

Human Picturing of Birds – the Case Study of Zoosemic Developments in the Category Female Domesticated Birds

Małgorzata Górecka-Smolińska & Grzegorz A. Kleparski

It is noteworthy that animal terms have been employed in secondary senses with reference to HUMANS since as long ago as the era of Sanskrit, described by the majority of linguists as the parent language of the Indo-European family (see Kamboj 1986). The issue of zoosemy in the history of English – one of the most representative languages of the Indo-European family – has been analysed in a number of works, among others, Schreuder (1929), Thornton (1989), Kleparski (1988, 1990, 2002), Kiełtyka (2005a, b, 2006, 2008, 2009), Górecka-Smolińska (2007, 2008, 2009 a, b) and Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski (2008).

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1. Evaluative developments in the category DOMESTICATED BIRDS

We shall consider the etymological roots of such lexical items denoting female birds as *hen*, *duck* and *goose* scrutinised in the category DOMESTICATED BIRDS. The discussion on the semantics of the lexical categories in question will involve reference to the historically original or primary meanings of the targeted words coupled with an analysis of the secondary or transferred senses linked to the lexical items in question. Chronological ordering of the historically evidenced secondary meanings will enable us to speculate on the nature of transfers of the secondary senses associated with bird names related to the category DOMESTICATED BIRDS.¹

2. Semantic evolution of the lexical category *hen*

Let us start our discussion on the semantics of O.E. bird-words with the analysis of the lexical category *hen* which stands both for the name of the female and of the race, though the etymological sources that have been consulted register the presence of the lexical unit *cock* a century earlier in the English language than the appearance of the word *hen*.²

The major etymological sources, such as the *CEDEL*, *EDME*, *OED*, *SCEDEL*, *SEDME* and *WO* dictionaries inform us that the Mod. Eng. lexical category *hen* continues the O.E. *hen/henn* forms which are the strong forms corresponding to Du. *hen*, Ger. *Henne* all employed with the meaning 'hen'. O.E. *hana*, Da. and Sw. *hane*, Du. *hann* and Ger. *Hahn* are the masculine forms used in the sense 'cock'. Note that, literally, all these cognates mean 'the singing bird' and – as the *EDME* dictionary maintains – the masculine forms are Germanic cognates with L. *canere* meaning 'to sing'. As testified by the *OED* dictionary, the historically primary meaning of *hen* is that of 'an adult female of the common domestic or barn-door fowl, the male of which is the cock'. This may be testified by the following *OED* quotations:

c 950 *Suæ henne somniæas cicceno hire under feðrum.*

a 1225 *Þe hen hwon heo haueð ileid, ne con buten kakelen.*

1577 *Fesantes.. are better to bee brought up under a Henne.*

1847 'Boys!' shriek'd the old king, but vainlier than a *hen* to her false daughters in the pool.

In the course of time the lexical category *hen* in the 14th century developed a novel meaning 'the female of various other birds'. This extended sense-thread may be illustrated by means of the following *OED* contexts:

? c 1325 Partriche, *fesant henne* ant fesant cocke.

1879 An old blackcock crowing on a birch~tree with a dozen *hens* below it.

Furthermore, as evidenced by the etymological sources, such as the *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries, the word *hen* – in the process of zoosemic development – has shifted its meaning and started to be used in the following human-specific senses 'a wife, woman, female'³ and 'a mistress' – both secondary senses entered the English language in the first half of the 17th century and survived to the end of the 19th century. Note that similarly to the English lexical category *hen*, French *poule* 'hen' developed at some point of its history the meaning 'wife, mistress' and 'prostitute'. In addition to this, as pointed out by a number of lexicographic sources (see the *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries), it was in the 17th century that the word *hen* started to be employed as a term of endearment – similar to *sweetheart* – mainly in Sc. Eng. regional use. Likewise, observe that in present-day French the collocation *ma poule* 'my pet' is used in the transferred sense 'honey'. Nonetheless, the semantics of English *hen* conveys traces of pejorative development confirmed by the emergence of the 20th century secondary sense 'flamboyant feminine male homosexual' (see the *CNPDSUE* dictionary). In the long run, one may come to the conclusion that the Early Modern English development of the secondary human-specific senses has influenced the extension of the semantics of the lexical category *hen* from the macrocategory **BIRDS** onto **HUMANS**.

The diagram below aims at schematising the historical development of the semantics of *hen*. The vertical axis marks the period of the introduction of either the primary or secondary sense of the word *hen* to the English language, whereas the horizontal axis stands for the culmination of the use of a given historical sense-thread.

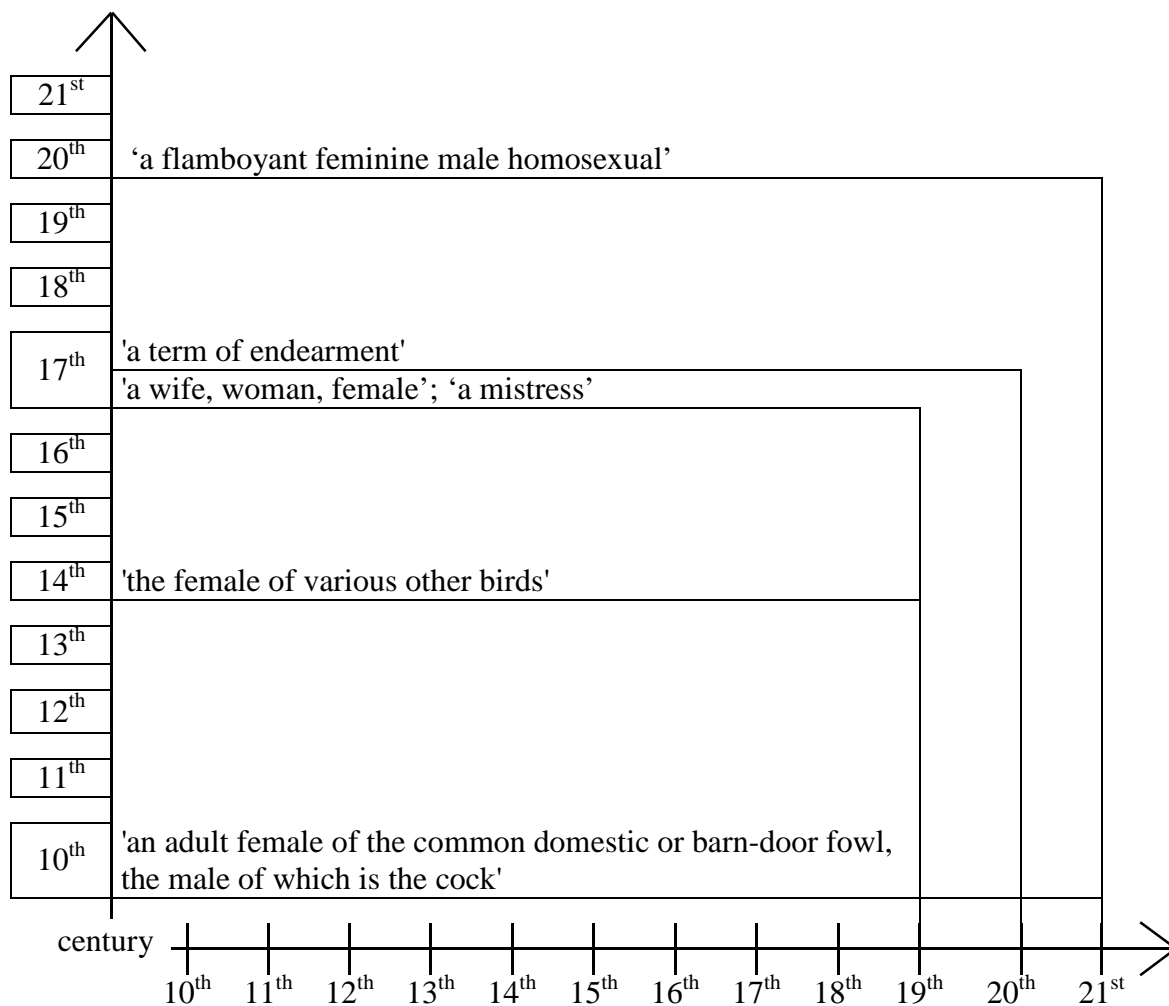


Figure 1 *Historical development of the semantics of the lexical category hen*

The majority of lexicographic sources that have been consulted (e.g. the *CNPDSUE*, *DASCE*, *OED*, *RDHS*, *RDMASUE*, *VS* dictionaries) inform us that one of the earliest metaphorical senses of *hen* emerged from the now archaic compound *hen-flesh*, current in the period between the 15th and 19th centuries in the secondary sense 'the roughness of the skin arising from chilliness or shivering', and the adjectival compound *hen-hearted* registered in the transferred sense 'feeble, timid, easily panicked' (16th > 19th centuries) – a formation which is clearly linked to the conceptual zone /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with such attributive elements as <SHY> and <WEAK> brought to prominence. It is worth stressing that the senses of both compound expressions began to function in the English language a century or even two centuries earlier than the transferred senses developed by the morphologically simple *hen*. Hence, we may conclude that the metaphors of the expressions *hen-flesh* and *hen-hearted* have their grounds in the primary sense of the word *hen*, that is 'an adult female of the common domestic fowl', rather than in the secondary sense 'a wife, woman, female'. However, while the meaning of the compound *hen-flesh* may be fairly unambiguously linked to the original sense of *hen*, the semantic structure of the expression *hen-hearted* cannot be

with absolute certainty linked to any of its historical senses. And so, the sense of the compound *hen-hearted*, that is ‘feeble, timid, easily panicked’, may be conceptually linked to either the supposedly feeble and easily panicky nature of the majority of women, according to the stereotype, or – alternatively – the feeble and easily panicked nature of the bird in the yard. Note that a similar sense thread is encoded by the Italian and Spanish *gallina* ‘hen’ which has developed the secondary sense ‘a coward’.

