THE OLD NORSE SEMANTIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH WORD STOCK – A STUDY BASED UPON PROTO-GERMANIC

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Abstract

The following paper constitutes an investigation devoted to one of the groups of English vocabulary resulting from the contact with the Old Norse tongue – the one comprising those English lexemes which consist of the Anglo-Saxon form and the Scandinavian denotation attached. Despite being tiny, this particular group of Norse lexical contributions to the English language highlights the unusual character and extremely rare outcomes resulting from the interaction between the two tongues in question. These, however, would not have been possible, had it not been for their common ancestor – Proto-Germanic. Therefore, this hypothesized parent language shall constitute the basis of the following lexical-semantic investigation, which in turn is hoped to offer a deeper insight into some of the Norse modifications of the English vocabulary, as well as to aid the revelation of surprisingly alluring histories hidden behind seemingly ordinary lexemes.

Keywords: Old Norse, Old English, Proto-Germanic, semantic change

Introduction:[20]

The Viking invasions of England and the resulting seizure of a substantial area of Anglo-Saxon territory by the Norse invaders, followed by their subsequent settlement thereupon and culminating with the reign of Cnut the Great, created conditions enabling the interaction between the languages of the two peoples involved. However, the racial and linguistic kinship of the Anglo-Saxons and the Norsemen, originating in their common Proto-Germanic past, substantially facilitated the communication between them and, what is most important, the final outcomes it yielded. For all the

[20] Based upon the material in: Batey *et al.* (1998: 122-142, 207-212); Baugh (1971: 107-124); Bradley (1904: 83-84); Hughes (91-100); Jespersen (1919: 58-82); Kastovsky (2003: 320-336); Myers (1966: 107-112); Price (1985: 194-199); Roesdahl (2001: 202-222); Townend (2002: 201-211); Trudgill (1998: 98-113); Wooding (2001: 18-19, 53-56, 138-141); *DASL*.

modifications of and additions to the English language resulting from the Scandinavian influence point to an unparalleled language contact, a fusion of the two tongues manifesting itself, amongst others, in the character of the Norse loans – everyday words and expressions – those belonging to the realm of core vocabulary, the ones used by common people, and until this day occupying the central position in the English lexis. However, Old Norse not only constituted a source from which certain lexemes were borrowed, but it also led to slight modifications in relation to pronunciation of particular native Anglo-Saxon vocabulary items. Moreover, the Vikings are known to have stamped their presence on the English soil and their co-existence with its people in the family names and the names of places found throughout England, whereas their speech is additionally credited with affecting English grammar, as well as syntax, including form words – those hardly ever subjected to any foreign influence.

Nevertheless, it is the sphere of lexis which is the most extensive and plays the most prominent role as far as the effect of Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic contact is concerned. However, due to their multifold nature, the Old Norse lexical contributions are customarily divided into several categories exhibiting influence of a different type. Therefore, one may encounter a group comprising terms pertaining to the legal system and administration – these were unknown to the Anglo-Saxons prior to the Norse invasions (f.e. ON *lǫg* and hence OE *lagu* 'law'; ON *útlagr* – OE *utlah* 'outlawed'; ON *logréttr* – OE *lahriht* 'law right'; ON *vrangr* – OE *wrang* 'wrong'; ON *vapnatak* – OE *wæpentace* 'a division of a county'); as well as a group embracing terminology associated with war and seafaring – such words were the earliest to make their way into the English language (f.e. ON *orrustu* and hence OE *orrest* 'battle'; ON *knorr* – OE *cnearr* 'small warship'; ON *barði* – OE *barda* 'beaked ship'; ON *háseti* – OE *hasæta* 'oarsman'); another group may be based upon those vocabulary items of Scandinavian provenance which functioned in the Middle English period, yet eventually passed out of use, having given their way to the Anglo-Saxon equivalents (f.e. Norse-derived *naken* used alongside with *naked*; *sterne* – *star*; *fisk* – *fish*; *heythen* – *heathen*); however, certain Norse loans, although now non-existent in the standard speech, may still be found in English dialects and as such they form a group in their own respect (f.e. *lake* 'to play' deriving from ON *leika*; *bairn* 'child' – ON *barn*; *dale* 'valley' – ON *dalur*; *gate* 'way, street' – ON *gata*); nonetheless, the most important category to be distinguished is the one comprising those Scandinavian loans which, despite being paired by their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, managed to survive for hundreds of years, eventually becoming a legitimate part of the standard, present-day English lexicon. It is reasonable, however, to apply a further division to this particular category of Norse contributions on account of its

differentiation. In such manner, three subgroups shall be obtained: one composed of those Scandinavian loans which succeeded in ousting their Anglo-Saxon equivalents, where the latter themselves lead to further dual subdivision depending on whether they differed in or shared their Proto-Germanic roots with the Norse lexemes (e.g. ON *vindauga* 'window' vs. OE *ēagþyrel*, ON *húsbóndi* 'husband' vs. OE *wer*; and ON *veikr* 'weak' vs. OE *wāc*, ON *gefa* 'give' vs. OE *ġiefan*); the second one comprising those instances in which both the Scandinavian loan and its Anglo-Saxon equivalent based upon the same Proto-Germanic root persist in modern English, often having undergone the process of semantic divergence (e.g. *skirt* and *shirt* as developed from ON *skyrta* and OE *sċyrte* respectively, or *dike* and *ditch* deriving from ON *díki* and OE *dīc*); finally, the third one consisting of those lexical items which survive as made up of the Old Norse meaning carried by the Old English form (e.g. *bread* carrying the sense of ON *brauð* but continuing the form of OE *brēad* 'fragment, crumb').

