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## THE OLD NORSE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LEXIS – A STUDY BASED UPON PROTO-GERMANIC

The following paper constitutes an investigation of Old Norse contributions to the development of the English language from a lexical-semantic perspective based upon the Proto-Germanic language. Such an approach is intended to offer a much deeper insight into the influence exerted by the speech of Vikings upon English, as well as to prove that the modifications of the English lexis resulting from the Anglo-Scandinavian contact represent an unusual and extremely rare language phenomenon, and at the same time to reveal surprisingly intriguing histories hidden behind many inconspicuous ordinary lexemes. Moreover, the investigation of Proto-Germanic forms ancestral to particular Scandinavian lexical items and their Anglo-Saxon equivalents may constitute an interesting, though obviously limited, account of the origin of vocabulary used by these two groups of Germanic peoples. Foremost, however, the Common Germanic parent language is hoped to serve as an important background for the analysis, due to its role in enabling all the unique interactions between the Old Norse tongue of the Viking raiders and the Old English speech of the Anglo-Saxons.

### 1. Introduction

The Viking invasions of England, beginning with the infamous plundering of the Lindisfarne monastery in 793, comprised three characteristic stages of their activity on the Anglo-Saxon territory. Being initially engaged only in a series of swift attacks aimed at pillaging churches and monasteries on the coastal areas of England, the Norse invaders turned towards harassing the Anglo-Saxons with well-organized armies, extraction of tribute known as Danegeld, and capturing vast areas of their land, thus leading to the formation of the so-called Danelaw. Eventually, the whole of England fell under the rule of one man – Canut the Great – the one credited with the formation of a truly powerful Anglo-Scandi-

navian empire. Over the course of three centuries, the warlike Vikings turned into peaceful settlers engaged in trade, farming, and hence slowly merged with the local populations. This, in turn, created conditions favouring the interaction between Old Norse and Old English, facilitated by the racial and linguistic kinship between the Norsmen and the Englishmen<sup>1</sup>.

The results of the Anglo-Scandinavian language contact have already been proved to carry traits of a unique amalgamation, and the extent to which the Viking tongue affected English has been carefully examined. The Norse linguistic contributions are particularly extensive in the area of vocabulary: beginning with a large group of loans associated with war and seafaring, as well as the one related to the legal system and at the same time representing terminology previously unknown to Anglo-Saxons; through a group comprising borrowings notable for their everyday character; finally, a tiny yet remarkable group containing form words that made their way into the speech of Englishmen, the words hardly ever transferred from one language to another. Additionally, the Norse invaders managed to leave the trace of their tongue on the names of places found throughout England, as well as on family and personal names. What is more, assumptions have been made as to the degree to which the requirements of communication that had arisen in the Anglo-Scandinavian society accelerated the simplification of Old English grammar, as well as about the possible influence the Norse language stamped upon Old English syntax.<sup>2</sup>

Though credited with affecting the English language in different spheres, Old Norse may be considered to have stamped the most astounding impact upon its core vocabulary. The majority of Scandinavian loans until this day occupies a central position in the English lexis, which points to their non-need nature in the face of easily available Anglo-Saxon equivalents, and what is most crucial, to the equal prestige shared by the two tongues in Viking Age England. It only proves how phenomenal the interaction between them must have been, how intimate and subtle interactions between English and Norse words must have occurred, so as to enable such a remarkable outcome. The distinctive character of Scandinavian borrowings clearly manifests itself when compared to the immense amount of French vocabulary that made its way into the English language. Nonetheless, despite having such a tremendous impact upon the tongue of Anglo-Saxons, French had never managed to get access into the speech of common people – the speech successfully affected by Old Norse. As a result “[a]n Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to the daily *fare*” (Jespersen 1919: 79).

<sup>1</sup> Based upon the material in: Batey et al. (1998: 122-142, 207-212); Roesdahl (2001: 202-222); Wooding (2001: 18-19, 53-56, 138-141); Baugh (1971: 107-112).

<sup>2</sup> Based upon the material in: Baugh (1971: 107-124); Bradley (1904: 83-84); Hughes (2000: 91-100); Jespersen (1919: 58-82); Kastovsky (2003: 320-336); Myers (1966: 107-112); Price (1985: 194-199); Townend (2002: 201-211).

The unmistakably unique trace the Vikings left in the English core lexicon would not have been possible without them sharing their Germanic forefathers with the Anglo-Saxons, and what is most important, their ancestral tongue – Proto-Germanic – which lies at the basis of such an extraordinary Anglo-Scandinavian language fusion. Therefore, this paper approaches the question of Norse modifications and loan words in the English language in a much broader manner, and instead of merely enumerating those, reaches for the source of all the unusual interactions between the Scandinavian and English words – Common Germanic, at the same time presenting developmental similarities as well as differences between Old Norse and Old English in terms of their vocabularies and phonology, which in turn is hoped to highlight the uniqueness of the North Germanic contributions to the English word stock.

## 2. Method

The set of vocabulary chosen for the study comprises those lexical items influenced by or borrowed from Old Norse, which until this day continue their existence in the English language and had their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Therefore, those vocabulary items which passed out of use or represent terminology absent in Old English prior to the Viking invasions are not dealt with. However, due to the multifold nature of Scandinavian contributions to the English lexicon, three separate categories are presented: one devoted to those Norse vocabulary items which managed to supplant their Old English unrelated counterparts – the ones exhibiting different Proto-Germanic roots (e.g. ON *vindauga* ‘window’ vs. OE *ēagþyrel*); the second one comprising those Scandinavian loans and their discarded Anglo-Saxon equivalents which represent pairs of variants developed from the same Proto-Germanic root and hence are marked solely by phonological differences (e.g. ON *veikr* ‘weak’ vs. OE *wāc*); finally, the third one dealing with those cases in which both the Old Norse and Old English developments of the same Proto-Germanic form survive in Modern English, often having undergone the process of semantic divergence (e.g. *skirt* and *shirt*, as developed from ON *skyrta* and OE *scýrte* respectively).

In each of the three categories, an attempt is made to provide hypothetical Proto-Germanic forms that constitute the source of the Old Norse and Old English vocabulary under analysis, and the development of which is hence traced back. Moreover, the discussion concerning the lexical items chosen for the study is in numerous cases extended by: presenting additional developments or cognates of the Proto-Germanic forms they originate from; providing their Middle English representations – bearing in mind the importance of that period as the one in which certain Anglo-Scandinavian lexical interactions were particularly operative; discussing their modern developments – especially with the aim of exhibiting the present-day representations of those Anglo-Saxon lexical items which despite having been replaced by the Norse borrowings, managed

to persist in the English language, though often with a changed or specialized meaning. Such a broad lexical-semantic presentation is intended to exhibit the manifold and often surprising pathways by which particular forms developed, as well as to point to the lexical relations within the Germanic language group. However, in order to provide at least a hint of what its Norse and Anglo-Saxon members were like and to demonstrate the degree of similarity between them – which beyond any doubt facilitated the communication of the two Germanic peoples and enabled the occurrence of unparalleled interactions between their languages – the following situation may be presented:

“[I]f the Anglo-Saxon from the South wants to say (in good Old English) ‘I’ll sell you the horse that pulls my cart,’ he says: ‘**Ic selle the that hors the draegeth minne waegn.**’ Now the old Norseman – if he had to say this – would say: ‘**Ek mun selja ther hrossit er dregr vagn mine.**’ So, roughly speaking, they understand each other. One says ‘waegn’ and the other says ‘vagn’. One says ‘hors’ and ‘draegeth’; the other says ‘hros’ and ‘dregr’, but broadly they are communicating” (McCrum et al. 1992: 69).