Added to that, such sources as the *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *TTEM* dictionaries include the adjective *henpecked*, which surfaced in the 17th century and seems to be the surviving form of the original verb *hen-peck* (17th > 19th centuries according to the *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries). Since the word is currently employed in the transferred sense ‘ruled by a domineering female’, and is frequently used as a derogatory epithet to qualify a husband, we feel justified in claiming that the meaning of the adjective *henpecked* may have been derived from the secondary human-specific sense of *hen*; that is, ‘a wife, woman, female’. Likewise, in French we find the expression *poule mouillée* used in the transferred sense ‘wimp’ or ‘softy’; however, the phrase does not refer to husbands specifically but rather to any male in general.

Furthermore, the lexical category *hen* seems to have provided the basis for the emergence of various compounds and phraseological expressions which entered the English language in the first half of the 18th century, such as the morphologically complex noun *henchman*, which stands for ‘loyal and stalwart supporter, likely to be employed by a ruthless ruler to carry out severe or punitive measures’; the figurative expression *hen-house*, ‘a predominantly female ménage, a house in which the woman rules’ (see the *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries); or *tappit hen*, that is ‘a drinking vessel having a lid with a knob and containing one Scottish quart’.

Similarly, 19th century English witnessed the rise of numerous *hen*-based compounds and fixed expressions, such as *hen-fruit*, *hen-scratch* and *hen party* whose senses are clearly linked either to the original meaning of *hen*, that is ‘an adult female of the common domestic fowl’, or to its secondary sense ‘a wife, woman, female’. And so, *hen-fruit* and *hen-apple*, are currently employed chiefly in A.E. slang in the sense ‘eggs’, hence the meaning of the expressions is linked to the historically primary sense of *hen* (see the *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries). Similarly, the metaphorical verbal expression *hen-scratch*, which appeared at the end of the 19th century – as evidenced by the *OED* dictionary – in the sense ‘to scratch in the manner of a hen’ foregrounds the attributive elements of the historically original meaning of *hen*, that is ‘an adult female of the common domestic fowl’. Note that in Polish we find equivalent expression *bazgrać jak kura pazurem* ‘to scribble like a hen’, used in the same sense as English *hen-scratch*. Last but not least, the phrase *hen-party* which stands for ‘a gathering consisting only of women, held before one of them is to be married’ is related semantically to the historically secondary sense of *hen*, that is ‘a wife, woman, female’.

Finally, the 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed the rise of numerous expressions which seem to have entered the English language as a consequence of the semantic development of the word *hen*. To start with, in prison slang the compounds *hen pen* or *hen mill* are used with reference to a women’s jail or prison (see the *CNPDSUE* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries), thus being clearly related semantically to the secondary sense of *hen*, that is ‘a wife, woman, female’. Moreover, the historical development of the semantics of *hen* exemplifies certain traces of pejorative extension. The list of negatively loaded lexical items includes, among others, *hen-brained* or *hen-headed* employed in the sense ‘scatty, witless’

which – evidently – are linked to the conceptual zone /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with such evaluatively loaded elements as <SCATTY> and <FOOLISH> brought to the fore. Note that the similar German phrase *dummes Huhn* is used in the pejoratively loaded sense ‘stupid’ or ‘fool’. Additionally, one finds such compounds as *hen-cackle* used in the sense ‘a trifle’ and *hen-and-egg* used attributively in the sense ‘the irresolvable problem of the *first cause* – frequently in somewhat trivial contexts’.

As far as the abovementioned compounds and fixed expressions are concerned, we are left with a certain amount of uncertainty as to whether their secondary meanings are linkable directly either to the primary or the secondary sense of *hen*. Yet, the data available prompts us to conclude that the negative features of <FOOLISHNESS> or <LESSER INTELLIGENCE> are frequently assigned – justifiably or not – both to women and hens. Added to that, both the female kind and the bird are almost universally perceived as those beings whose focus on trivial matters is both incomprehensible and overwhelming (at least to the male kind).

Finally, we find the expression *hen-toed*, meaning ‘with toes turning in’ – a phrase whose semantics is clearly anchored in the conceptual sphere /**APPEARANCE**/, and reflects a certain imperfection of the person’s looks. However, the seemingly related syntagma *hen’s toes* does not reflect human appearance in any way, since it merely denotes ‘bad writing’. Last but not least, another emergence of the metaphorical sense based on the semantic development of the lexical category *hen* relates to the word *hench*, which is currently employed in the sense ‘a person in attractive physical shape’, which again may be said to derive its figurative sense from the secondary meaning of *hen*, since women are seen as creatures who are not very frequently blessed with intelligence but rather with good looks.

Below we present a graph portraying the semantics of the senses of *hen*-based compounds that have appeared throughout the history of the English language.