The last group represents the case of semantic changes undergone by the Anglo-Saxon lexemes as a result of the influence of Scandinavian cognate forms with a differing denotation attached, and at the same time constitutes the area of investigation intended for the present paper. However, in view of the significance that ought to be attached to Proto-Germanic – the ancestor of the two tongues in question – as a factor contributing to all the unique interactions between them, this paper aims at basing the analysis upon the Common Germanic parent language and creating a detailed account of the evolution of the crucial lexemes, those involved in the Norse-English sense-shifting process.

The Analysis

As has been stated above, the following, main part of the present paper shall be devoted to the process of sense-shifting from Norse onto English affiliated forms, and it is hoped to provide a comprehensive explanation on why one uses: ***bread*** as a substitute of ***loaf***; ***plough*** in place of ***sullow***; ***bloom*** additionally to ***blossom***; ***dream*** instead of ***sweven***; ***dwell*** in the sense of 'living' and not 'deceiving'; ***earl*** as a replacement of ***alderman***; ***gift*** rather than ****yive***.[21]

[21] The analysis has been based upon the material in: Acker (2002: 229-243); Algeo (2010: 253-254); Barber (1993: 132); Baugh (1971: 114); Becker (2005: 22-27); Bergen (1906: 272); Blumetti (2004: 214-221); Burnley (2006: 490-491); Cavill (1999: 7-59); Crouch (1992: 35-54); Fabiszak (2001: 48-49); Gelderen (2006: 96); Hughes (2000: 99); Jespersen (1919: 68-69); Lass (1995: 59); Liberman (2008: 60-61); Liberman (2009: 86-87); Looijenga (2003: 30-32); Lutz (2012: 15-42); MacLeod (2006: 183-200); Martell (2001: 10-11); Plowright (2006: 144-148); Polome (1996: 143-144); Poole (2005: 269-284); Spurkland (2005: 20-53); Strang (1970: 255); Syrett (1994: 171); Vinaver (1971: 17); Weekley (2003:

The first to be discussed is undoubtedly one of the most important lexemes associated with food and household, namely *bread*. It owes its modern meaning to ON *brauð* 'bread', since its OE cognate in the form of *brēad* stood for 'bit, fragment, morsel', whereas in order to refer to 'bread' the Anglo-Saxons made use of *hlāf (*also 'food in general' or 'loaf, cake') – the word representing the original Germanic name applied to this particular type of food, and in its reconstructed form appearing as **hlaibaz* (Goth. *hlaifs*, OHG *hleib* 'bread'). What is more, the Common Germanic word for 'bread' constitutes the source of loans found among different non-Germanic tongues: Est. *leib* 'bread', Finn. *leipä* 'bread' (also 'food, fare'), OSl. *chlebu* 'bread' or more precisely 'sourdough bread formed into loaves' as that is the exact type of bread to which the Slavs applied the name borrowed from the Germanic peoples (up to then they had only known unleavened flatbread). As far as the source of *bread* is concerned, this remains a point of dispute as there are two forms purported to represent its ancestor: PGmc. **braudan* 'fragment, piece' – akin to OE *brecan* (ModE. *break*) and OE *breōtan* 'to bruise, break, demolish, destroy', hence the basic sense of *bread* would be 'piece of food' (PGmc. **braudsmon-* 'fragments, bits', OHG *brosma* 'crumb'); and PGmc. **bruthan* 'broth' (OE *broþ*, Ice. *broð*, OHG *brod*) deriving from the sense 'to boil, seethe' and thus cognate with OE *breōwan* (ModE. *brew*, PGmc. **brewwanan*)[22] – whence the basic sense 'cooked food'. Furthermore, *bread* – despite its being a modern common Germanic word denoting 'the substance' (and *loaf* 'the shape'): Ice. *brauð*, Nor. and Dan. *brød*, Swe. *bröd*, Ger. *Brot*, Fris. *brea*, Du. *brood* – in early times, down to the 9th century, it did not carry the present meaning in any of the Germanic tongues (even in old heathen Scandinavian poems *hleifr* is the word denoting 'bread'), instead it was used only to refer to 'honeycomb' and as such may be found in the following compounds: OHG *bibrod*, Ger. *Bienenbrot*, OE *beobrēad* 'bee-bread' (in Icelandic there are also: *bráð-björg* 'thyme' and *þinga-brauð* referring to certain cures). The shift from 'honeycomb' to 'bread' remains obscure, it may, however, have had something to do with the honeycomb texture of a baked bread. When that semantic change occurred in North Germanic, the Anglo-Saxons still resorted to *hlāf* (its relation to OE *hlīfan* 'to stand out prominently, tower up, raise higher' has been suggested, as relating to the bread rising while it

153); and the following dictionaries: *AHDIER*; *ASD*; *CASD*; *CDME*; *CDOL*; *CEDEL*; *ChEDEL*; *CODEE*; *EDME*; *IED*; *MED.M2*; *MED.XYZ*; *MSIP-PI*; *MWCD*; *OALDCE*; *SEJP*; *SF-P*; *SMNP-PN*; *TOE*; *WHM*; *WIS*; as well as the following websites: (IS 1); (IS 2); (IS 3); (IS 4); (IS 5); (IS 6); (IS 7); (IS 8); (IS 9); (IS 10).