### 3. The analysis

Due to the fact that the Modern English vocabulary descending from the Old Norse influence constitutes quite an abundant group, as well as in favour of a detailed analysis offered to each vocabulary item, only a few examples have been chosen to illustrate each of the three presented categories. They, however, are hoped to provide a comprehensive account of the Anglo-Scandinavian lexical-semantic interactions and the results they yielded.

#### 3.1. The replacement of the Old English lexemes with the unrelated Old Norse loans

On why one makes use of: *knife* in place of *sax*; *cut* over *shear* or *\*charve*; *window* instead of *\*eytril*; *leg* as a replacement of *shank*; *skull* as a substitute of *headbowl*; *happy* rather than *silly* or *blithe*; *ill* alongside with *evil* and *sick*; finally, *husband* and not *\*wer*.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis shall begin with an object of everyday use, a cutting tool known as *knife*. It derives its name from ON *knifr* ‘knife’ or more precisely

<sup>3</sup> The analysis conducted in this subchapter is based upon the following sources: Baugh (1971: 119); Baugh and Cable (2002: 101); Berndt (1982: 65-64, 98); Bright (1912: 270); Brook (1965: 172); Fabiszak (2001: 46-47); Griffiths (2010: 77); Jespersen (1919: 73); Sikorska and Fabiszak (1998: 96); Strang (1970: 378); Wright (1910: 308); *ASD*; *CDME*; *CEDEL*; *ChEDEL*; *CODEE*; *DWO*; *EDME*; *IED*; *MSIP-PI*; *OALDCE*; *SF-P*; *SMNP-PN*; *TOE*; *WIS*; (IS 1); (IS 2); (IS 3); (IS 4); (IS 5); (IS 6); (IS 7); (IS 8); (IS 9); (IS 10); (IS 11); (IS 12); (IS 13).

‘a knife or dirk, worn fastened to the belt’, (nowadays Ice. *hnífur*, Nor. *kniv*), which developed from PGmc. *\*knībaz* ‘knife, pinchers’ – itself based upon the PGmc. root *\*knīp-* meaning ‘to nip, pinch’, and therefore carrying the literal sense of ‘an instrument for nipping’. The possible reason lying behind the adoption of this particular Norse lexeme according to Jespersen (1919: 73) might have been that “the Scandinavian *knives* were better than or at any rate different from those of other nations, for the word was introduced into French (*canif*) as well as into English”. At the same time, the name applied to ‘knife’ and used extensively by the Anglo-Saxons was *seax*, precisely referring to ‘a single-edged knife’ (ON *sax* ‘a kind of short sword with one sharp edge’), deriving from PGmc. *\*sahsan* ‘knife, dagger’ which is assumed to share its source of origin (PGmc. *\*seh-* ‘to cut’) with another cutting instrument, namely *saw* (OE *sagu*, PGmc. *sagō*). However, even though the Viking *knife* superseded its English native counterpart as denoting ‘a cutting tool’ or ‘weapon’, the word continues its existence as a name – *Saxon* (OE pl. *Seaxan*) and hence in *Anglo-Saxons* (OE *Angli Saxones* – distinguished from *Ealdesaxe* ‘Old Saxons’ who remained on the continent), *Essex* (OE *Eāst-Seaxan*), *Sussex* (OE *Sūþ-Seaxan*), *Wessex* (OE *West-Seaxan*), as well as *Saxony* (Ger. *Sachsen*). Moreover, *Saxons*, as representing the name of a group of Germanic peoples (considered to have been a fighting confederacy), may be seen as indicative of the weapon they favoured, whereas the utilitarian character of *seax* manifests itself in plenty of Old English compounds: *mete-seax* ‘knife for cutting food’, *nægel-seax* ‘knife for cutting nails’, *hype-seax* ‘a dagger hanging at the hip’, *ceorf-seax* ‘a surgeon’s knife’, and many more. Nevertheless, however important *seax* for the Anglo-Saxons was, the Viking *knife* appears to have made such an impression on them that it soon made its way into their language, and hence may be found in late OE as *cnīf* which in turn developed into ME *knīf* designating ‘knife’, ‘dagger or sheath knife carried or worn on the person’, ‘a knife as a weapon distinguished from sword’, or ‘an instrument for cutting or scraping made of material other than metal’. In the lexicon of Middle English, the Scandinavian *knife* was still accompanied by the native *seax* – ME *sax*, *sexe* – meaning ‘knife’ or ‘dagger’, yet at that time already following the path to oblivion. In such a way, the lexeme denoting this once crucial, eponymous incising tool and weapon became obsolete, with its sole traces preserved within the above discussed proper nouns.

What is more, not only does the name for the basic cutting instrument, the *knife* undoubtedly is, derive from Old Norse, but also the verb *cut* itself is supposed to do so, yet in this case opinions are divided. It may represent the continuation of the hypothetical Scandinavian *\*kut-* preserved in ON *kuti* ‘a little blunt knife’, Ice. *kuti* ‘a small knife’, *kuta* ‘to cut with a knife’, Norwegian *kutte* ‘to cut with a little knife’, *kyttel* ‘a knife for barking trees’, or Swe. dial. *kytti* ‘knife’, *kuta* ‘to cut small with a knife’ (also a Germanic borrowing in Finnish

– *kutteri* ‘cutting instrument’)<sup>4</sup>. However, it should be noted that the existence of OE *\*cyttan* is also postulated and thought to be continued by ME *cutten* (also *cotten*, *kytten*, *ketten*) ‘to cut with a sharp implement, make an incision’. Yet, it might be then seen as restored or reinforced by its Norse cognate, with both of them originating from PGmc. *\*kutjanan*, *\*kuttanan*. What is certain, on the other hand, is the increasing role of *cut* as it managed to supersede three Old English verbs carrying that particular sense, namely *snīpan* ‘to cut, make an incision in anything’, *ċeorfan* ‘to cut, cut down, hew, rend, tear’ but also ‘to carve, cut out, engrave’, and *sċieran* ‘to cut, shear’. The first of these developed from PGmc. *\*snīthanan* ‘to cut’ simultaneously constituting the source of ON *sníða* (Ger. *schneiden* ‘to cut’, as well as Goth. *sneiþan* ‘to reap’). *Sċieran* represents the development of PGmc. *\*skeranan* ‘to cut, shear’, also preserved in ON *skera* ‘to shear, pierce, cut open’ (Ger. *scheren* ‘to shear’). Whereas *ċeorfan* is seen as ultimately descending from PGmc. *\*kerbanan* ‘to scratch’ which yielded WGmc. *\*kerfan* (Ofris. *kerva*, Du. *kerven*, Ger. *kerben* ‘to cut, notch’) and ON *kyrfa* (Ice. *kyrfa* ‘to carve’, Swe. *karfva* ‘to notch’), at the same time being akin to Greek *graphein* ‘to write’ – the connection between the Greek and Germanic denotations lies in the ancient manner of writing which consisted in carving or cutting. In the course of time, the adoption of the Scandinavian verb and its subsequent extensive usage resulted in its acquiring the denotations carried by the above Anglo-Saxon verbs, thereby becoming one of the most basic verbs of the English lexicon. This in turn contributed to the persistence of both *sċieran* and *ċeorfan* with their meanings specialized, though back in the Middle English period, despite the presence of *cutten*, they could be applied in quite a many situations: the former, appearing as ME *shēren*, could mean: ‘to cut or penetrate with a weapon or sharp instrument, to cut apart with a weapon, sharp tool’, ‘to cut open the breast of an animal’, ‘to cut a tree into pieces’, but also ‘to clip or trim with shears, to clip away the fleece from a sheep’ – and that particular denotation brings one to ModE. *shear*; whereas the latter, in the form of ME *kerven* – ‘to cut or pierce, make a cut or incision’, ‘to cut into parts or pieces’, ‘to perform a surgical operation upon’, ‘slice, chop, dice, or mince’, as well as ‘to carve or cut up meat’ or ‘to fashion or shape by cutting it out of a material’ – with the last two meanings ultimately surviving in ModE. *carve*. However, the initial sound of that particular verb may be ascribed to Scandinavian influence – it should have produced ModE. *\*charve* as a result of palatalisation and subsequent assibilation of the velar consonant *k* (the most distinctive innovation in the Old English consonant system), which at the same time remained unchanged in Old Norse<sup>5</sup>. The initial [k] established itself c. 1200, it is noteworthy, however, that there also existed the phonologically legitimate ME *cherven* which

<sup>4</sup> Finnish constitutes a useful source of information on early Germanic due to its borrowings from it, see: Bammesberger (2003: 28); Bloomfield and Newmark (1965: 98-99).