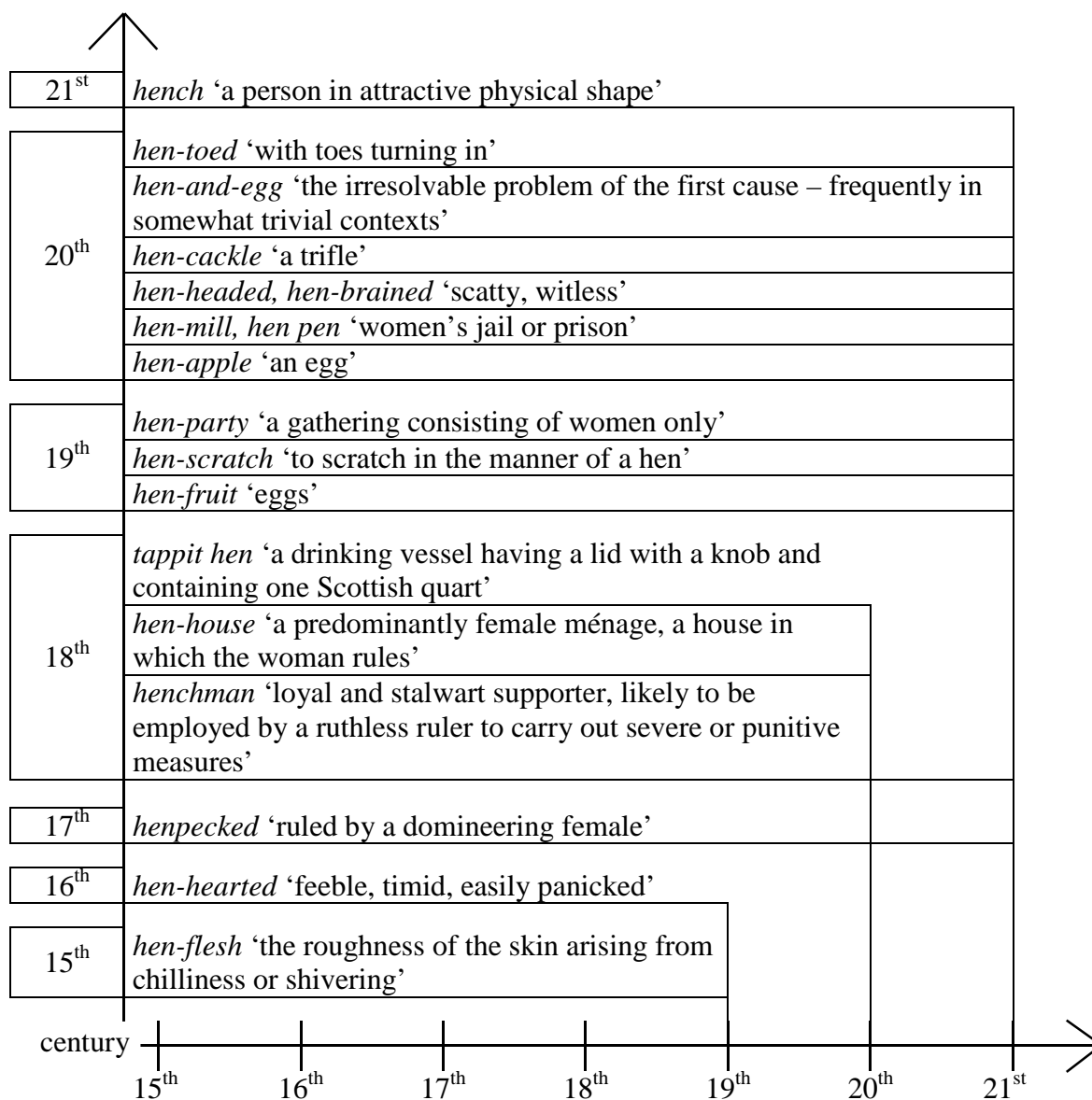


Figure 2 The semantics of historical hen-based compounds and expressions

3. The development of the semantics of the lexical category *duck*

According to a number of available etymological sources (e.g. the *CEDEL*, *EDME*, *OED*, *SCEDEL*, *SEDME* and *WO* dictionaries), Mod. Eng. *duck* may be said to be derived ultimately from O.E. *duce* (or perhaps *dúce*) meaning 'to duck, dive'. The form is etymologically linked to Da. *duk-and*, the literal meaning of which is 'dive-duck', where *and* means 'duck'; Sw. *dyk-fågel* literally 'dive-fowl' or 'diver'; and Ger. *tauchen*, that is 'to dive'. Finally, the etymological sources that have been consulted show that in current usage the lexical category *duck* functions not only as a noun, but also as a verb, chiefly in the senses 'to plunge or dive' and 'to suddenly go down under water, and emerge again'.

When we go back to the beginnings of the word *duck*, we see that the historically primary meaning of the lexical category in question is 'a swimming bird of the genus *Anas*

and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*, of which species are found all over the world' (see the *OED* dictionary). At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that without any specific context, *duck* is customarily applied to the common duck of the yard, a domesticated form of the wild duck or mallard (L. *Anas boschas*). The historically original meaning of *duck* is clearly evidenced in the following *OED* quotations:

967 Andlang Osrices pulle þæt hit cymb on *ducan* seape; of *ducan* seape þæt hit cymb on Rischale.

1377 A-syde he gan hym drawe Dredfully.. as *duk* doth fram þe faucoun.

1530 *Ducke* a foule, canne. *Duke* of the ryver, cannette.

1847 The Eiders are the largest of all the *Ducks*, being as weighty as the average of Geese.

Apart from the historically primary general sense 'a swimming bird of the genus *Anas* and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*', *duck* has also been used in more specific senses, for example, it is currently employed in the meaning 'the female of the fowl, the male being the drake' (14th > 21st centuries), and in the 18th century there developed the sense 'the flesh of this fowl'.

Evidently, in the course of time *duck* has undergone the process of semantic evolution and came to be used with reference to people in general, and – in particular – to their physical appearance and personality. Thus, the historical meanings linked to this lexical category do not merely belong to the subcategory **DOMESTICATED BIRDS**, but are also related to the conceptual macrocategory **HUMANS**. Let us begin – following the *CNPDSUE* and *OED* dictionaries – with one of the earliest transferred senses of the word *duck*, which was coined in the 16th century, that is 'a dear person' (16th > 19th centuries). Note that in French *canard* 'duck' may be currently employed in the secondary sense 'darling'.

Moreover, historically *duck* also appeared in the 19th century phrase *a duck of a...* applied to things as well as persons, and with hypocoristic suffix *-s* the term *duck* has been used since the 20th century either endearingly or as a familiar form of address. Added to that, the lexicographic sources that have been consulted (for example, the *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *RSSD* dictionaries), provide evidence for the fact that since the 19th century the morphological derivative *ducky* has been employed in a number of secondary senses. Namely, the noun *ducky* was originally used as a term of endearment, especially frequent in female usage; however, according to the *CNPDSUE* dictionary, from the mid-20th century *ducky* started to function in male-specific language, especially as an opprobrious term implying homosexuality. Apart from the noun *ducky*, the *CNPDSUE*, *OED*, *RDMSUE* and *RSSD* dictionaries trace the currency of the adjective *ducky* which since the late 19th century has been used in the secondary sense 'attractive, good' (19th > 20th centuries).

It is worth mentioning at this point of our discussion that in prison usage the word *duck* functioned in the 19th century in the transferred senses 'an unrelentingly gullible and trusting person' and also 'an odd person' (see the *CNPDSUE* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries). On our interpretation, in case of the latter sense, that is 'an unrelentingly gullible and trusting person', the word *duck* may be said to be linked to the conceptual dimension **BEHAVIOUR** with such attributive values as <GULLIBLE> and <TRUSTING> brought to prominence, whereas in the case of the secondary sense 'an odd person' it may be said to be linked to the conceptual sphere **PERSONALITY** foregrounding the attributive element <ODD>. The same lexicographic sources, namely the *CNPDSUE* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries, inform us that in the 20th century the word *duck* started to be used in the secondary sense 'a prison

sentence of two years' – probably extralinguistically conditioned by the shape of 2 – added to that, the word started to serve as a term for 'an attractive target for robbery' and – in underground lingo – 'a stolen car discovered by police through serendipitous checking of number plates'. Regarding the A.E. slang register the word *duck* has been used – starting from the 19th century – either in the sense 'a fellow' or 'a customer' (19th > 20th centuries), and – moreover – starting from the early 20th century *duck* started to be employed in A.E. police slang in the sense 'a fire-fighter', hence became linked to the conceptual zone **/PROFESSIONS/** (see the *CNPDSUE* and *OED* dictionaries).

Apart from the numerous secondary senses of the word *duck* that have been accounted for so far, the word has also developed a variety of transferred senses related to different disciplines of sport, hobbies and interests. And so, the word *duck* and its derivatives *duckstone* and *duckiestone* are historically evidenced in the secondary senses 'a boy's game', 'one of the stones used in this game' and 'a player' in the 19th century (see the *OED* dictionary). In addition to this, as the *CNPDSUE* and *OED* dictionaries inform us, in cricket slang *duck* – being the shortening of the phrase *duck's egg* – was employed in the 19th century English in the secondary sense 'no score, nought', but also with the sense 'a player who fails to score'. Furthermore, according to the *CNPDSUE*, *RDMSUE* and *VS* dictionaries, in pool *duck* has been used since the 20th century in the sense 'a shot that cannot be missed or a game that cannot be lost', whereas in a deck of playing cards *duck* is a synonym for *a two*. Finally, *duck* is also registered in the sense 'a surfer who lingers in the water, rarely catching a wave'.

Let us now sum up our discussion on the semantics of *duck* by referring to the body of transferred senses derived from the verb *to duck*. And so, following the *CNPDSUE*, *OED*, *RDMSUE* and *RSSD* dictionaries, the converted verb *to duck* surfaced in the 19th century in the secondary sense 'to avoid, to neglect to attend' (19th > 20th centuries), whereas in the 20th century the word started to be used in pool terminology with the secondary meaning 'to miss a shot or lose the game intentionally to mislead an opponent as to your true ability'.

Last but not least, during the course of the 19th century the lexical category *canard* was introduced into the English language. According to the *OED* dictionary, the etymological roots of this word go back to the French word *canard* employed in the secondary sense 'a false rumour'. Similarly, in English *canard* was used in the transferred senses 'an extravagant or absurd story circulated to impose on people's credulity' and 'a hoax, a false report'. The diagrams given below show the historical development of the semantics of the lexical categories *duck* and *to duck*.