[22] According to food historians, the beginnings of leavened bread baking and brewing industry go more or less in pair. See: (IS 6).

bakes)[23], the original sense of which, though vaguely to modern eye, is preserved in the words *lord* and *lady* (hence testifying the importance of that particular food, yet found only in English) – OE *hlāford* 'loaf-ward, keeper of bread' and OE *hlæfdige* 'kneader of bread, breadmaker'. Nevertheless, the oldest Teutonic name by which Germanic peoples referred to 'bread' eventually acquired the sense of its shape, thus resulting in modern English *loaf* (as well as Ice. *hleifur*, Nor. *leiv*, Ger. *Leib*) – which have been carrying the sense of 'a portion of bread baked in one mass' since the 12th century, as a result of transplanting its original sense onto *bread* under the influence of the Viking *brauð*.

However, before any bread may be baked and consumed, seeds need to be sown in the soil prepared by a *plough* – a basic farming tool representing one of the chief advances in the history of agriculture. However, in all likelihood one would not talk about *plough* as 'an implement for cutting furrows in soil' if it had not been for the ON *plógr* from which that particular sense was transplanted upon OE *plōh* – originally used to refer to 'a measure of land' or more precisely 'what a yoke of oxen could plough in a day'. Both the forms descend from PGmc. **plôguz* 'plough' (might be based upon the root **pleg-* 'to beat, strike, whip')[24] – a common Germanic word found in many of its daughter languages as carrying the same denotation: OFris. *plōch*, Ice. *plógur*, Nor. *plog*, OHG *pfluog*, Ger. *Pflug*, Du. *ploeg*; and additionally borrowed by non-Germanic peoples, hence: OSl. *plugu*, Lit. *plugas*; yet unknown to the Goths. However, *plógr* in fact is not native to the North Germanic peoples and must have been borrowed, as the original name they used to refer to that type of agricultural implement was *arðr* (the first colonizers of Iceland also made use of it), cognate with Goth. *arjan* and OE *ærian*, which probably differed in size and shape from *plógr*. Its name appears for the first time in an Eddic poem titled *Rígsþula*[25] in which distinction is made between *arðr* and *plóg*. What is more, other Germanic peoples made use of their own names as well: OHG *medela* (akin to OE *mattuck* 'mattock'), Goth. *hoha* (akin to OHG *huohili* 'small arable land'), and finally the genuine Old English *sulh* deriving from PGmc. **sulhiz*

[23] Due to the fact that the earliest breads were unleavened, the relation between *half* and *hlīfan* would suggest that Germanic peoples knew well its leavened version, whereas Slavic peoples did not – hence they borrowed **hlaibaz* to refer to the type of bread new to them.

[24] *Plough* might have been loaned from one of the north Italic languages and is thought to have originally denoted 'a wheeled heavy plough' common by the 5th century AD in Roman northwestern Europe. According to Pliny, it comes from Rhaetian (non-IE language) – Rhaetic *plaumorati* 'a wheeled heavy plough'.

[25] *Rígsþula* describes the creation of three classes of Norse society, as represented by: *Þræll* 'slave', *Karl* 'freeman' and *Jarl* 'nobleman'.

'plough' (OHG *suohili* 'little plough'), cognate with Latin *sulcus* 'furrow'. However, due to the transference of the meaning carried by the Viking *plógr* upon the Anglo-Saxon *plōh*, *sulh* entered the route to oblivion, and even though still occasionally found in the Middle English period (ME *sūl*, *sulle*; and now only dialectal – *sullow*), it was *plough* with its new meaning to constitute the primary word.

The most interesting case, however, is provided by the word not particularly intriguing at first glance – *bloom*. Its primary sense, that of 'flower, blossom', comes from ON *blóm*, as the almost identical lexeme *blōma* was used by the Anglo-Saxons to denote 'mass, lump of metal', whence *bloomer* 'the one who worked in a bloom-smithy', and *gold-blōma* – a compound most probably denoting 'a golden mass', or less likely 'marigold', since *blōma* is not found in Old English as referring to 'flower', yet the corresponding forms in all other Teutonic languages carry that particular sense – OS *blōmo*, OFris. *blōma*, OHG *bluomo*, Goth. *bloma*. What is more, a similar compound appears in OLG *golth-blómo*, Du. *goud-bloem*, Ger. *Gold-blume*, Swed. *guld-blomma* – with all of them pertaining to 'marigold'. Furthermore, as far as the ancestry of *blóm*, as well as its cognates, is concerned, these may be traced back to PGmc. **blômô* 'flower', itself deriving from the root **blô-* ('to bloom, flower') the extention of which in the form of **blôs-* gave rise to the proper Anglo-Saxon word for 'bloom, flower' – OE *blōstma* (whence ModE. *blossom*) as well as ON *blómstr* 'bloom, blossom' (synonymous with *blóm* which additionally, in its plural form *blómi*, was used as a metaphor denoting 'prosperity'), MLG *blossem*, or Du. *bloesem*. Even though almost identical in the form, it is difficult to connect the meanings carried by ON *blóm* and OE *blōma*, therefore they may either represent two separate words or the latter might have lost the basic meaning of 'flower' (otherwise present in all other Teutonic languages) with its secondary sense of 'lump of metal' remaining as the only one. However, even if it is a question of the former case, both of them appear to have evolved from the same source, represented by the suffixed Proto-Germanic form **blô-môn-*, ultimately descending from the sense 'to thrive, bloom', with the Old English semantic development remaining quite obscure. Nonetheless, due to the similarity between the native and Scandinavian forms, the peculiar Anglo-Saxon *blōma* eventually came to denote 'flower', becoming synonymous with its Old Norse sister, and as such surviving into Modern English in the form of *bloom*, not having, however, lost its genuine meaning, though probably mostly known to those dealing with metallurgy.