<sup>5</sup> All the information on the phonological developments of Old Norse and Old English come from: Townend (2002: 33-41); Voyles (1992: 103-133); Hogg (2003: 100-119).



compounds such as: *handlegg* or *armlegg* ‘arm’, *lærlegg* or *fótlegg* ‘leg’. The source of *legg* might be traced back to hypothetical early Germanic *\*lagjaz* ‘leg’, itself ultimately deriving from the sense ‘to lay’ – PGmc. *\*lagjanan* (ON *leggja*, OE *lecgan*). The Anglo-Saxon word supplanted by the above discussed borrowing was *sceanca* ‘leg, bone of a leg’, which similarly to its Norse equivalent formed various compounds, some of them being: *earmsceanca* ‘arm bone’, *fōtsceanca* ‘the leg from the knee downwards’, or *þeōhsceanca* ‘bone of leg’ or ‘the upper part of the leg’. It developed from PGmc. *\*skankô* the literal meaning of which could have been ‘that which bends’ (also the source of Ger. *Schenkel* ‘thigh, arm’, Du. *Schenkel* ‘thigh bone, leg’, WFr. *skonk* ‘leg’), akin to ON *skakkr* meaning ‘skew, wry, distorted’ with both of them leading to the root *\*skank-* deriving from the sense ‘to hobble’, ‘lame, slanted’. In the Middle English period the native word – in the forms *shanke* or *shanck* – was still in use as denoting ‘the leg of human or animal’ as well as ‘the part of the leg of a human or an animal below the knee’, whereas the Scandinavian ME *leg* or *legge* pertained to ‘the human leg, including the thigh, lower leg, and foot’ and additionally to ‘that part of the human leg extending from the knee to the ankle’. Eventually, however, it was its primary designation that made its way into Modern English, with the Anglo-Saxon *shank* remaining the leg’s lower part.

However, as far as anatomy is concerned, there is one more word borrowed from the Norsemen which successfully made its way into the English language. Its source lies in ON *skalli* which produced ModE. *skull*, though the Vikings used it not only in relation to ‘cranium’ but mainly to ‘a bald head’ (whence Nor. *skallet* ‘bald’, *hodeskalle* ‘skull’). At the same time, the Anglo-Saxons resorted to expressions such as: *hēafodbolla* ‘head-bowl’, *hēafodbān* ‘head-bone’ or *heāfodpanne* ‘head-pan’ (also referring to ‘forehead’). Nevertheless, despite being unrelated, both ON *skalli* and OE *hēafodbolla* are based on the notion of a bowl-like shape of the cranium, as *skalli* derives from the Norse word denoting ‘bowl’ – *skál*, additionally used in the sense of ‘a drinking cup’, which again points to its relation to *skull*, for according to an alleged custom human skulls were transformed into drinking goblets, often serving as a trophy, or ritual vessels – a custom practised by some of the Germanic tribes (as well as Euroasian nomads) but said to be a myth as far as the Vikings are concerned<sup>6</sup>. The Scandinavian *skull* entered the English language in the 13<sup>th</sup> century – at that time appearing in forms such as *scul* or *skulle* – and for a period coexisted with the Middle English *hēdbon* and *hēdpanne*, but due to its being the predominant name applied to the cranium, it soon ousted the native counterparts. It is noteworthy, however, that not only did the Anglo-Saxons adopt *skalli* but *skál* itself as well, though its meaning shifted from initial ‘drinking-bowl’ to ‘weighing instrument’ and as such survives in Modern English in the plural form *scales*,

<sup>6</sup> The “skull cup” motif is present in one of the Germanic legends in which the eponymous protagonist – Wayland the Smith, takes revenge on King Nidud for having been imprisoned by him, and after murdering his sons, fashions goblets from their skulls and jewels from their eyes.

thereby corresponding to the Norse *skálar* ‘scales’. The Old English noun bearing relation to Scandinavian *skál* is represented by *scealu* denoting ‘shell, husk, drinking-cup, weighing scale’ and hence to a certain degree synonymous with its Norse cognate by which it appears to have been replaced. The source of the two forms may be traced back to PGmc. *\*skêló*, derived from the root *\*skel-* meaning ‘to split, divide’, and at the same time constituting the source of ModE. *shell* (OE *scell*) based on the notion of ‘covering which splits off’.

At this point, a shift will be made from the physical towards the spiritual, and focus will be laid upon the most popular English adjective describing the state of being contented, which undoubtedly is *happy*. Even though it does not represent a direct borrowing from Old Norse in the form it is found nowadays, the source from which it developed – *happ* – was brought to England by the Norse invaders. For them, that particular word carried the sense of ‘fortune, good luck’ (Nor. *hâp*, Swe. *hopp* ‘hope’, Ice. *heppinn* ‘fortunate, lucky’) and was a common element of various compounds among which one finds: *happa-drjúgr* ‘lucky’, *happa-mikill* ‘having great luck’, *happa-verk* ‘a happy deed’, *happ-audigr* ‘wealthy’, *happ-fróðr* ‘wise in season’, and many more. As the Scandinavian “fortune” made its way into the English language in the form of *happy*, it initially referred to events as being ‘favoured by fortune, lucky, prosperous’ (ME *happī*), and it was not until the late 14<sup>th</sup> century that it was first recorded as referring to ‘very glad’. With such a denotation it eventually managed to oust a remarkably abundant group of Old English adjectives, among which there were: *gesælig* (also *sælig*, *gesæliglic*), *ēadig* (as well as *ēadilic*, *ēadiglic*) and *bliþe*. The first of those, particularly referring to ‘fortunate, prosperous, blessed’, is assumed to have developed from PGmc. *sêligaz* ‘good, happy’ (whence ON *séll* ‘happy’ or Goth. *sels* ‘good, kindhearted’). However, while *gesælig* is apparent to have been based upon the notion of being ‘spiritually favoured’, *ēadig* was associated with prosperity and wealth, as based on OE *ēad* ‘possession, riches, happiness’, whereas *bliþe* ‘joyful, glad, merry, cheerful’ is notable for its predominant connection with earthly experiences, and derives from PGmc. *\*blīþiz* ‘cheerful, mild, kind, friendly’ (whence ON *bliðr* ‘mild, gentle’) based upon the early Germanic root *\*bli-* ‘to shine’. The Middle English period initiated a considerable shift in meaning of *gesælig* – at that time evolved into *sēlī* – from ‘blessed, lucky, happy’ through ‘innocent, harmless’, ‘weakless, defenseless’, ‘gullible, ignorant’ eventually ‘foolish’ – thus resulting in ModE. *silly*. Furthermore, *bliþe* – with its Middle English stage as *blīthe* denoting ‘joyful, merry, glad’ as well as ‘mild, gentle’ – shifted to ‘lighthearted, unconcerned’, thereby leading to the emergence of ModE. *blithe*. Whereas *ēad*, still present in Middle English as *ēdī* ‘rich, wealthy’ or ‘blessed by God, favoured with Divine blessing’ (also in expressions: *the edi* ‘the Blessed One, God’ and *the edi ladi* ‘the Blessed Virgin’), eventually became obsolete. It managed, however, to leave its trace in a few Anglo-Saxon names – some of them still common in modern times: *Ēadgār* ‘happy spear’, *Ēadmund* ‘happy protection’, *Ēadred* ‘happy counsel’, or *Ēadward* ‘happy guardian’.