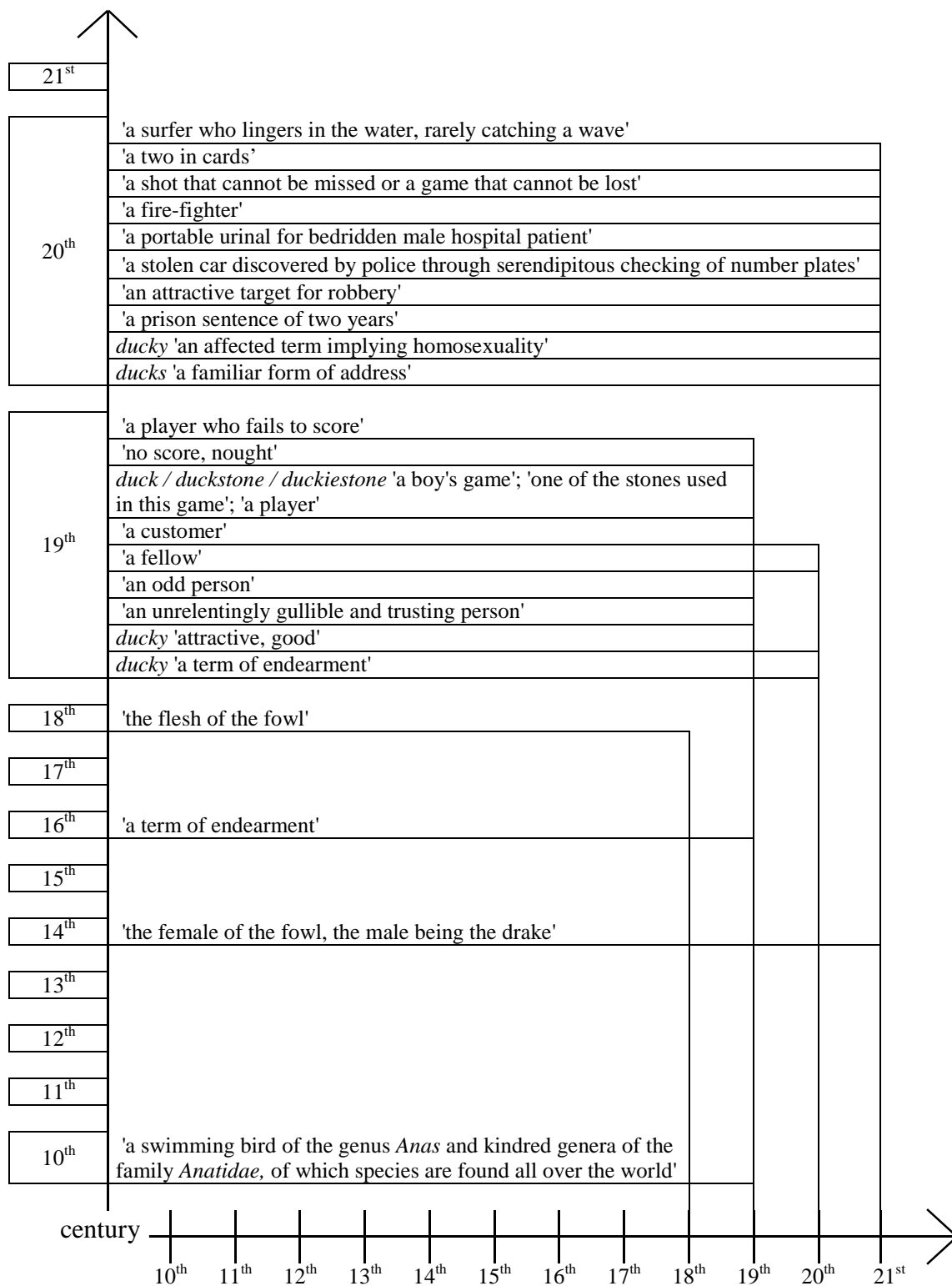


Figure 3 *Historical evolution of the semantics of duck*

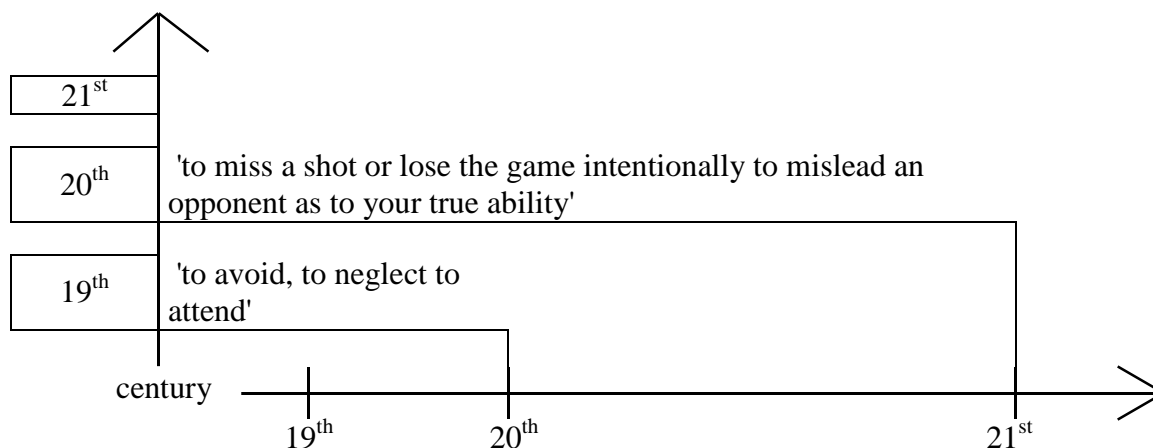


Figure 4 *Historical development of the semantics of the lexical category to duck*

Obviously, the semantic development of *duck* and its frequent application in the human-specific sense has also influenced the extensive development of *duck*-based compounds whose secondary meanings are not merely relatable to the historically primary meaning of the lexical category, but to its numerous transferred senses that have appeared in the history of English. First and foremost, let us begin with those vocabulary items whose secondary senses are linked to the conceptual zone /**APPEARANCE**/. Take, for example, the compound *duck-legged* which emerged in the 17th century and was used in the transferred sense ‘having unusually short legs’ (17th > 19th centuries). Moreover, the lexicographic sources (e.g. the *CNPDSUE* and *OED* dictionaries) that have been consulted single out yet another nominal compound which was coined during the course of the 20th century and is currently used mainly in colloquial register, that is *duck disease/duck's (ducks') disease* which is a somewhat facetious compound applied in the sense ‘shortness of stature, especially shortness of legs’. The *CNPDSUE* dictionary stresses that the item in question is a humorous reference to an anatomical characteristic of ducks and hence the phrase – with all likelihood – has grounds in the historically original meaning of the word *duck*, namely ‘a swimming bird of the genus *Anas* and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*’. Finally, the *CNPDSUE*, *DASCE* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries give evidence for the 20th century nominal compound *duck butt* employed in the sense ‘a short person’.

On the basis of the data discussed in the foregoing we may state that all the historical secondary meanings analysed above may have originated from the primary meaning of *duck*, that is ‘a swimming bird of the genus *Anas* and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*’. Moreover, they may all be proved to be conceptually linked to the sphere /**APPEARANCE**/ or – to be more precise – to the conceptual parameter of /**HEIGHT**/ with the conceptual element <SHORT> brought clearly to the fore.

Apart from numerous expressions whose senses are conceptually linked to the dimension /**HEIGHT**/, the *TTEM* dictionary points to the emergence of the picturesque adjectival qualifier *duck-footed*, employed – starting from the 20th century – in the sense ‘walking with toes turned inwards’. Note that this *duck*-based adjective is semantically related to the primary sense of the lexical category *duck*, that is ‘a swimming bird of the genus *Anas* and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*’, and its rise is clearly extralinguistically related to the observation of the characteristic movement of the bird. Similarly to other previously

discussed *duck*-based formations, the adjective *duck-footed* is clearly linked to the conceptual zone /**APPEARANCE**/, with the attributive element <MANNER OF MOVEMENT> brought to prominence. Moreover, it seems obvious that the adjective *duck-footed* gave grounds for the emergence of the verb phrase *duck foot* used in the sense ‘measure a distance by placing the feet end to end, one after the other’. Correspondingly, in Polish we find the verbal phrase *mieć kaczkowaty chód* ‘to walk in the manner of a duck’, and in French there is a phrase *marcher en canard* ‘to waddle’, both currently employed in the sense ‘to walk with a peculiar waddle’ (see the *DOS* and *SS* dictionaries).

The *CNPDSUE* and *RDMASUE* dictionaries single out yet another secondary sense of the compound *duck butt*, that is ‘a hair-style popular in the early 1950s, in which the hair was tapered and curled on the nape of the neck like the feathers of a duck’s tail’. Similarly to the previously analysed English compounds, the semantics of *duck butt* is evidently conceptually linked to the conceptual sphere /**APPEARANCE**/, however this time the dimension /**HAIRSTYLE**/ seems to be at work. Let us now turn to the phrase *duck tail* also employed in present-day English in two totally diverse senses, namely ‘a hair-style popular in the early 1950s in which a boy’s hair was tapered and curled on the nape of the neck like the feathers of a duck’s tail’ and ‘an unruly South African youth’. It is evident that the former sense may be proved to be linked directly to the conceptual dimension /**HAIRSTYLE**/, whereas the latter one is clearly linked to the dimension /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with the conceptual element <UNRULY> foregrounded, but also one may speak about a link to the dimension /**AGE**/ with the value <YOUNG> brought to conceptual prominence.