At this point a shift will be made from daily fare and work to the night's rest, thus bringing under discussion the word *dream*. Although its form represents the legitimate continuation of OE *drēam*, its modern reference to 'a vision experienced in sleep' derives from (or alternatively

may be seen as reinforced by) the Norse cognate *draumr* (Ice. *draumr*, Nor. *drøm*). The Old English literature exhibits *drēam* as denoting 'joy, mirth, music, revelry' and as Barber (1993: 132) explains, it appeared "in descriptions of the pleasures of the warriors relaxing in the hall over their ale or mead, and of the music accompanying those pleasures". However, it has been suggested that 'sleeping vision' might have been a secondary meaning attached to *drēam*, yet avoided in writing to prevent confusion with the primary sense. What is more, its Old Saxon cognate *drōm* carried the sense of both 'joy, revelry' as well as 'sleeping vision', and in the light of the close relation between the "English Saxons" and the "Old Saxons" it might be inferred that the latter sense was either lost or indeed avoided in the speech of the Anglo-Saxons, or the Old English *dream* underwent a shift in meaning (with the Old Saxon form exhibiting an intermediate stage). Furthermore, as far as the roots of *dream* are concerned, these may be ascribed to PGmc. **draumaz* 'dream' evolved from PGmc. **draugmaz* standing for 'deception, illusion, phantasm' and itself closely related to PGmc. **draugaz*, that is 'delusion, ghost' (ON *draugr* 'ghost, apparition', or OE *drēag* 'spectre, apparition'), ultimately based upon the PGmc. root **drug-* 'to deceive' (hence Ger. *trügen* with the same denotation). However, due to the Anglo-Saxon and Old Saxon usage of *dream* in relation to 'music, revelry', **draumaz* might be seen as additionally denoting 'cheering, singing, merriment', and as such would point to the PGmc. root **dru-* pertaining to 'making noise'. [26] These, however, are only hypotheses and the mystery behind the Old English *dream* still remains unsettled. As for the words which enabled the Anglo-Saxons to talk about 'sleeping visions', the two following were in use: *swefn* – literally 'sleep' (*unswefn* 'bad dream'), deriving from PGmc. **swefnaz* 'sleep' (ON *svefn* 'sleep, dream'; akin to *hypnosis*); and *mǣting*, additionally accompanied by the OE verb *mǣtan* 'to have a dream', of uncertain origin, though it might bear some relation to OE *mētan* 'to paint, design' (akin to Goth. *maitan* and Ice. *meita* 'to cut' from PGmc. **maitijanan* 'to cut'). When it comes to the Middle English period, one may encounter 'sleeping vision' as rendered by the continuations of both *swēven* (ModE. archaic *sweven* 'dream, vision') and *mēten*, whereas *drēm* appears as carrying both the native and foreign denotations, with the earliest substitution of the Anglo-Saxon *sweven* with the Scandinavian *dream* on the territory corresponding to the densest Scandinavian settlement. What is more, Middle English literature demonstrates the co-occurrence of these three lexemes, and *Le Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Mallory may serve as an example: "The Kynge of the Hondred Knyghtis that tyme **mette** a wondir **dreme** two nyghtes before the batayle: that there blew a grete wynde and

[26] See: *WIS*.

blew downe hir castels and hir townys, and aftir that com a watir and bare hit all away. And all that herde of that **swevyn** seyde hit was a tokyn of grete batayle" (Vinaver 1971: 17).

The notion of deceiving, upon which *dream* was originally based, is connected with one more word that owes its modern sense to the speech of the Norsemen. The lexeme in question is represented by *dwell* as its initial Old English meaning was 'to mislead, deceive, lead astray or lead into error, make a fool of', at that time found in the forms *dwellan* and *dwelian*. However, under the influence of an akin Old Norse verb *dvelja* (Dan. *dvæle*, Swe. *dväljas* 'to dwell') carrying a wide array of denotations, such as 'to delay, keep back, tarry, stay, stop oneself, abide', the Anglo-Saxon verb entered the process of semantic shift and thus appeared in the Middle English period as *dwellen* meaning 'to delay, be tardy in coming or starting, tarry, linger' (the trace of 'linger' is still present in the phrase *dwell upon*); 'to hold back or restrain (lust), postpone, detain'; as well as 'to remain (somewhere or with somebody), stay', and finally, from the 13th century, 'to have one's abode, reside, live'. However, ME *dwellen*, also rendered by forms such as *dwelen*, *dweillen* or *dwollen*, was curiously accompanied by another ME verb *dwēlen*, additionally spelt as *dwellen*, carrying quite a familiar sense 'to deceive, delude' as well as 'to be misled, go wrong in belief or judgement, wander, stray'. The two Middle English verbs – *dwellen* and *dwēlen* – might be seen as separate developments of Old English *dwellan* and *dwelian* respectively, though the additional Middle English spelling of the latter rendered by *dwellen*, as well as the shared meaning of the Old English forms, may point to a coalescence of the two. However, it should be noted that during the period in question the original Anglo-Saxon signification became quite rare, having given way to the denotations carried by the Norse *dvelja*, those successfully transplanted onto the English verb. Nonetheless, in *Cursor Mundi* one still may read: "Quen yee sa bede your war to sell, Þe fole marchandis eth to **duell** [to deceive]"[27], yet it is the Scandinavian meaning that prevails, hence in *Lydgate's Troy Book* one reads: "Ȝet neuer-þe-less, as somme bokis telle, Þat þese kynges no lenger wolde **dwelle** [to delay, tarry], But as fast as Paris was a-goon þei toke a schip and folweden a-noon"[28], in *The assumption of the Virgin*: "Fere yow not lady for I schal wyth you **duelle** [to stay]"[29], and finally, in *Mandeville's Travels*: "In þat contree ben many ipotaynes, þat **dwellen** [live] som tyme in the water, and somtyme on the lond"[30]. As far as the origin of both OE *dwellan* and ON *dvelja* is concerned,