Another adjective of the very basic lexicon, which owes its presence in English to the Norse invaders, though in this case bearing relation to misfortune, is *ill*. It evolved from ON *illr* denoting ‘ill, evil, bad’ in a bodily and moral sense (Ice. *illur* ‘bad’, Nor. *ille* ‘bad, wrong’) – a word notable for surprisingly extensive use, found in many compounds: *ill-fúss* ‘ill-willed’, *ill-gjarnligr* ‘ill-natured, spiteful’, *ill-orðr* ‘ill-worded, abusive’, *ill-skeptr* ‘ill-shapen, ill-natured’, *ill-virki* ‘an ill-doer, thief, robber’, *ill-præli* ‘wretched thrall’, *ill-felli* ‘mishap’, *ill-gresi* ‘evil-grass, tares’, *ill-ráðigr* ‘giving wicked counsel’, and many more. The Norsemen must have resorted to this particular word very often, which might be seen as a possible reason for borrowing it by the Anglo-Saxons. *Illr* is assumed to have originated from PGmc. *\*elhilaz* carrying the sense ‘bad, miserable’ and ultimately deriving from the signification ‘ill, hungry’ (OHG *ilki* ‘hungry’). Once adopted into English (ME *ille*) – with its initial sense of ‘morally evil’ (c. 1200), which later extended to ‘wicked, sinful, immoral’, ‘harmful, injurious’, ‘sad, sorrowful’, ‘deficient, inferior’, ‘diseased, ill’, and even ‘(of coin) counterfeit’ – it began to partially supersede OE *yfel* (ME *ivel*) – likewise prominent for its wide applicability and parallel to its Scandinavian counterpart on account of the meanings it carried – ‘wicked, depraved, sinful’, ‘harmful, hurtful, destructive’, ‘miserable, unfortunate’, ‘poor in quality, worthless, useless’. The source of this ubiquitous Anglo-Saxon lexeme lies in PGmc. *\*ubilaz* ‘bad, evil’ (Goth. *ubils*, ‘bad, evil’, Ger. *übel* ‘bad’), a word common to all early Germanic tongues – with the exception of North Germanic – serving as the most universal expression of disapproval, dislike, criticism. Nevertheless, due to the expanding function of the North Germanic *ill*, the native *yfel* experienced considerable semantic narrowing, thus surviving in Modern English as *evil*, with the former word eventually persisting as ‘bad, harmful’ but foremost ‘unhealthy, unwell’ (the meaning developed in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century) by which it became synonymous with the native *sick* (OE *sēoc* ‘ill, unwell’ from PGmc. *\*seukaz* ‘sick, weak’)<sup>7</sup>, thereby creating an Anglo-Scandinavian pair of unrelated words carrying parallel meanings.

The last lexeme of Scandinavian provenance to be discussed in the present section of the paper, due to its character and early period of borrowing (before 1066), constitutes a symbol of the rapid cultural integration of the Norsemen into the community of the Anglo-Saxons and their peaceful coexistence onwards. The word in question is *husband* – representing a direct continuation of ON *húsbóndi* that is ‘a house-master’ as well as ‘husband’ (accompanying in Old Norse *húsfreya* ‘a house-lady’ or ‘wife’). The literal sense of the second element making up the compound – *bóndi* – is ‘dweller, freeholder’, itself representing a contracted form of the present participle *\*bóandi* derived from the verb *bóa* meaning ‘to dwell, have a household’. The Scandinavian *husband* succeeded in replacing its Old English counterpart represented by the word

<sup>7</sup> PGmc. *\*seukaz* represents the Common Germanic word pertaining to ‘being sick’ – Goth. *siuks* ‘sick, weak’, ON *sjúkr* ‘sick’, OHG *sioh* ‘sick’.



### 3.2. The substitution of the Anglo-Saxon lexical items with their Scandinavian variants

On why one would say: *\*ey*, *\*yest*, *\*yive*, *\*yete*, *\*chettle*, *\*woke*, *\*bloke*, or *\*swester*.<sup>11</sup>

Before particular instances of Scandinavian variants replacing their Anglo-Saxon counterparts are presented, it ought to be stressed that when it comes to particular pairs of Norse and corresponding English lexical items differing solely on account of their divergent phonological developments, it is often difficult to decide if it is a matter of borrowing the foreign variant, or just the foreign influence upon the native word (See Townend 2002: 206-210). Nevertheless, whether it is the contribution of the former or the latter, it may be seen as representing an unusual language phenomenon.<sup>12</sup> As Burnley (2006: 420) helpfully concludes:

“No doubt both populations noticed that their languages possessed many forms in common which were differentiated by regular phonological contrasts [...]. Once such correspondences were noted, it was a simple matter to make conscious modifications to aid comprehension”.

In order to vividly present a peculiar struggle between the Norse- and English-derived pairs of cognates, the analysis shall begin with the word *egg* and Caxton's description of how in the Middle English period the Viking *egges* – used especially in the northern part of the country (corresponding to the area most densely inhabited by the descendants of Vikings), competed with southern Anglo-Saxon *eyren*:

And certainly our language now used varyeth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken when I was borne. [...] And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certain merchautes were in shippe in tamyse [...] [a]nd for lacke of wynde [...] thei [...] wente to lande [...]. And one of theym named sheffelde, a mercer, came in-to an

<sup>11</sup> The analysis is based upon the material in: Allen (1908: 227); Barber (1993: 130); Baugh (1971: 113, 119); Baugh and Cable (2002: 101); Blake (2006: 10-12); Burnley (2006: 420); Jespersen (1919: 66-68); Kastovsky (2006: 224, 249) (2003: 332); Kroesch (1911: 464-465); Lass (1995: 53-59); Morris (2004: 170-171); Strang (1970: 256); Townend (2002: 201-210); Weekley (2003: 74); Williams (1975: 61); *ASD*; *CASD*; *CDME*; *CDOL*; *CEDEL*; *ChEDEL*; *CODEE*; *DWO*; *IED*; *MED.S17*; *MSIP-PI*; *OALDCE*; *SMNP-PN*; *WIS*; (IS 1); (IS 2); (IS 3); (IS 4); (IS 5); (IS 6); (IS 7); (IS 14); (IS 15).

<sup>12</sup> Jespersen (1919: 65) perceives such co-existence of two slightly differing forms for the same word as a phenomenon which “is paralleled nowhere else to such an extent”, whereas Townend (2002: 204-205) provides an explanation seeing it as rooted in the death of Old Norse in England resulting from “the gradual accommodation to the dominant dialect (English) on the part of Norse speakers and, through dialect shift, a gradual increase in the number of English speakers in relation to Norse”.

hows and axed for mete; and specially he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answered, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges, and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understode hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges of eyren. Certaynly it is harde to playse every man, by cause of dyversite & change of language (Jespersen 1919: 67).