The *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *RDMASUE* dictionaries make note of the phrase *duck('s) arse/duck('s) ass* which is qualified as a slang nominal compound used in several senses. First of all, the compound is used in the sense ‘a hairstyle popular among Teddy Boys in the early 1950s in which the hair at the back of the head is shaped like a duck’s tail’, whereas in S.A.E. the compound noun in question serves to express the sense ‘a young hooligan’ or ‘a teddy-boy’. In this respect the senses of the expression *duck('s) arse/duck('s) ass* – correspondingly to the earlier discussed *duck butt* – may be said to be linked to the conceptual dimension /**HAIRSTYLE**/ and the conceptual sphere /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with the negatively charged attribute <UNRULY> brought to the fore, and the dimension /**AGE**/ with the element <YOUNG> clearly foregrounded. All in all, we feel justified in claiming that the semantics of the formation *duck-butt* and *duck('s) arse/duck('s) ass* is linked to the conceptual zone /**APPEARANCE**/ to which the historically primary meaning of the lexical category *duck*, that is ‘a swimming bird of the genus *Anas* and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*’, is clearly linked.

In addition to a number of *duck*-based compounds whose senses are construed due to the involvement of the conceptual dimension /**APPEARANCE**/, we find a collection of vocabulary items whose senses are clearly linked to such conceptual zones as /**BEHAVIOUR**/ or /**PERSONALITY**/. Following the *BDPF*, *OED*, *PDEI* and *TTEM* dictionaries we may single out the compound *lame duck* which surfaced in 18th century English and was employed in the secondary sense ‘a disabled person or thing’ and – more specifically – in Stock Exchange jargon, served as a name for ‘one who cannot meet his financial engagements’ (18th > 19th centuries). Thus, one may conclude that when used in the abovementioned secondary senses, *duck* is linked to the conceptual dimension /**PHYSICAL/MENTAL CONDITION**/ with the negatively loaded conceptual element <DISABLED> brought to the fore, and the conceptual sphere /**FINANCIAL CONDITION**/ with the negatively tinted attribute <DEFAULTING> foregrounded. Furthermore, the

CNPDSUE and *RDMSUE* dictionaries draw our attention to the 20th century expression *duck fucker* employed in the sense ‘a lazy person’. It seems that any attempt at making a final judgement concerning the origin of the phrase poses certain difficulty, however we may risk a statement that the meaning of *duck fucker* has its etymological grounds in one of the transferred senses of *duck*, that is ‘a surfer who lingers in the water, rarely catching a wave’. Moreover, we need to point out that the semantics of the compound is linked to the conceptual sphere /**PERSONALITY**/ with the negatively tinted attributive element <LAZY> clearly highlighted. Added to that, the *CNPDSUE* and *PDEI* dictionaries register the modern compound *duck egg*, used in the sense ‘a fool’. According to the lexicographic sources, the compound noun may have its origins in the cricketing term which derives from *duck* used in the sense ‘no score, nought’ and – moreover – the expression is linked to the conceptual dimension /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with the highly negative attribute <FOOLISH> foregrounded. Let us now turn to the slang registered compound *duck-shover*, quoted in such sources as the *OED*, *RDHS* and *TTEM* dictionaries, which is current mainly in Australia and New Zealand in the sense ‘a cabman who touts for passengers’ (19th > 20th centuries). It is clear from the footnoted contexts that the semantics of the compound is linked to the conceptual domain /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with the negatively charged attributive element <DISHONEST> brought to prominence. Although the origin of *duck-shover* is far from clear, following the *SS* dictionary we may hypothesise that the meaning of the compound in question is linked historically to the primary sense of *duck*, that is ‘a swimming bird of the genus *Anas* and kindred genera of the family *Anatidae*’, as well as to the axiologically negative symbolic value attached to the bird, namely <DECEPTION>, since ducks tend to steal secretly the nests of other ducks.

Additionally, the *CNPDSUE* dictionary gives evidence that the derivative *duck shoving* is employed in the secondary sense ‘the passing of a problem on to another’. Yet another example of a *duck*-based compound whose meaning is clearly linked to the macrocategory **HUMANS** is the formation *duck soup*. The *CNPDSUE*, *OED* and *TTEM* dictionaries state that *duck soup* is a slang expression which originated in the 20th century and has gained currency chiefly in A.E. in the sense ‘a person easy to overcome or cheat’ or ‘something requiring little effort’. Note that a similar sense is expressed by the compound *sitting duck*, employed in the sense ‘someone who is vulnerable to attack from his enemies’ (see the *PDEI* and *TTEM* dictionaries).

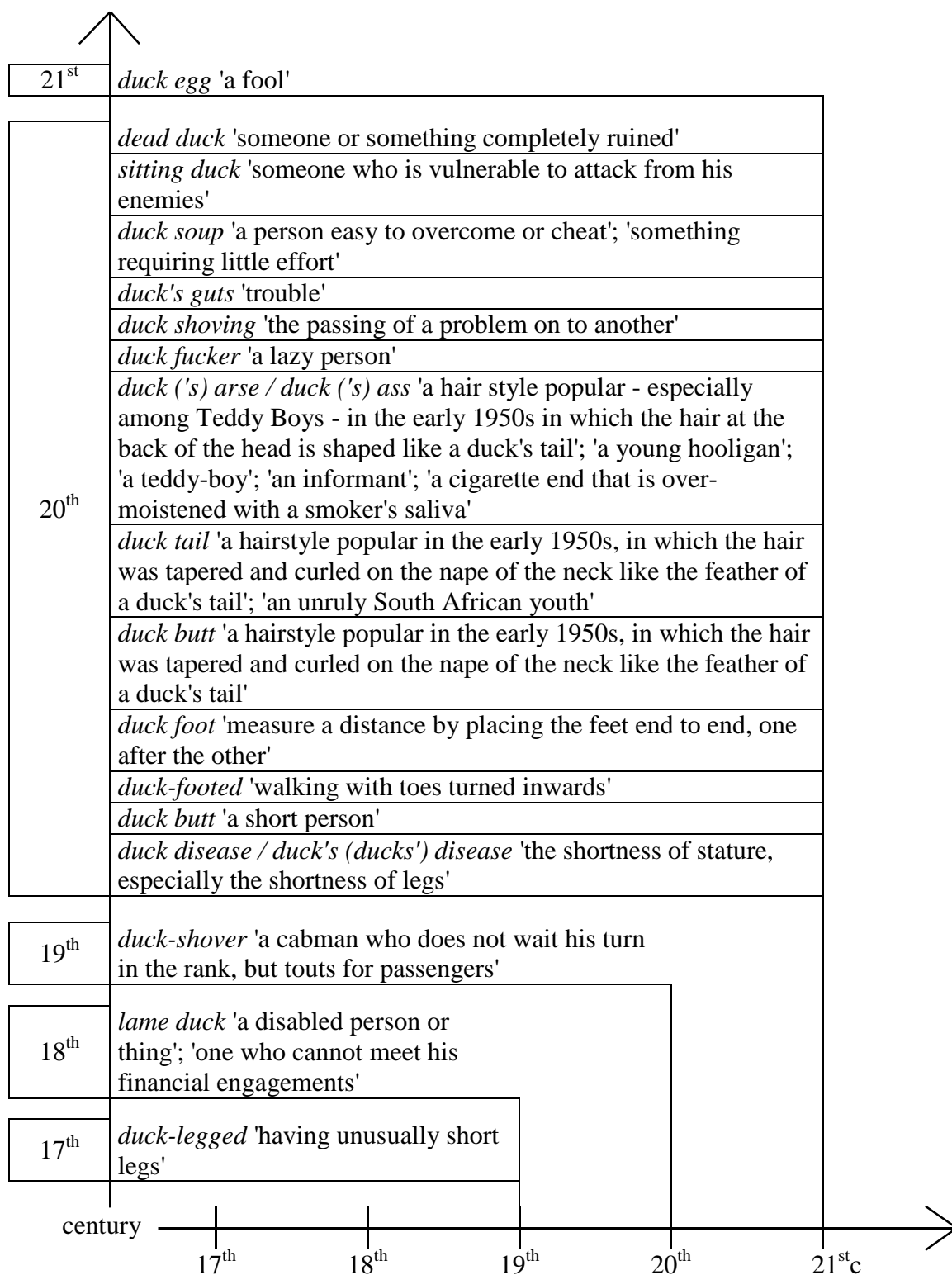


Figure 5 *The historical senses of duck-based compounds and expressions*

4. Semantic evolution of the lexical category *goose*

According to many etymological sources, such as the *CEDEL*, *EDME*, *OED*, *SCEDEL*, *SEDME* and *WO* dictionaries, present-day *goose* derives from O.E. *gós* – a form related to Du. *gans*, Ger. *Gans*, Sw. *gås* and Da. *gaas*, all used in the sense ‘goose’. Note that *goose* has etymological relatives in many Indo-European languages such as L. *anser*, Gr. *χῆν* and Skr. *haṅsá*, employed in the sense ‘swan’, as well as Russ. *gus*, Czech *husa*, Lith. *žąsis*, used in the sense ‘goose’.