[27] See: *MED.M2*, *marchaunt* entry.
[28] See: Bergen (1906: 272).
[29] See: Greg (1915: 53).
[30] See: *MWCD*, 27a.

these two are assumed to have emerged from PGmc. **dwaljanan*, itself related to Common Germanic roots **dwal-*, **dwul-* and **dwel-* which at the same time represent the source of OE *dwola* (also *gedwola* or *gedweola*) 'error, heresy, madness' (hence f.e. OE *se mennisca gedwola* 'human error'), ON *dvǫl* 'delay', OS *bidwellian* 'to hinder', OHG *twellen* 'to delay, harass', MDu. *dwellen* 'to stun, perplex'. However, it has been noted[31] that words clustered around the above mentioned roots have somewhat incoherent meanings, these being 'tarry' and 'lead astray' which in turn constitute the source of 'have one's abode' and 'be stupid' respectively – hence Goth. *dwals* 'foolish', OE *dol* 'foolish' (ModE. *dull*), OHG *tol* 'foolish' (Ger. *toll* 'great, awesome'). What is more, the root **dwal-* is also identified with 'being confused, bewildered' or 'numb, drugged, intoxicated' – hence Dan. *dvale* 'trance, stupor', *dvaelbær* 'narcotic berry'. According to Wyld (Liberman 2008: 60), the meaning 'to hinder, delay' "is the connecting link between that of 'wandering' and 'dwelling'; to wander, having lost one's way; to linger, delay, in doubt which way to go,' & finally, 'to remain where one is'", whereas the ultimate sense of the roots **dwal-*, **dwel-* suggested by him is 'to lead astray in the dark'. At the same time, Lübben (Liberman 2008: 61) reconstructs the original meaning of *dwellan* as 'to move in a circle', basing it upon MHG *twellen*, which according to Liberman is more convincing since "a person moving in a circle gets nowhere (is delayed) and labors under the illusion of making progress (is led astray)".

There is also such a Scandinavian semantic loan which may be seen as a remnant of the Viking ruling system in England, the loan pertaining to the Norse-derived ranks of society as found on the Danelaw territory, the one embraced by Modern English <u>*earl*</u> – a lexeme which shall require much more space for its complex history to be told. This 'nobleman of high rank' as it is known to us, originally, in the form of OE *eorl*, represented 'a warrior (often a brave one), hero, leader, chief' as well as 'a man in general or that of high birth'. As such, until the 10th century, *eorl* made its presence mainly in poetry – *Beowulf* may serve as an example: "Wyrd oft nereð unfægne **eorl** þonne his ellen deah" – "Fate often spares the undoomed warrior when his courage holds out" or "Deað bið sella **eorla** gehwylcum þonne edwitlif" – "Death is better for any warrior than a life in shame".[32] The two quotations are evident of the ethos associated with the Anglo-Saxon *eorlas*, as Cavill (1999: 13-14) explains: "vengeance is a social responsibility for anyone, whereas the high code of honour embraced by the *eorl* [...] makes death preferable to shame: this is a social distinction in the heroic code (...)". Nevertheless, the time of the Scandinavian rule in England and the resulting

