

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY – FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ELT METHODOLOGY**

Relationships between the borrowed Old Norse adjectives in English and their Old English counterparts

MA THESIS

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Abstract:

The aim of this MA thesis is to examine the relationship between six word pairs, each comprising an Old Norse adjectival borrowing in Middle English and its Old English counterpart along with its Middle English reflex for further reference. The inquiry into their relationship involves an analysis of: their (i) formal aspects, (ii) syntactic properties, (iii) semantic fields and (iv) external factors possibly contributing to their obsolescence or survival, such as the restriction to certain text types or geographic localization, as suggested by the individual linguistic profiles in the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* and *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. The description of individual semantic fields of the given words is based on their semantic classification within the *Historical Thesaurus of English*.

This analysis is based on the occurrences of the individual words as taken from the dictionaries *Middle English Dictionary* and *Dictionary of Old English*, and related corpora *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* and *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English: version 2*. The factors contributing to the survival or obsolescence of the given words are highly individual to each of the words but differ for the native lexis and the incoming borrowings. Those factors facilitating the spread of the entering foreign lexis within the speech community are vital for their following entrenchment and thereby survival, while for the native lexis it is mainly the independence from the patterns that are increasingly weakened and finally abandoned in Middle English, as in the case of numerous ablaut derived forms.

Key words:

Old Norse, Old English, Middle English, semantic fields, competition, competitive relationship, usage overlap, lexical borrowings, Old Norse impositions, obsolescence, localization, text type restrictions, genre restrictions, adjectives, *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), *Dictionary of Old English* (DOE), *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (DOEC), *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English: version 2* (PPCME2), *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME), *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (LALME)