Let us begin our analysis of the semantic evolution of *goose* with the historically primary sense of the word, which is employed as ‘a general name for the birds of the family *Anatidae*, usually larger than a duck, and smaller than a swan, including *Anser* and several allied genera’ (see the *OED* dictionary). The etymologically original meaning of *goose* first surfaced in the 11th century and, without any distinctive addition or context, the word is applied to the common tame goose – *Anser domesticus* – which is descended from the wild grey or greylag goose. The historically primary meaning of the word is attested by the following *OED* contexts:

a 1000 Hwilum ic græde swa *gos*.

1535 Quhilk brocht with thame bayth *guiss* [and] gryce, and hen.

1893 The largest living *Goose* is that called the Chinese, Guinea, or Swan-Goose, *Cygnopsis cygnoides*.

In the course of history – as testified by the *OED* dictionary – the word *goose* came to be employed in a number of more concretised senses. For example, in the 13th century *goose* started to be applied in the sense ‘the female bird; the male being the gander, and the young goslings’ (13th > 17th centuries), while in the 16th century – by the mechanism already observed earlier – the word started to be used in the sense ‘the flesh of the bird’ (16th > 18th centuries). Numerous quotations from the *OED* exemplify amply the relevant historical senses of the word:

c 1220 Ȝe feccheð ofte in ðe tun and te gandre and te *gos*.

1692 Why do you go Nodding, and Wagging so like a Fool, as if you were Hipshot? says the *Goose* to her Gosselin.

1533 *Goose*, is hard of digestion.

1786 I was saying to a friend one day, that I did not like *goose*; one smells it so while it is roasting, said I.

The semantic evolution of the word *goose* shows that due to the process of zoosemic extension the lexical category in question started to be historically employed not only in the bird-specific senses, but also in various human-specific ones. Thus, *goose* has clearly undergone certain semantic transfer from the macrocategory **DOMESTICATED BIRDS** to that of **HUMANS**. Following the *OED* dictionary, we find that the allusion to the alleged stupidity of the bird led to the emergence – in the mid-16th century – of the transferred sense ‘a foolish person, a simpleton’ (16th > 19th centuries). Similarly, note that Spanish *ganso* ‘goose’ is currently used in the sense ‘an idiot’, while in Polish *gęś* ‘goose’ appears not

infrequently in the sense ‘a silly girl/woman’. It is evident from the context provided that the semantics of the three lexical categories, that is *goose*, *ganso* and *gęś* is related to the conceptual zone /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with the highly negative attributive elements <FOOLISH>/<SILLY> clearly foregrounded for their semantics. Moreover, such lexicographic sources as the *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries maintain that in the 17th century the lexical category *goose* started to be applied with the sense ‘a tailor’s smoothing-iron’ since the shape of the handle resembled the neck of the bird (17th > 19th centuries). In addition to this, the *CNPDSUE* and *TTEM* dictionaries inform us that in the 18th century the word functioned in the morally pregnant sense ‘a prostitute’, while in the 19th century *goose* started to be used in the secondary sense ‘an act of copulation’. Thus, one may conclude that both secondary meanings of the word are linked directly to the conceptual domain /**SEX LIFE**/.

Note that the majority of secondary sense-threads historically linked to the noun *goose* emerged during the course of the 20th century. First and foremost, the word *goose* started to be employed in the axiologically negative transferred sense ‘a socially inept, out of fashion person’ (see the *CNPDSUE* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries). In this particular case *goose* is clearly related to the conceptual dimension /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with such negatively tinted values as <INEPT> and <OLD-FASHIONED> brought to prominence. Next, in the second half of the 20th century, *goose* started to be applied in the evaluatively neutral female-specific senses ‘a girlfriend’ or ‘a woman’ and – almost simultaneously – the word began to operate in shoplifters’ slang in the secondary sense ‘a shop assistant’ (see the *CNPDSUE* dictionary). Here, compare Polish *gęś* ‘goose’ which is also used with reference to women, nevertheless – as mentioned in the foregoing – in Polish (*głupia*)*gęś* ‘a (silly) goose’ is a moderately disrespectful term denoting ‘a naive and stupid woman’. Similarly, in French we find the phrase *oie blanche* ‘a blank/white goose’, employed in the evaluatively loaded sense ‘a naive young girl’.

As can be seen, while the English secondary meanings of *goose*, ‘a girlfriend’ and ‘a woman’ carry no evaluatively pregnant load, Polish (*głupia*) *gęś* ‘a naive and stupid woman’ and French *oie blanche* ‘a naive young girl’ are both evaluatively loaded with negative attributive values brought to prominence. Added to that, in the game of poker the lexical unit *goose* developed yet another negatively tinted transferred sense, namely ‘an unskilled player who is a likely victim of a skilled professional’ (see the *CNPDSUE*, *RDMSUE* and *VS* dictionaries). Last but not least, the *CNPDSUE* dictionary adds that in the 21st century *goose* started to be used as a slight in the sense ‘a trifle, something of no value’, whereas the diminutive formation *goosie* started to operate in 20th century prison slang in the transferred human-specific sense ‘the passive or female role in male homosexual relations’.

It needs to be added that the word *goose* has developed various secondary senses derived not only from the nominal sense, but also from its verbal and adjectival use. Let us begin, following the *OED* dictionary, with the verb *to goose* used in the 19th century secondary sense ‘to press or iron with a tailor’s *goose*’. It is fairly evident from the context provided that this secondary meaning of the verb may have been motivated by the transferred sense of the noun *goose*, that is ‘a tailor’s smoothing-iron’. Apart from the meaning ‘to press or iron with a tailor’s *goose*’, the verb *to goose* may be proved to have been used in the 19th century in theatrical lingo with the transferred sense ‘to hiss; to express disapproval by hissing’ (see the *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries). The rise of this human-related sense must have been conditioned by the allusion to the hissing noise made by the bird. Moreover, the lexicographic sources that have been consulted, such as the *CNPDSUE*, *DASCE*, *OED*, *RDMSUE*, *RSSD* and *TTEM* dictionaries make note of the slang use of the verb *to goose*,

that is ‘to poke or tickle a person in a sensitive part, especially the genital or anal regions’ (19th > 20th centuries). The *TTEM* dictionary maintains that this slang use of the verb *to goose* has roots in the 18th century secondary meaning of the noun *goose*, that is ‘a prostitute’, however the relation between the two senses is neither certain nor evident.

Moreover, the *OED* dictionary provides evidence of the emergence of numerous secondary senses derived from the verb *to goose* in the course of the 20th century. First of all, let us turn to the passive form *to be goosed* which functions as a slang verbal expression employed in the transferred negatively loaded sense ‘to be finished or ruined’ (see the *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries). Secondly, *to goose* is also used in slang in the transferred sense ‘to spur, or provoke someone’, yet in this sense the verb both originated and is chiefly testified for A.E. usage. Moreover, according to the *DASCE* and *OED* dictionaries, the verb *to goose* has been employed since the 20th century in such secondary senses as ‘to feed short bursts of fuel to an engine or vehicle using the accelerator or throttle’, ‘to employ the accelerator or throttle in order to accelerate a vehicle or rev an engine’, and – more generally – ‘to accelerate a vehicle’.

Finally, the *OED* dictionary draws our attention to the 20th century rise of the transferred senses ‘to increase the quantity, size or amount’ and ‘to enliven or jazz up’, both of which may be said to descend from either the verb *to goose* or its derivative form *to goose up*. Note that similarly in the Polish language the now archaic reflexive verb *gęsić się* ‘to goose’ was used in the secondary senses ‘to increase the quantity, size or amount’ or ‘to gather’. As far as the adjectives derived from the noun *goose* are concerned, the *CNPDSUE*, *DAW*, *RDMSUE* and *TTEM* dictionaries provide us with an account of the semantics of the currently used adjectives *goosed*, employed in the secondary sense ‘drunk’, and *goosey*, used in the transferred sense ‘jumpy, weary or nervous’. The diagrams given below show the historical polysemy of the lexical categories *goose* and *to goose*.