Eventually, it was the Scandinavian *egg* that managed to fight its way into Modern English, casting aside ME *ey* (evolved from OE *ǣg*), which – had it not been for the Viking invasion – would most probably persist in a more or less similar form. The source of the two variants has been reconstructed as *\*ajja-*, which due the process of hardening of PGmc. *\*-jj-* in North Germanic (Holtzmann’s law) yielded ON *egg*, and it is the hard pronunciation that indicates either the Norse origin or its influence. Casting aside the Anglo-Saxon *ey* for the sake of the Norse variant might have taken place on account of its similarity to another, unrelated, native word – *eye* (also spelt *ei*) – that is Middle English ‘eye’. These two words were most probably homophonous and in such circumstances the Norse *egg* variant might have served as a helpful solution to that ambiguity.

One can imagine that a similar struggle must have occurred in the case of plenty of other pairs consisting of Anglo-Scandinavian variants of the same word – a process particularly operative in the Middle English period – at times leading to “instances in which the intruder succeeded in ousting the legitimate heir” (Jespersen 1919: 67). So let us proceed to another such a pair in which the Norse variant proved to be victorious, and take a closer look at the word *guest*. It may be seen as the continuation of ON *gestr* ‘guest’, the original meaning of which was ‘stranger, alien’, and hence it initially pertained to ‘an accidental guest’, ‘a chance comer’ and was distinguished from *boðs-maðr* ‘an invited guest’. Had it not been for the adoption (or influence) of that Scandinavian variant, Englishmen would most probably make use of the form *\*yest*, that is the legitimate development of OE *giest* ‘guest’, but also ‘enemy’ and ‘stranger’ – the word, or more precisely, the initial consonant of which, is marked by the effect of palatalisation, as opposed to its Scandinavian cognate (whence the Middle English use of the Norse-derived *gest* and the proper English *yest*). The two variants emerged from PGmc. *\*gastiz* originally referring to both ‘stranger’ and ‘guest’, though it is the North Germanic one considered to be more archaic with its retention of hard pronunciation of the initial consonant. Interestingly, however, the descendants of the Viking tongue exhibit to a certain degree parallel phonological development as Old English, having been eventually affected by the process of fronting the velar stop consonant *g* in certain environments, and hence Norwegian *gjest* or Swedish *gäst* will be pronounced as [jest].

What is more, the profound process of palatalisation which, among others, led to the emergence of distinctive Old English phonology on its way of evolving from Proto Germanic would be also preserved in two ubiquitous English

verbs: *give* and *get*, thus making one use, rather awkwardly sounding to the modern ear, continuations of Middle English *yive* and *yete*. Nonetheless, it is ON *gefa* and *geta* respectively, once brought with the speech of the Vikings that eventually became a part of the Modern English vocabulary or at least influenced their English cognates. The source of *gefa* ‘to give, allow, determine’ (Ice. *gefa*, Nor. *gi*) as well as its discarded Anglo-Saxon variant *giefan* ‘to give, bestow, commit, devote’ lies in the hypothetical Proto-Germanic form *\*gebanan* itself ultimately deriving from the root ‘to have, take, hold, give’. Whereas *geta* ‘to get, arrive at, learn, guess, think, speak of’ (Ice. *geta*, Nor. *gjeta* ‘to guess’) and its unrecorded English cognate *\*gietan* represent two divergent developments of PGmc. *\*getan* ‘to guess’ ultimately evolving from the sense ‘to seize, grasp’. The existence of OE *\*gietan* is inferred from numerous Old English compounds, some of them being: *beġietan* ‘to get by effort, find’ (ModE. *beget*), *forġietan* literally ‘to lose one’s grip’ (ModE. *forget*), *āġietan* ‘to discover, find’, or *onġietan* ‘to seize, assail’. What is more, analogical situation – with the verb *get* recorded only in compounds – is to be found in Dutch and Frisian as well. However, the latter is additionally notable for its palatalisation, among other phonological developments parallel to those of Old English, therefore a common Anglo-Frisian group is often postulated: OFris. *forieta* ‘to forget’, OFris. *jeva* ‘to give’. Finally, it may be added that once again the English language preserved the archaic pronunciation of both *gefa* and *geta*, for some of their present-day North Germanic developments are pronounced with the initial consonant palatalised, hence: Nor. *gi* [ji:], *gjeta* [jeta].

One more example of a word exhibiting typically Old Norse hard pronunciation of velar stop consonants, yet in this case precisely the voiceless plosive *k*, is represented by another object of daily importance – the one accompanying the Viking *knife* in the kitchen realm, namely *kettle*. It owes its present-day form to ON *ketill* pertaining to any ‘kettle’, ‘cauldron’ or ‘boiler’ and often appearing in compounds, some of them being: *búðar-ketill* ‘booth kettle’, *eir-ketill* ‘brass kettle’, *járn-ketill* ‘an iron kettle’ or *stein-ketill* ‘earthen kettle’ (Ice. *ketill* ‘kettle, cauldron, boiler’, Swe. *kittel* ‘kettle’). The source of *ketill* lies in PGmc. *\*katilaz* ‘kettle, bucket, vessel’, itself most probably constituting a loan from Latin *catillus* ‘small bowl’ (a diminutive form of *catinus* ‘a deep vessel for serving or cooking food’), though it is not entirely impossible that the word has in fact Germanic origin, and it might have been confused with its Latin cognate.<sup>13</sup> A phonologically divergent development of PGmc. *\*katilaz* is represented by Anglo-Saxon *ċetel* – notable for its palatal *k*, subsequently affected by the process of assibilation, resulting in the Middle English *chetel* used from Kent and East Anglia to Devonshire, coexisting with its Norse-derived (Mercian, Northumbrian) cognate *ketel* by which it was eventually ousted. However, had it not

<sup>13</sup> *Ketill* might also represent a diminutive of ON *kati* – ‘a kind of small boat’, see: *IED*, *ketill* entry; it was borrowed into Finnish as *kattila* carrying a similar amount of meanings as in Proto-Germanic: ‘boiler, cauldron, kettle’.

been for the *ketill* arriving in the Anglo-Saxon territory with the Norse-speaking invaders, the pronunciation of the ‘container used for boiling water’ would be notably marked by an initial affricate [tʃ], whereas its spelling might be rendered by *\*chettle* – as such preserved in an English surname.

