialects, even in the underrepresented Kentish dialect.” This is in fact true of ME hille, mount, mountaine, doune (Table 38/p. 135).

“The concluding remarks” (pp. 146–148) give a brief summary of the results of the present study. The following statements seem to carry particular weight: whether a word will be assigned the status of prototypicality or not, depends to a large extent on its frequency in the sources consulted (p. 146). For the sources, see Chapter Two (pp. 27ff.). In Chapter Four the author had shown that the French loanword *mountain* eventually replaced native *bergh* (*< OE beorg*) (Chapter Four/pp. 105–106, 108), which had lost its most prototypical features, corresponding to the conceptual category HILL/MOUNTAIN. ME *bergh* (North. E *bargh*) survived as ModE *barrow*, meaning ‘burial mound’ in an archeological context (p. 147).

The reader will not always agree with Sałdej-Sobolewska’s conclusions, but the layout of her study is very user-friendly due to numerous tables and figures which serve as a welcome illustration. Unfortunately, there are quite a few typos and errors (see below). This is not to detract from the merits of the dissertation under review which is methodologically well-founded and comes up with convincing results.

REFERENCES

(a) Sources

<table>
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**(b) Special studies**

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Wright, Laura (ed.)  

**Appendix**

To conclude a few corrections and comments may be called for:  