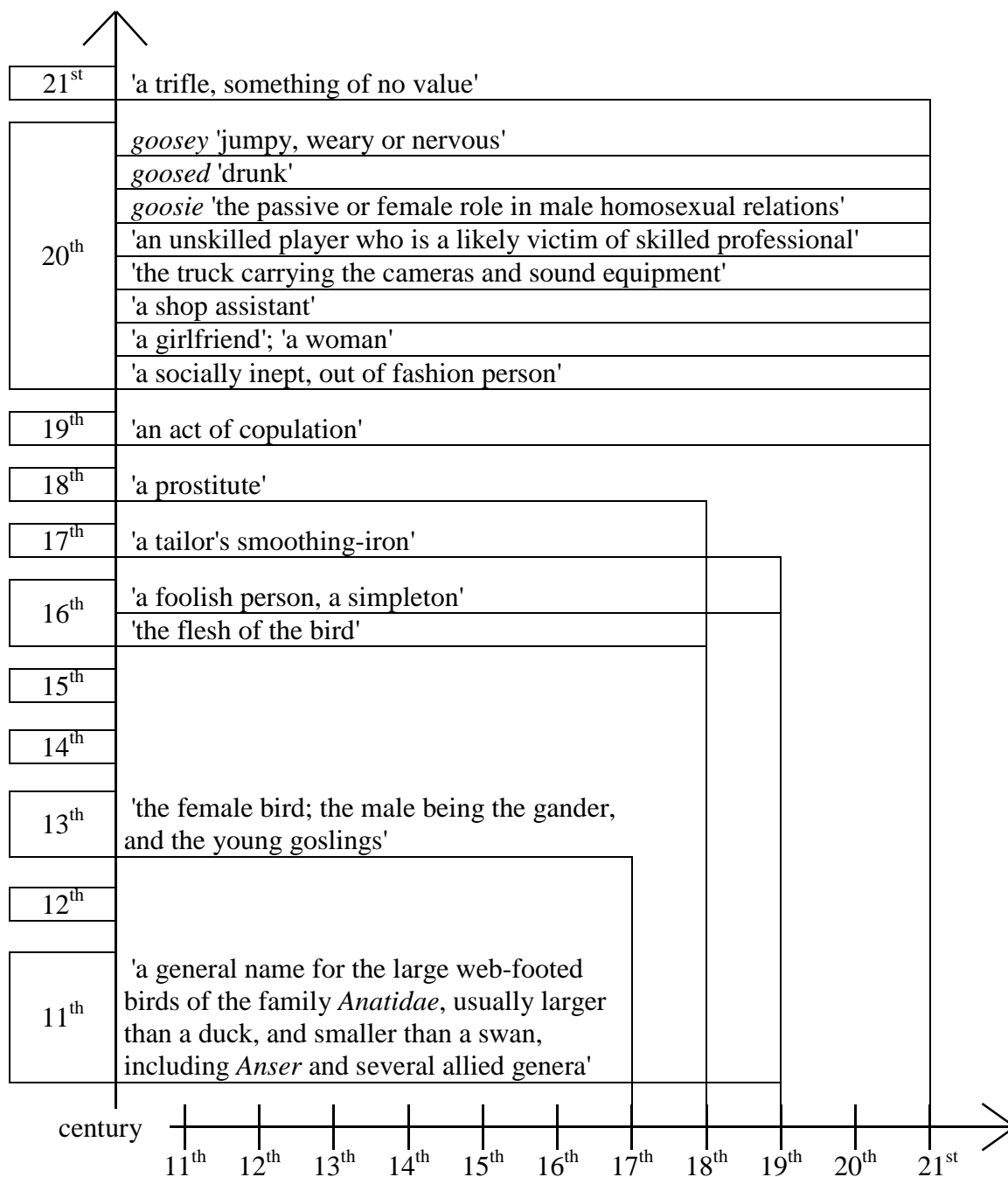


Figure 6 Historical evolution of the semantics of goose

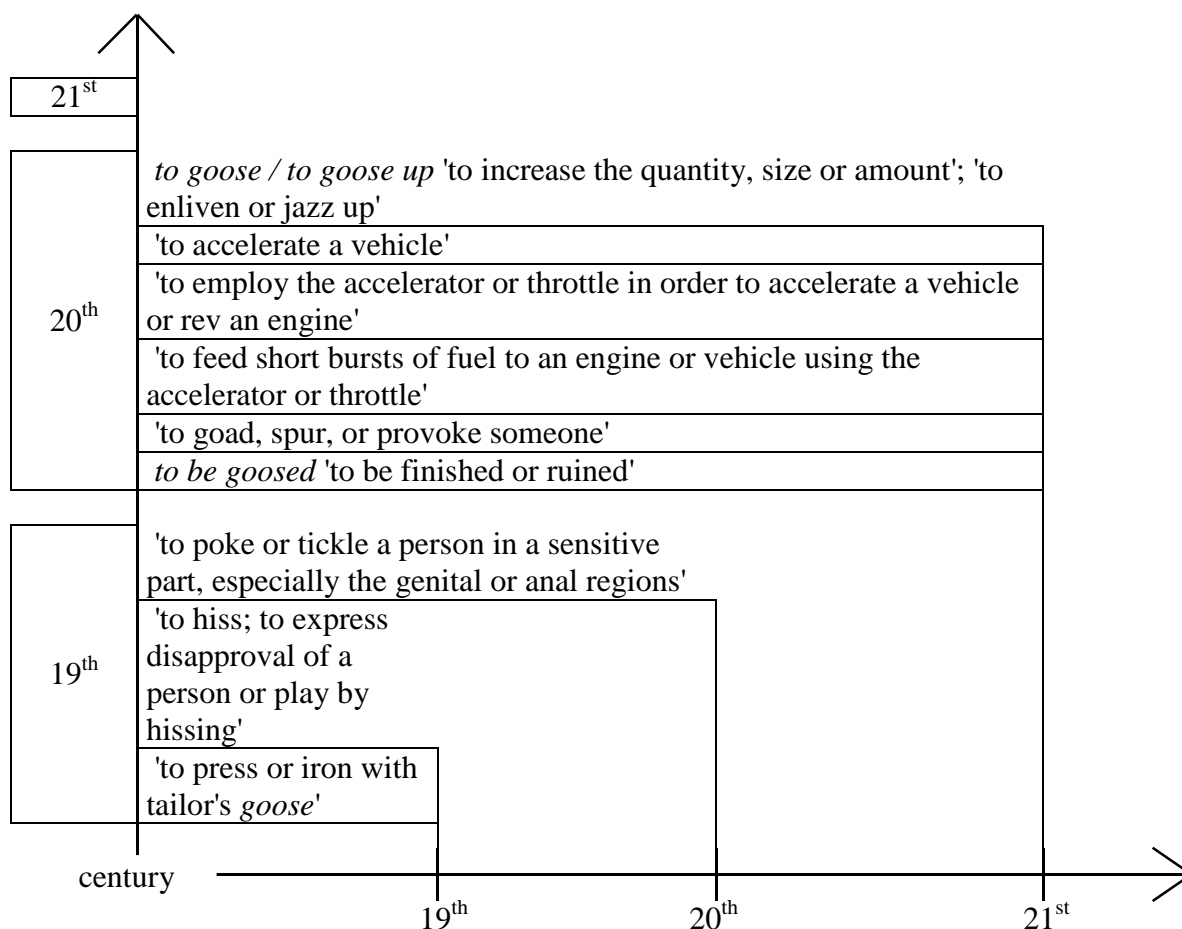


Figure 7 *Historical senses of the verb to goose*

As in the majority of cases the semantic evolution of *goose* has led not only to the emergence of various historical secondary senses, but also to the formation of numerous *goose*-based compounds whose senses are directly relatable either to the diachronically primary meaning of *goose* or to one of its secondary senses frequently used with reference to human beings and encoding various features of physical appearance or traits of character and/or personality. First, let us turn to the semantics of the formation *goose-cap* registered, among others, in the *OED* and *RDHS* dictionaries which today is an archaism used in the sense 'a dolt' or 'a silly person' (16th > 19th centuries). It is fairly evident that the semantics of the compound *goose-cap* evolved from and is directly relatable to one of the transferred senses linked to the polysemic chain of the word *goose*, that is 'a foolish person, a simpleton' which was current in the English language simultaneously with the registered use of *goose-cap*. Note that one is justified in stating that the compound *goose-cap* is linked to the conceptual zone /**BEHAVIOUR**/ with the evaluatively pregnant element <FOOLISH> brought to prominence. Likewise, observe that in both modern German and present-day Polish the syntagmas *eine dumme Gans* and *głupia gęś* are also employed in the sense 'a silly person', especially in the female-specific use.

Apart from the well-evidenced *goose-cap*, such lexicographic sources as the *BDPF*, *CNPDSUE*, *DASCE*, *OED*, *RDMASUE* and *TTEM* dictionaries register the compound *goose-*

egg, which surfaced in the 19th century in A.E. baseball slang employed in the sense ‘a score of zero’ (19th > 20th centuries). It is fairly obvious that the rise of this sense of *goose-egg* must have been extralinguistically conditioned by the shape of the egg laid by the goose. However, it needs to be pointed out that in the 20th century *goose-egg* started to be used in the transferred sense ‘a swollen bump’. Similarly to the sense ‘a score of zero’, the rise of the sense ‘a swollen bump’ must have been extralinguistically conditioned by the shape of the egg of the goose, and – therefore – we feel justified in claiming that the construal of both senses has grounds in the historically primary meaning of *goose*, that is ‘the large web-footed bird of the family *Anatidae*’. Moreover, in the 19th century such *goose*-based formations as *goose flesh/skin/pimples* were coined, all used in the secondary sense ‘a rough condition of the skin resulting from cold or fear’ (see the *BDPF*, *OED*, *PDEI* and *TTEM* dictionaries). Similarly, in Polish the formation *gęsia skórka* ‘goose skin’ is used in the same sense.