However, not only the presence or lack of palatalisation enables one to approach the question of Norse loans in the English language. Another important phonological criterion refers to the development of the Proto-Germanic diphthong *ai*, yielding Old Norse *ei* and Old English *ā*, on account of which the adjectives *weak* and *bleak* are known to be the Norse survivors of once present Anglo-Scandinavian lexical “conflict”. As far as the former is concerned, its reconstructed ancestral form is rendered by PGmc. *\*waikwaz* ‘weak, soft, pliable’ deriving from the sense ‘to yield, fold’, whereas its Anglo-Saxon and Norse developments are *wāc* ‘yielding, weak, poor’ and *veikr* ‘weak; sick’ respectively. The source of the second adjective under discussion lies in PGmc. *\*blaikaz* ‘pale, white, shining’, the divergent developments of which are represented by ON *bleikr* ‘pale, whitish, blond’ and OE *blāc* ‘pale’. The Middle English period witnessed the presence of both the adjectival pairs with the Anglo-Saxon forms developed at that time into *wōk(e)* and *blōk(e)*, and had it not been for the ultimate adoption of the Scandinavian forms (ME *weik* and *bleik*), the native variants – on account of the further phonological changes – would have produced ModE. *\*woke* /wəʊk/ and *\*bloke* /bləʊk/ (in the same way PGmc. *stainaz* gave rise to OE *stān* which turned into ME *stōne* eventually becoming ModE. *stone*). Although the reasons behind discarding the native form for the sake of the foreign in the case of *weak* remain obscure, the apparent inclination towards the Scandinavian form of *bleak* might have resulted from OE *blāc* ‘pale’ being liable to confusion with OE *blæc* ‘black’ (ME *blāk*), and hence supplanting it with the Norse variant could have been felt as helpful in keeping the two words apart. ‘Black’, apart from the primary ‘pale, wan’, is even provided as the second meaning of ME *blōk(e)* which could be seen as betraying that confusion. Such denotation may be found in one of the Middle English Homilies: “Ac þo unbil-effule men þe bi here quica liue here sunnes ne forleten. ne betten. ne fastliche bote ne biheten. hie bicumeð in þe fure swo **bloke**. and swo eiseliche. and swo ateliche (...)” – “But the unbelieving men, who while alive did not forsake nor repent of their sins, nor firmly promise amendment, shall in the fire become so black and so awful and so horrible (...)” (Morris 2004: 170-171).

The final discussion of the present section will be devoted to one more family member, keeping company with the formerly described Scandinavian *husband*, and owing its name to the speakers of Old Norse, though in this case it might be as well perceived as a slight modification offered to the native form. Nevertheless, *sister*, resulting from the influence of ON *systir*, is one more living proof of how unique the interaction between the Anglo-Scandinavian vocabulary was, and once again it is the Middle English period that reveals the coexistence of various Norse and English variants of the same word: *syster*, *sister*, *suster*, *soster*, *soustir*, *swuster*, and many more. From the several presented,

*suster* may be viewed as the standard form due to its predominant use in the Middle English literature, including Chaucer's works, hence in *The Canterbury Tales* one may encounter expressions such as: "Deere **suster** Alisoun" or "hir yonge **suster** Emelye"<sup>14</sup>. This particular form evolved from OE *swuster* (also *-or*, *-ur*) and as such still appears in the early Middle English period, whereas other forms encountered back in the Old English period included *sweoster* and *swystor*, among others. The regular development of the former, on account of the sound change from OE *eo* to ME *e*, yielded early Middle English *swester*. The further developments of those (as well as other forms alike) marked by the loss of *w*, might be seen as already influenced by the Old Norse variant, as the predominant forms descending from PGmc. *\*swestêr* retain the initial *sw-* (whence OS *swestar*, OHG *swester*, Goth. *swistar*), whereas North Germanic is remarkable for the dropping of the original Germanic *w* – a loss which occurred in all environments except *w* preceding a non-rounded vowel. Therefore, if it had not been for the presence of the Viking *systir*, chances are that one would have a *\*swester* (reminding of Ger. *Schwester*), not a *sister*.

### 3.3. The retention of both the Norse- and English-derived variants of particular lexemes

On why one may talk about: *shirts and skirts; scattered shattered glass; scrub-shrub marsh; shrieking in fright or screeching breaks; scab ointment or shabby conditions; loose colorless shirt; an area surrounded by dike and ditch; raising and rearing children*.<sup>15</sup>

In congruence with the previous section, the following part of the paper will be concerned with Anglo-Scandinavian variants of the same words, differing solely in divergent phonological developments. However, in this case, focus will be laid upon those originally synonymous pairs of Anglo-Scandinavian cognates which, having been as a rule affected by semantic differentiation made their way into Modern English. Beyond a doubt, they may be viewed as representing the most outstanding linguistic outcome resulting from the Anglo-Scandinavian coexistence – the coexistence which after 1000 years still manifests itself in the language of the contemporary Englishmen.

<sup>14</sup> For more quotations containing the Middle English *sister* variants and their usage see: *MED. S17, suster* entry.

<sup>15</sup> The analysis is based upon the material in: Barber (1993: 130-131); Barber et al. (2012: 121); Berndt (1982: 98); Braudel (1992: 317); Burnley (2006: 416-422); Gelderen (2006: 96); Helfenstein (1870: 333-334); Hughes (2000: 99); Jespersen (1919: 66); Kastovsky (2003: 332) (2006: 224); Lass (1995: 21-29, 121); Liberman (2009: 16-19); McCrum et al. (1992: 71); Myers (1966: 110-111); Plummer and Earle (1892: 263); Taylor (1864: 270-271); Townend (2002: 206); *ASD; CASD; CDME; CDOL; CEDEL; ChEDEL; CODEE; DWO; IED; MED.L6; MED.S5; MED.S7; MED.W7; MSIP-PI; OALDCE; SMNP-PN; WIS*; (IS 1); (IS 2); (IS 3); (IS 4); (IS 5); (IS 6); (IS 7); (IS 16).

Undeniably the most famous of such pairs is represented by the Viking *skirt* and the Anglo-Saxon *shirt*, as respectively developed from ON *skyrta* and OE *scýrte*, with both the names pertaining to ‘a kirtle’, that is ‘a tunic-like garment worn by men and women’. These two, in turn, constitute phonologically divergent continuations of PGmc. *\*skurtijōn* designating ‘a short garment’ (Ger. *Shürze*, Du. *schort* ‘apron’) as based upon the root *\*skurt-* ‘short’ – and once again it is the Norse variant retaining the original Common Germanic pronunciation and the Anglo-Saxon featuring the effects of palatalisation and assibilation, in this case affecting the initial *\*sk* cluster. At first the Viking *skyrta* constituted the doublet of the English *scýrte* in not only having the same etymological root but also meaning. However, in the course of time the two forms developed divergent denotations with the Norse variant (ME *skirte*) referring to ‘the lower half of the above mentioned kirtle’, ‘the lower part of a man’s robe or women’s dress’, and the English one (ME *shirte*) pointing to its upper half or denoting ‘a garment for the upper body’, which in turn developed into the *skirt* and *shirt* respectively. This specialization in meaning may be seen as reflecting the changes that affected the fashion trends in Europe in the Late Middle Ages – men exchanged the tunic-like over-garment for its shorter version, thus giving rise to *shirt*: “Around that year [1350], men, in particular noblemen and their squires, and a few bourgeois and their servants took to wearing tunics so short and tight that they revealed what modesty bids us hide. This was a most astonishing thing for the people” (Nangis after Braudel 1992: 317). Whereas when it comes to women, a kirtle (usually ankle or floor-length) still represented their prime element of clothing, yet since the XIII century its part from the waist down began to be referred to as *skirt*. It is interesting to note that ON *skyrta* gave rise to both ‘skirt’ and ‘shirt’ in Norwegian – *skjørt* and *skjorte* respectively, as well as Swedish – *skört* and *skjorta*, whereas in Icelandic its sole development became *skyrta*, that is ‘shirt’.