[31] See: <u>Liberman (2008: 60-61).</u>
[32] See: <u>Cavill (1999: 13, 58).</u>

appearance of the Viking 'governors' known as *jarls* brought about a steady shift in meaning to the linguistically affiliated Anglo-Saxon *eorlas*. It is interesting to note, however, that amongst all the Germanic societies, North Germanic peoples constituted the only one to make a practical use of "earls", yet the role applied to those was secondary – it was 'man' or 'warrior' that represented the original Germanic denotation carried by PGmc. **eralaz* (-*ulaz*, -*ilaz*), as such also known to the earliest Norsemen and common to all the Saxons (OS *erl*). Unfortunately, no conclusion has been reached as far as the circumstances which contributed to ON *jarl* having acquired the role of 'a nobleman in dignity next to the king' are concerned, as well as the degree of affiliation between **eralaz, *erular* and **erilaz*, though some of the theories may suffice to form quite an interesting and satisfying background. There exist several Proto-Norse runic inscriptions containing the word *erilaR* or *irilaR* (thus attesting PGmc **erilaz*) and the denotation attributed to those is usually that of 'rune-master' or 'rune-carver', yet in fact only two of those state clearly that *erilaR* was the writer of the given runes: *ek erilaR runōr wrītu* 'I, the *eril*, carve the runes' (Järsberg Runestone, Sweden); *e(k) erilaR fāhidō* 'I, the *eril*, painted' (Väsby bracteate, Sweden).[33] In the case of other inscriptions *erilaR* simply identifies himself as one: *ek WagigaR irilaR Agilamundon* 'I (am) WagigaR, Agilamundō's *eril*' (Rosseland Runestone, Norway); *ek erilaR* (Bratsberg brooch, Norway); *ek irilaR hroRaR* 'I am the *eril* hrōRaR' (a rock in Sigdal, Norway), *ek erilaR Asugisalaz Muha haite, gagaga* 'I, the *eril* of Āsugīsalaz, am called Muha', whereas *gagaga* may stand for a kind of battle chant (Kragehul I spear-shaft, Denmark). These, however, still do not clarify who exactly that quite a mysterious person was – "only the *eril* qualified to handle runes, or did the term imply a function of which knowledge of runes was only a part?" (Spurkland 2005: 50). The obscure status and origin of *erilaR* has also been attached to a Germanic tribe known as *Heruli*. They originated on the Danish islands but due to their expulsion by the Dani tribe they migrated to the Black Sea, on the coasts of which their presence is reported for the first time (by the Roman writers) as falling on the second half of the third century. However, even though engaged in the migration, they are thought to have maintained contact with their Scandinavian homeland and thereby transmitted the runic writing to their North Germanic kinsmen.[34] Therefore, it would be *Herul* originally representing the name of an accomplished rune-carver, Proto-Norse **erulaR* which later gave rise to **erilaR*, a general term, as opposed to the former one applied to a rune-carving member of *Heruli* tribe. However, there still

[33] See: Spurkland (2005: 49-51).

[34] In the year 508 Heruli suffered defeat by the hands of Germanic Lombards and many of them are said to have returned to their Scandinavia homeland.

remains the question of *jarl*. Its Proto-Norse version is rendered by ***erlaR* and a suggestion has been made that ***erilaR* represents its earlier form – in the same way PGmc. ***karilaz* 'man' (attested by a Finnish loan *karilas* 'old man') gave rise to ON *karl* 'freeman'. In phonological terms, it might have been "abnormally early medial syncope" (Syrett 2012: 171).[35] As far as the development of ***erilaR-jarl* meaning is concerned, relying upon the assumption that the two are somehow connected, at first it may have stood for 'rune-magician' representing the Proto-Norse priesthood, the office which later could have been secularised, and those skilled at runic arts participated in the formation of their own upper class, the upper class of rune-masters, or, if understood in a much broader sense, the upper class of the learned ones. And as members of the upper class they began to be referred to by means of the term *jarl*, thus sharing this secular title with the upper class of chieftains, which may indicate a process of ***erilaR-jarl* generalization. At this point, the discussion may be aided by the material provided by an Old Scandinavian poem titled *Rígsþula*, that is 'Lay of Ríg', describing the emergence of three classes of Viking society: *Thrall* 'slave' (ON *Þræll*), *Karl* 'freeman', and finally *Jarl* 'warrior, chief, nobleman'.[36] Out of them only *Jarl* learned runes and magic, amongst other aristocratic skills he was obliged to master, thus forming the upper class of educated noblemen.[37] However, his primary occupation was warriorship, therefore ***erilaR* does not necessarily need to refer to 'rune-master' but an educated warrior who mastered, among others, the knowledge of runes. Plowright (2006: 145) argues that "[n]othing in the linguistic or historical evidence suggests *Erilaz* means 'rune magician'. [...] *ek Erilaz* is 'I the earl', indicating a warrior of high standing or a commander who is stating his authority".[38] Whereas *Heruli* would stand for 'army people', not a tribe, but

[35] The process of syncope, falling on the period between 500-800, led, among others, to the elision of short vowels in unstressed syllables.

[36] *Rígsþula* ascribes the emergence of the three classes of Viking society to the Norse god Heimdall who, having acquired the name Ríg, set out on a journey during which he visited three different houses. In each of them a married couple offered him food and shelter for the night, as a result of which, after nine months, each woman gave birth to a child. The poor one bore a son dark in colour and ugly, yet strong – the progenitor of the race of slaves, whom she named *Thrall*. The woman of moderate means bore a son neat in appearance, whose hair was red and face ruddy – she named him *Karl* – he was the ancestor of all the freemen. Finally, the rich woman bore a son of great beauty, who was white in color and whose hair was blond, and it was him who became the forebear of kings and warrior nobility, the one known under the name *Jarl*.

[37] According to *Rígsþula*, it was *Ríg* who passed the runic knowledge to him.