Furthermore, mention should be made of two other *goose*-based nominal compounds which appeared in the English language in the 19th century, namely *goose-persuader* and *goose-shearer* (see the *RDHS* dictionary). As far as the semantics of *goose-persuader* is concerned, this compound is currently employed in the sense ‘a tailor’, thus being linked to one of the secondary historical meanings of *goose*, that is ‘a tailor’s smoothing-iron’. As to the formation *goose-shearer*, the compound means ‘a beggar’ and it is difficult, if not impossible, to judge whether the primary meaning of *goose* or any other of the historical secondary meanings provided the basis for this coinage. Yet, we may conclude that the figurative formation *goose-persuader* is linked to the conceptual sphere **/PROFESSIONS/**, whereas the semantics of the phrase *goose-shearer* seems to involve a direct link to the conceptual dimension **/SOCIAL STATUS/**.

Let us now turn to other *goose*-based formations which emerged during the course of the 20th century, namely the phrase *goose and duck* which is currently employed in the sense ‘to have sex’ (see the *CNPDSUE* and *RDHS* dictionaries). It seems that the origin of the sense of *goose and duck* lies in the 19th century secondary sense of *goose* itself, that is ‘an act of copulation’ and – therefore – historically both *goose* and *goose and duck* may be said to be conceptually linked to the dimension **/SEX LIFE/**. It is worth mentioning at this point – following the data given in the *RDHS* dictionary – the compound *goose-grease* which has been used in the secondary sense ‘a woman’s vaginal emission’ since the 19th century. In the 20th century *goose-grease* underwent the process of generalisation and started to be employed in the senses ‘a lubricant’ and ‘KY jelly’ (see the *CNPDSUE*, *RDHS* and *RDMSUE* dictionaries). Independently of the scope of the secondary meanings linked to the compound *goose-grease* we may postulate that the senses mentioned above are ultimately linked to the primary meaning of the word *goose*, that is ‘the large web-footed bird of the family *Anatidae*’, and – more specifically – to the nature of the sticky grease of the goose used, for example, in culinary art.

Added to the language data analysed above, the *NDFRRS*, *RDMSUE*, and *TTEM* dictionaries register the 20th century compound *goose-drowner/goose-drownder* used in the sense ‘a heavy rain’ the semantics of which is linked to the conceptual domain **/WEATHER CONDITIONS/** with the value <RAINY> foregrounded. The *CNPDSUE* dictionary registers the compound *goose’s neck* which serves as a synonym of *a cheque*. It seems that the rise of the sense may have been conditioned by the shape of the neck of the goose.

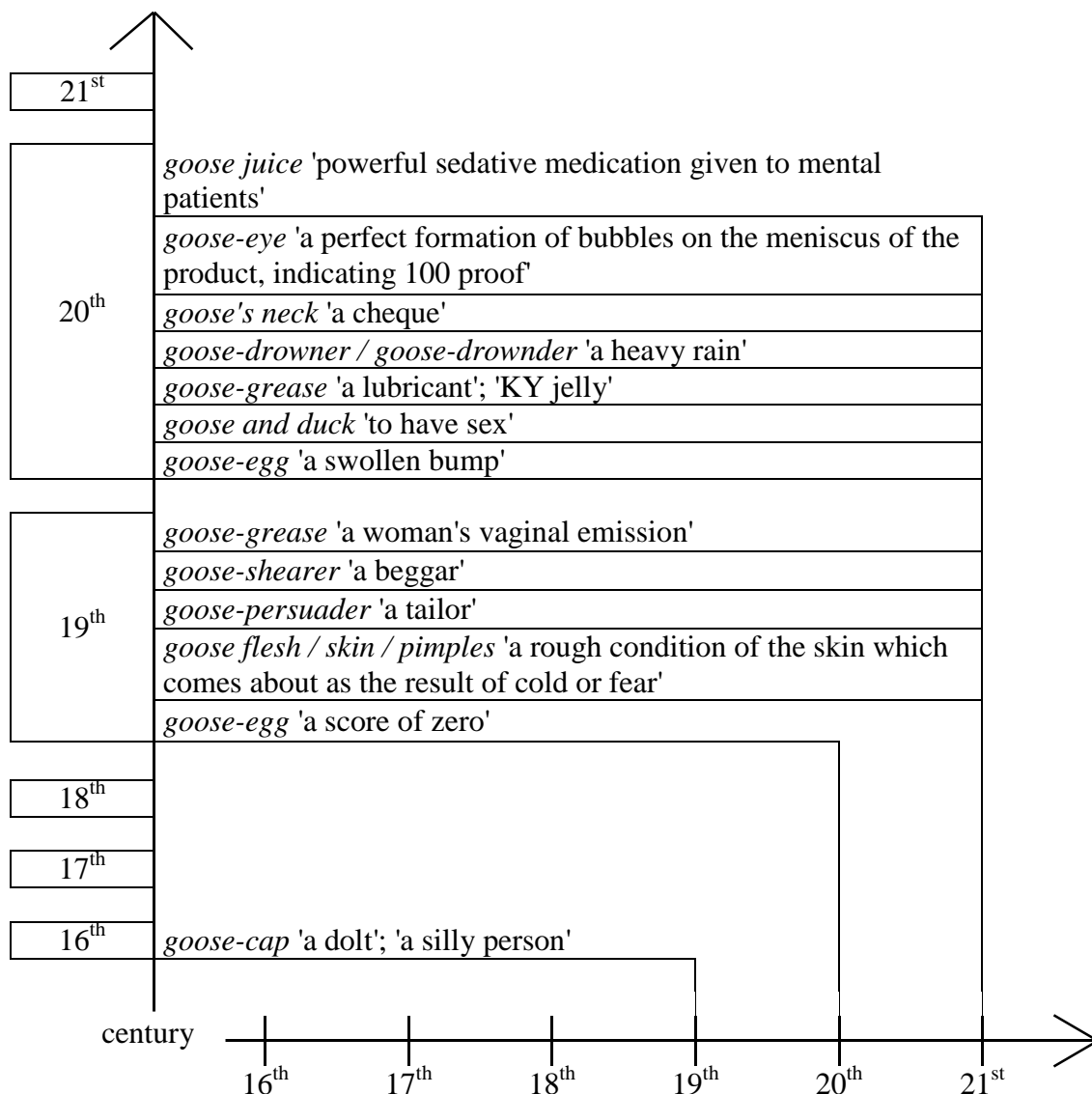


Figure 8 *The semantics of historical goose-based compounds*

5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to trace the development of polysemic strings of lexical categories related to the category **FEMALE DOMESTICATED BIRDS**. One may hope that with the linguistic mechanisms discussed, humans may approach and – at times – enter the mystic atmosphere that birds are part of, hence making the relationship between people and birds closer – at least from the point of view of humankind.⁴

Notes

¹ For a detailed analysis of the etymology, semantic evolution, phraseological productivity and symbolic associations of O.E., ME. and Mod. Eng. bird words encapsulated in the categories **DOMESTICATED BIRDS** and **SEMI- DOMESTICATED BIRDS** see Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski (2012; in print).

² It must be added at this point that in many cases such as, for example, *hen, cock, chicken, duck, goose, gander, swan, dove, pigeon, drake, gosling, ostrich, peacock, pheasant, turkey* and *canary* the historically primary senses have survived to the present day; however, the *OED* dictionary documentation rarely exceeds beyond the turn of the 20th century. However, such lexicographic works as *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* confirm that these lexical items continue to be employed in their historical senses today. The reader should be aware of this information in order to avoid being misled into erroneous conclusions while following the individual analysis of the lexical items alluded to here.

³ For quotations testifying as to the secondary meanings developed in the course of time from the lexical items used to name birds, as well as additional lexicographic data, see see Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski (2012; in print).

⁴ The authors would like to thank Mr Ian Upchurch for his valuable comments and suggestions which have contributed greatly to the style of the text.

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Małgorzata Górecka-Smolińska
The State School of Higher Education in Sandomierz
Ul. Schinżla 13a
27-600 Sandomierz, Poland
mgsmolinska@poczta.onet.pl

Kleparski Grzegorz Andrzej
University of Rzeszów, Institute Of English Studies
Al. Rejtana 16B
35-959 Rzeszów, Poland
gak@univ.rzeszow.pl

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