Among other Viking-Saxon lexical pairs marked by the characteristic word-initial *sk/sh* opposition, which until this day make up the English vocabulary, one may also find *scatter* and *shatter* – now constituting two separate verbs, yet back in the Middle English period coexisting as mere variants – the former, restricted to Northern England, corresponding to the territory of the Viking settlement, as the Norse-derived *scateren*, and the latter, typical of the southern part of the country, as English-derived *schateren*. The ultimate source of these two forms might be traced back to PGmc. root *\*skat-* ‘to break, disperse’, yet there appears a problem posed by the absence of both the Old Norse and Old English developments – these might have been either unrecorded, or the Scandinavian pronunciation influenced hypothetical OE *\*scæatterian* (though it should be noted that there exist forms like Nor. *skratte* ‘to burst out laughing’, or Swe. *skratte* ‘to laugh’ – thought to be cognate with *scatter*). The Norse-derived (at least in terms of pronunciation) *scatter* was first recorded in the *Peterborough Chronicle* around 1154: “& for he hadde get his tresor, ac he to deld it & **scatered** sotlice” (Plummer and Earle 1892: 263), and at that time carried the sense ‘to

distribute (goods, wealth), spend, waste’, hence “scatered sotlice” would stand for ‘squandered foolishly’. However, the further development of phonologically English *schateren* and Scandinavian *scateren*, on their way into Modern English, led to the semantic differentiation of these two originally synonymous forms, thus enabling one to render the following situation by means of them: “If you drop a porcelain cup on a hard floor, the cup will probably *shatter* while the pieces of it *scatter*” (Myers 1966: 110-111).

However, not only phrases such as “*scattered shattered* porcelain cup” embody a kind of peace treaty concluded between those once struggling Anglo-Norse variants, as an Englishman may also built phrases such as “*scrub-shrub* marsh, forest or birds”. The source of this particular Viking-Saxon lexical pair lies in PGmc. \**skrub-* ‘to be rough’, itself rooted in the sense ‘to cut’, and in the Middle English period found in the form of the Norse-derived *scrubbe* and English-derived *schrubbe* (continuing OE *scrybb* ‘brushwood, underwood’ which probably evolved from unrecorded \**scrubb*) with both of them pertaining to ‘low-growing bush’ or ‘stunted tree’. Therefore, when it comes to the Middle English literature, one may read about: “A **scrubbe** þat groweþ in place þat is forsake, stony, and vntilyed.is witesse þat þe grounde is bar- eyn” (See *MED.W7*, *witnes(se)* entry) or “Þurstlis & nyztyncales..makeþ here nesttis in **schrubbes** and in busschis” (See *MED.S7*, *shrub(be)* entry). However, peculiarly enough, just as the existence of OE \**scrubb* is only a hypothesis, the same relates to its Scandinavian counterpart – unrecorded in its Old Norse form, yet words like Nor. *skrubba* ‘dwarf tree’ or Dan. *skrub* ‘a stunted tree, brushwood’ seem evidence of its somewhat obscure existence. Finally, when it comes to the Modern English period, the developments of the English and Norse variants seem to exhibit only slight shift in meaning, with the former, *shrub*, denoting ‘a small bush or woody plant’, and its Scandinavian doublet, *scrub*, referring to ‘shrubs collectively’ or simply ‘stunted tree’.

And now a pair which permanently preserved the apparent confusion that must have existed between the English and Norse forms of many words, a pair consisting of cognates which Baugh (1971: 120) calls “hybrids” – *screech* and *shriek* – for “[o]bviously they ought to be *shreech* and *screek*, each a respectable descendant of its own tradition” (Myers 1966: 111), yet each of them reveals both the typically Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon sound characteristics: *screech* with initial cluster [sk] pointing to the Scandinavian origin and final [tʃ] indicative of clearly English sound development; on the other hand, *shriek* initially betrays the Old English assibilation, while in the final position shows the Old Norse retention of hard pronunciation of *k*. Furthermore, in the Middle English period, prior to the ultimate persistence of the two hybrids (which remained considerably synonymous, as referring to making or giving high unpleasant sounds), there were plenty of forms, be they the “appropriate” ones or those already confused: *scrycke*, *skrike*, *scriken*, *skirken*, *skriche*, *shriken*, *scrichen*, *shriche*, *schrichen*, or *shritch*. Verbs like *scrycke* or *shriche* still represented the legitimate developments of ON *skrákja* ‘to screech, shriek’ (accompanied in

Old Norse by *skrækta* ‘to shriek, yell’, *skrikja* ‘to twitter’) and OE *scriðcettan* respectively – the two descendants of PGmc. *\*skrēkianan* ‘to shout’, itself originating from the PGmc. root *\*skri-* ‘to shout’ which, among many others, yielded the verb *scream* (modified by the Scandinavian pronunciation as well, it ought to have produced ModE. *\*shream*) and ON *skræma* ‘to scare away’. The *\*skri-* based verbs are most probably the ones reproducing natural sounds (similarly to *squeal* and *squeak*, or *creak* and *crow*), and due to their apparently onomatopoeic nature may be called echoic verbs (See Liberman 2009).

As far as the *sk/sc* opposition is concerned, there is one more interesting pair to take a closer look at – this time consisting of different parts of speech, as represented by the Scandinavian *scab* and the Anglo-Saxon *shabby*. *Scab* owes its present-day form to ON *skabb* denoting ‘scab, itch’ (Norw. *skabb* ‘itch’) and when brought to the English soil by the Viking raiders, it came to describe ‘any of various skin diseases (predominantly characterized by itching)’, ‘any eruption occurring on the skin’, or ‘any skin disease affecting sheep, horses, oxen or hounds’, and c. 1400 it also came to be used with the modern denotation of ‘a crust formed over a wound’. With such a wide range of applicability it was found in the Middle English period as carried by the forms: *scab*(*be*) or *skab*(*be*). However, at that time these were additionally accompanied by the native *shab* and *shabbe*, evolved from OE *sceabb* ‘scab, itch’ and used with the reference to ‘skin diseases of different type, causing itching, loss of hair or skin eruption’. Therefore, in the readings of the Middle English period one may encounter them both used in the following situations: “Kest þerto oyle and make an oynement, & þat is gode for **scabbes**, and it doth a way pickyls in a manys face” or “A goud oynement for þe **schabbe**: Take brynston and quikeseluer and verdegrece (...)” (See *MED.S5*, *shab*(*be*) entry). Ultimately, both *skabb* and *sceabb* may be traced back to PGmc. *\*skabbaz* ‘itch, scabies’ descending from the Common Germanic verb *\*skabanan* meaning ‘to scratch, scrape’ (which simultaneously gave rise to OE *sceafan*, that is *shave*). Whereas, on account of the further development, the Norse-derived form, having become the predominant one, made its way into Standard English as *scab* (which likewise may be used to relate to ‘a skin disease of animals or plants’), at the same time pushing the English-derived *shab* to a dialectal status, in which it may be found as referring to ‘sheep disease’. The native form managed, however, to leave its trace in Modern Standard English, by means of its derivative – *shabby* (its emergence is dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century) carrying the sense ‘dingy, faded’ or ‘in poor condition’.

Another appealing lexical pair is the one composed of the Viking *loose* and Anglo-Saxon *-less*. When following back the evolution of these two cognates, one arrives at ON *lauss* denoting ‘loose’ or metaphorically ‘free, unimpeded’ and OE *lēas* standing for ‘loose, free from, void of, without’ as well as ‘false, lying, deceitful, deceptive’. These, in turn, emerged from PGmc. *\*lausaz* ‘loose, free, empty, devoid, lacking’ deriving from the sense ‘to loosen, cut apart, divide’, with the Norse form retaining the Common Germanic diphthong *au* on its way of emergence, and the Anglo-Saxon one exhibiting its transformation