[38] It may be useful to note that runic inscriptions (usually the oldest ones) were often carved on warrior equipment, weapons, and jewellery. Their presence on those, with a simultaneous inclusion of an ample number of names, "can be interpreted as the expression of a ruling class" for which "runic script may have filled a need for writing of some sort to express

a war band consisting of warriors belonging to various Germanic tribes. The only real connection between *Heruli*, *Erilaz* and *Jarl*, according to Plowright (2006: 148), is their stemming from "a military root word", therefore all of them should be seen as originally representing warriors.[39] Indeed, as has been stated, **eral-*, **erul-*, **eril-* denoted 'warrior',[40] yet in the Scandinavian society the warrior appears to have acquired a new role, thus becoming *jarl*, which was then passed upon the Anlgo-Saxon *eorl*. But how exactly did the whole process advance? The period of the Viking rule in England brought the imposition of Danish governors – *jarls* – upon particular shires, thus reducing the function of their Anglo-Saxon equivalent – OE *ealdorman* – 'a nobleman who held an office inferior only to that of a king'. Its name, as built upon OE *eald* 'old', originally denoted 'an old man', yet not only old in age but primarily in knowledge.[41] In the course of time, the role of 'a ruler and administrator of the region' within the Danelaw territory shifted upon the native *eorl*, thus contributing to *eorlas* being identified with the function of governors. Nonetheless, outside the territory in question, Anglo-Saxon *ealdormen* still held their genuine position, even though it was doomed to be lost. In the 10th century the Old English form with the Norse denotation attached entered the process of gaining steady recognition. First, only Scandinavian leaders were referred to as *eorlas* in vernacular, yet during the reign of Cnut the Great (1016-1035), the title gained special popularity on account of which, not only Scandianvians, but also Englishmen, were those to whom the *eorl* designation was applied, which term of rank thus became the successor of the native *ealdorman*. The period following the Norman Conquest contributed to the further consolidation of the title due to its inclusion in the terminology assigned to the Norman feudal hierarchy. The earls performed the function of king's governors in the provinces, being in charge of their defence and presiding over the shire court (a duty they shared with a local bishop). The importance attached to the *earl* title contributed to its becoming the equivalent of French *count* after the year 1066. The whole process, in turn, resulted in quite a dramatic change of reference carried by the legitimate Anglo-Saxon *ealderman* – such a hierarchically prominent

ownership or prestige on the one hand, and a cultural identity on the other" (Looijenga 2003: 31).

[39] Plowright (2006) provides other presumably affiliated forms: PGmc. **harjaz* 'army' which combined with **-il-* 'person belonging to' results in **harjilaz* 'army person'.

[40] In accordance with *WIS*, see: *erala* entry.

[41] Every shire was governed by an *ealdorman* representing its principal judicial officer, the leader of its armed forces, the supervisor of its internal regulations, as well as its interactions with the whole kingdom. This particular office was not rigidly hereditary, rather designated amongst families having already possessed it, and its bearer held it for life unless charged with treason or any other severe offence.

figure whose function came to be appropriated by the hitherto inferior *eorl*, thereby diminishing the former to no more than 'a local dignitary'.[42]

Finally, a word which "has been modified both with regard to pronunciation and meaning, and curiously enough has by that process been brought nearer to the verb from which it was originally derived" and therefore "[no] subtler linguistic influence can be imagined that this" (Jespersen's 1919: 68). The word in question is *gift* which owes its modern sense of 'a thing given' to ON *gipt* / *gift* (also 'endowment', *anda-gift* 'inspiration' *jarðligr giptir* 'earthly gifts') as its OE cognate *ġift* pertained to 'a payment for a wife', 'giving a woman in marriage' or 'marriage' in plural (*ġifta*). However, it should be noted that as such it was semantically related to its Norse counterpart's derivatives: *gipta* 'to give away in marriage', and *gipting* 'marriage of a woman' (hence Ice. *giptu-mál* 'marriage', *giptar-gáfa* 'wedding gift', *giptar-kveld* 'wedding eve', *giptar-vitni* 'wedding witness', *giptingar-dagr* 'a wedding day'). Both the Old English *ġift* and the Old Norse *gipt* are assumed to have originated from PGmc. **giftiz* (**gebanan* 'to give' + **-þiz*) 'the act of giving, gift' which also constitutes the source of Goth. *fragifts* 'engagement' and Ger. *Mitgift* 'dowry', hence the developments of **giftiz* as related to 'giving in marriage' may be seen as reflecting the treatment of matrimony as a bargain in the past. However, this proto-form bears relation to another reconstructed Proto-Germanic word for 'gift', which is **gebō*. This, in turn, yielded OE *ġiefu* – representing the proper Anglo-Saxon word for 'gift, giving' (akin to Goth. *giba*, OHG *geba* 'gift'), as well as ON *gjǫf* or *gjöf* standing for 'gift in a material sense, present' and found in expressions such as: *skipta gjöfum við e-n* 'to exchange gifts with one', *leiða e-n út með gjöfum* 'to dismiss one with gifts (at the end of the visit)'; or in compounds: *gjafa-skipti* 'exchange of gifts', *gjafa-laust*

[42] The three subsequent passages may illustrate a lexical route followed by 'a nobleman of a high rank, a governor of a territorial subdivision' in the English language: the end of the 9th century (or more precisely the Charter of King Alfred from 889) faces one with Æðelræd, the legitimate Anglo-Saxon viceroy of the Mercians, bearing the title *ealderman*: "[...] Æðelréd **ealderman** alle Mercna weotan tosomne to Gleaweceastre, biscopas, and aldermen, and alle his duguþe; and ðæt dyde be Ælfrédes cyninges gewitnesse and leáfe" – "[...] Æthelred alderman assembled all the witan of the Mercians together at Gloucester, bishops, and aldermen, and all his nobility; and did that with the knowledge and leave of king Alfred" (See: *ASD*); whereas the first half of the 11th century introduces one of the most powerful *eorlas* under Cnut the Great – Godwin, Earl of Essex: "Þe **Erl** Godwyne, þat þo was þe grettest lorde of al Engeland next þe kyng" (*The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, see: (IS 3)); finally, the post-Conquest period brings the equation of *earl* with *count*, "thus paving the way for the present signification of *earl* as one of the grades in the (French) scale of rank" (Jepersen 1919: 68) – "Innan hærfest com se **eorl** Rotbert ham into Normandi, And se **eorl** Rotbert of Flandran, And Eustatius, **eorl** of Bunan" (*Peterborough Chronicle*, see: (IS 3)).

'dismissed without gifts' or *gjafa-leysi* 'scanty gifts'. These, on the other hand, are indicative of the importance attached to gift giving in ancient times – a ritual synonymous with hospitality (it was obligatory to dismiss a departing visitor with a gift) or cementing friendship, a symbol implying the relationship between the giver and the receiver.[43] That significance might be seen as reflected in Anglo-Saxon *ġift* acquiring the denotation carried by its Norse cognate, thereby becoming a semantic doublet of the native *ġiefu*, and hence in the Middle English period both *yift(e)* and *yēv(e)* respectively are used to refer to 'that which is given or offered, present', with the former one carrying somewhat broader application (also 'reward, payment for services', 'an offering made to God or pagan deity', and even a 'bribe') and paired by phonologically Norse-derived *gift(e)*. In such a way, not only the meaning but the initial sound as well (otherwise one would make use of **yift* resulting from the Old English process of palatalization), represent the linguistic remnants of the historical events from before a thousand years owed to the Viking raiders.

Conclusion

The above presented analysis, even though pertaining to just a single, tiny group of lexemes resulting from the Scandinavian influence, is hoped to serve as an exhaustive example of the undoubtedly intriguing and undeniably incomparable linguistic peculiarities which occurred as a consequence of the Anglo-Scandinavian language contact and contributed to the present shape of the English language. The thorough examination of each vocabulary item undertaken above has been intended to provide a much broader approach to the question of Norse contributions to the English word stock, and at the same time to bring to light the facets involved in the path of their evolution, eventually contributing to their becoming a part of the language by means and on account of which this paper has been created. However, it ought not to be forgotten that all the linguistic interactions inscribed in the Anglo-Scandinavian co-existence and the ultimate outcome those yielded should be credited to their sharing the same immediate ancestor – Proto-Germanic, hence the prominence given to this parent speech in the course of the present work.

When considering the interaction and evolution of the ultimately surviving Scandinavian vocabulary items and their Old English equivalents, whether affiliated or unrelated, on their path into modern English, one most often deals with the latter having been eventually replaced or joined by the foreign lexemes or forms. However, a small number of those persists as instances of subjection to the Norse denotation transmission. Therefore, if it

[43] See: *IED*; Poole (2005).

had not been for the Viking invasions and settlement on the Anglo-Saxon soil, the likelihood is that a modern English speaker would talk about: "spreading butter on a *loaf* slice", "kneading *loaf* dough", "earning one's *loaf*", or "being a *loaf*winner", whereas *bread* on account of its original denotation might accompany the former in a phrase "*loaf bread*", that is 'bread morsel' or 'bread crumb'; further chances are that Englishmen would use a *sullow* to till the land, in which circumstances its quantity might be still referred to by means of *plough*, and thus a phrase "a *plough* of land" might then be in use; moreover, one would not be able to employ expressions such as: "trees covered in *blooms*", "roses in full *bloom*", "a *blooming* orchard", and alike; yet they might describe a bad *sweven* waking them up at night, in which case, spending time in joy and revelry would continue to be referred to as *dreaming*; moreover, accusing someone of *dwelling* another person, if they turned out to be unfaithful to or have misled him or her, might be hypothesized as well; furthermore, one might be fond of reading tales about brave *earls* fighting malevolent dragons – yet then, books expounding on English history would provide commentaries on *aldermen* of Northumbria, Sussex, Chester, Cambridge, or Kent, whereas one of the most popular teas might be known by the name of "*Alderman* Grey"; finally, one would stand chances of wrapping up a birthday *yive*, as *gift*, or rather *yift* – bearing in mind that it was the speech of the Norsemen which contributed to the hard pronunciation of the initial stop consonant – due to its original reference to 'payment for a wife' would be likely to have either passed out of use or undergone semantic shift, yet following a different route than the one initiated by Old Norse.

Obviously, these are only loose assumptions and one may never predict the path followed by lexemes or a given set of those. However, such hypotheses do not utterly lack basis and even if these assumptions would not be congruent with the outcomes which would have arisen had the Viking invasion never taken place, one circumstance may be taken for granted – the vocabulary items in question would be known to modern English speakers as different words – carrying different meanings, used in different contexts. And even though the lexical group under analysis may be perceived as not particularly important due to the limited number of items included, it ought to be emphasized that all the meanings it embraces – all those that an English speaker is so familiar with and accustomed to – are owed to a chain of events involving the warlike Viking raiders and peaceful settlers. Hence, the vocabulary in question may be said to have preserved the history dating back about 1000 years, thus enabling one to: bake or buy a *loaf* of *bread*, admire *blossoms* in *bloom* (the two being remarkable linguistic manifestations of the Anglo-Scandinavian co-existence), drink *Earl* Grey, *plough* the fields, *dwell* on Earth and *dwell upon* its issues, take pleasure in receiving *gifts*, and

finally, have good and bad *dreams* at night as well as those that contribute to being lost in reverie.

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