into *ēa*. What is more, apart from their adjectival nature, both *lauss* and *lēas* performed the role of suffixes conveying the sense ‘lacking’, therefore, in Old Norse one encounters forms such as: *litlauss* ‘colourless’, *athugalauss* ‘thoughtless’, *vitlauss* ‘witless, insane’ or *auðnulauss* ‘luckless’; whereas in Old English: *hāmlēas* ‘homeless’, *hlāfordlēas* ‘lordless’ or *frēondlēas* ‘friendless’. In the Middle English period ON *lauss* could be found as evolved into a wide array of forms – some of them being: *lōs*, *lousse*, *lause*, *lose* or *loes* – conveying a similarly wide array of denotations – ‘(of people) free from fetters, imprisonment, captivity’, ‘(of fetters, chains) unfastened’, ‘(of animals) untied, loose’, ‘independent of (destiny)’, ‘not firmly attached, unstable’, or ‘undisciplined’, hence: “I ffynde hym also ryght **loose** in the tonge”, “And whan the hors was **laus**, he gynneth gon Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne”, or “His fettirs sodanly **loose** ware” (See *MED.L6*, *lōs* entry). At the same time, the further development of OE *lēas*, on account of its original denotations, went in two directions: one related to the role of a derivational suffix standing for deprivation, that being *-lēas*, hence: ME *armles*, *blameles*, *cloudeles*, *comfortles*, *childrenles*, *husbondles*, or *drinkeles*; the other, rendered by *lēas(e)*, continued the adjectival function, yet with the meaning narrowed to ‘untruthful, disloyal, false’, with the ‘loose’ denotation having been taken by its Norse counterpart: “So are ye lythyr [bad] and **lees!**” (See *MED.R2*, *rehers* entry). Eventually, the latter use became obsolete, thus making the native form persist in English solely as a suffix *-less*, accompanied by its Scandinavian doublet in the form of *loose*<sup>16</sup>.

However, returning to those pairs of Viking-Saxon cognates which comprise parallel parts of speech, a closer examination shall be offered to *dike* and *ditch*. Originally these two nouns, in the form of ON *diki* and OE *dīc* respectively, represented synonyms “used to mean both the trench and the long mound formed alongside it by the earth removed” (Myers 1966: 111) and constituted phonologically divergent developments of PGmc. *\*dikaz* ‘pond, puddle’ (akin to Old English *dīcian* ‘to dig a ditch, to mound up earth’) – as in the previous cases, with the Norse form distinct for its hard pronunciation of *k*, and the English one displaying a phonological shift towards palatalisation and assibilation. The dikes and ditches – the vast earthen ramparts were the great works constructed by the Anglo-Saxons, serving as the boundaries between hostile kingdoms. Their importance is still preserved in: *Offa’s Dyke* guarding the frontiers of Wessex against the Welsh, *Grim’s Dyke* together with *Old Ditch* and *Bokerly Ditch* defining the position of Welsh and Saxon frontier, or the *Devil’s Dyke* defending the kingdom of East Anglia against Mercia (See Taylor 1864: 270-271). In the Middle English period the native form, usually spelt as *dich(e)* or *dech(e)*, represented the southern English variant: “Offa, forto haue a distinccioun..byt-

<sup>16</sup> In modern North Germanic languages the developments of ON *lauss* preserve its original role of both the adjective and suffix, hence one finds forms such as: *laus* ‘loose’ and *heimilislaus* ‘homeless’ or *skýjalaus* ‘cloudless’ in Icelandic; *lōs* ‘loose’ as well as *livlōs* ‘lifeless’ or *fargelōs* ‘colourless’ in Norwegian.



has been attempted by means of: providing an extensive analysis of particular Scandinavian lexical items and their Anglo-Saxon equivalents which the former eventually replaced or joined on their path into Modern English; investigating the Proto-Germanic roots of those foreign and native words chosen for the study, as well as their emergence from the parent tongue and following their further development in relation to both form and meaning; studying the results that arose due to their coexistence – the results pointing to an absolutely unique and incomparably intimate language fusion that the two tongues in question were involved in. That unusual linguistic interaction may be ascribed to their sharing the same Proto-Germanic ancestor – the parent speech lying at the basis of all the intriguing, often peculiar, sometimes only slight yet still remarkable lexical modifications that affected the English language as a result of its contact with the Viking tongue.

The division of the analysis into separate categories has been intended to present the multifold character of the Scandinavian influence upon the English lexis, each of them exhibiting different linguistic peculiarities resulting from the communication necessities that must have arisen between the Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons. The changes initiated by Old Norse led some of the native vocabulary items to oblivion, but in many cases those haven't ceased to exist and still represent a part of the English lexicon having undergone semantic differentiation or narrowing. Another group of Anglo-Saxon lexemes experienced modification in respect to form and pronunciation, or they might as well be said to have given their way for the sake of affiliated Norse counterparts. The reason behind the ultimate preference towards particular Scandinavian forms in many cases remains obscure, but some of them might have been felt as fine replacements of the ambiguity-causing native variants. Moreover, the Middle English competition between the Norse- and English-derived forms might be seen as reflecting the conflict between the Anglo-Saxons and the invading Viking tribes from before a few hundred years. However, just as the Norse raiders turned into peaceful settlers, thus becoming a part of the Anglo-Saxon society, in a similar way the Anglo-Scandinavian lexical struggle finally settled down, allowing some of the Scandinavian variants to become a legitimate part of the English vocabulary. In other cases, however, both the competing forms were retained, with the native and foreign variants of most of such pairs having developed divergent meaning and as such found in Modern English, representing one of the most extraordinary language phenomena.

Furthermore, the most crucial task undertaken in the study, that is tracing back the evolution of all the words chosen for the analysis, and thereby reaching their Proto-Germanic roots, gave an interesting, though obviously limited, glimpse into the origin of vocabulary used by the two groups of Germanic peoples. It appeared to be particularly intriguing in those instances in which, despite sharing close linguistic ties, the Norsemen and their Anglo-Saxon kinsmen resorted to unrelated words in order to denote the same concepts, which, in turn, may point to their somewhat differing perception of reality. Moreover,

following the emergence from the parent language and the further development of particular Norse lexical items and their Anglo-Saxon equivalents – whether affiliated or unrelated – has exhibited the relations between the two languages involved. What is most unique, however, is the fact that all the changes induced by Old Norse, whether subtle or more radical, that made their contribution to the present shape of the English vocabulary in relation to forms, meanings as well as pronunciation, were kept within the boundaries of the same language group, therefore, that particular linguistic influence let the English language maintain its originally Germanic character. Moreover, those common Germanic linguistic ties contributed to the sphere of vocabulary affected, with most of the Scandinavian words involved representing the core lexicon, and that is why they “will crop up together with the Anglo-Saxon ones in any conversation on the thousand nothings of daily life (...)”, as “[t]hey are homely expressions for things and actions of everyday importance; their character is utterly democratic” (Jespersen 1919: 78-79).

The above presented study deals with just a tiny part of all the Old Norse lexical contributions to the English language, whereas the extent of the Scandinavian influence creates opportunity to reveal and carefully examine intriguing histories concealed in many other seemingly ordinary lexemes. Nevertheless, however limited in relation to the number of vocabulary items chosen, the above analysis is hoped to have successfully presented a broader, comprehensive insight into the effect exerted by the Viking tongue upon particular English lexemes, with each of them descending from the Anglo-Scandinavian contact and hence being the evidence of historical events once taking place in Anglo-Saxon England:

Nowhere over Europe was the fight so fierce, because nowhere else were the combatants men of one blood and one speech. But just for this reason the fusion of the northmen with their foes was nowhere so peaceful and so complete (Green 1894: 43).

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### A list of abbreviations

Dan.	Danish	OE	Old English
Du.	Dutch	OFris.	Old Frisian
Ger.	German	OHG	Old High German
Goth.	Gothic	ON	Old Norse
Ice.	Icelandic	PGmc.	Proto-Germanic
ME	Middle English	Swe.	Swedish
ModE.	Modern English	WGmc.	West Germanic
Nor.	Norwegian		