Revisiting the semantic history of *dream*

An analysis of the semantic development of *dream* and its place in the Anglo-Saxon
literary tradition.

Andrea de Vries (5812755)
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Supervisor: Dr. M.P.J. Cole
Second reader: dr. N.K. de Haas
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Abstract: This paper gives an overview of the theories concerning the semantic shift of *dream* from the Old English period, in which it is attested as 'joy, mirth, noisy merriment or music', to the Middle English period, when it is also attested with its present day meaning. It shows that the essentially Christian Anglo-Saxon literary tradition might have concealed the more neutral, unattested sense of 'sleeping vision', instead of it being a case of semantic displacement because of Old Norse. It does this by carrying out a thorough analysis of the contexts in which *dream* was used during the Old and Middle English time periods.

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1. Introduction and theoretical background

The modern English word *dream* presumably derives from an Indo-European form **draugmaz* (*OED3* dream, n.2 and adj.). In Proto-Germanic it became **draumaz*, which gave rise to Old English *dream* and its Germanic cognates, such as Old Frisian *dram,* Middle Dutch *droom,* Old Saxon *drōm,* Old High German *troum,* Old Swedish *drömber,* Old Danish *drøm* and Old Norse *draumr.* All of these cognates, expect for Old English *dream*, were used in the sense of 'sleeping vision'. In Old Saxon the word had multiple connotations: 'joy, pleasure, ecstasy, music, song' and 'sleeping vision'. In Old English however, this 'sleeping vision' meaning is unattested. Old English *dream* meant 'joy, mirth, noisy merriment or music' (*OED3* dream, n.1). There are no recorded instances of Old English *dream* denoting 'sleeping vision' (Lindheim, 1949, p. 196). Old English textual records suggest that *sweven* was the main term to indicate the sense of 'sleeping vision' (Lindheim, 1949, p. 197). *Sweven* meant both 'sleeping vision' and 'sleep' (*OED3* sweven, n.). *Sweven* derives from the Indo-European form *swepno-, which later became Germanic *swefno-. It had Germanic cognates as well: Old Norse *svefn,* which mainly meant 'sleep' and in some cases 'sleeping vision', and Old Saxon *sweƀan,* which had two connotations: 'sleeping vision' and 'sleep' (Ehrensperger, 1931, p. 87).

According to the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED* drēm, n.2), the sense of 'joy, mirth, noisy merriment, music' for *dream* started to be used less in early Middle English. Instead, a 'sleeping vision' connotation started to be recorded for the word *dream.* The word *dream* also begins to replace *sweven* as the primary word for 'sleeping vision'. As the first instances of *dream* with the meaning 'sleeping vision' and the replacement of *sweven* occur in texts from the East Midlands and the North of England, where the settlement of Scandinavians was the greatest, the word's shift in meaning is often seen as an example of a semantic loan from Old Norse (van Gelderen, 2006; *OED3* dream n.2 and adj.)

In the 9th century, Scandinavians settled in the North-Eastern parts of the British Isles (Van Gelderen, 2006). The Scandinavians spoke Old Norse, a language that also had a Germanic origin and thus had much in common with Old English. This helps explain the extensive impact of Old Norse on Old English. The influence of Old Norse on the vocabulary of English is substantial. Some estimate the number of Scandinavian loans to be around 1,000 (Minkova, 2005, as cited in van Gelderen, 2006). What is remarkable is the non-technical nature of the Old Norse words that Old English borrowed, including *anger, egg, give, sister* and *window*.

Some Scandinavian loans caused a meaning shift in the original Old English words. An example of this is *gift*, which originally meant 'payment for a wife'. Old Norse influence caused its meaning to shift to the present day meaning of 'gift' (Van Gelderen, 2006, p. 96). This is called a semantic loan, when the word itself exists in two languages with different meanings, and the meaning of one language replaces the meaning in the other language. So, the word itself is not a loanword, only the meaning of the word is borrowed.

The Old Norse word for *dream, draumr,* only denoted 'sleeping vision', it did not have a 'joy, music' connotation. It was also the predominant word to mean 'sleeping vision' in Old Norse. Old Norse *swefn* denoted 'sleep' for all but a few instances, in which it does meaning 'sleeping vision' (Ehrensperger, 1931, p. 87). During this period of language contact between Old English and Old Norse, the 'sleeping vision' meaning could have been loaned into Old English. Because of the presence of Old Norse this 'sleeping vision' became more prevalent, and the 'joy, music' connotation was gradually lost from Old English. This can be seen in Middle English East Midlands texts where the two meanings coexist (Lindheim, 1949). As the word *dream* was reinforced by the presence of Old Norse, it became a more common way to say 'sleeping vision' than *sweven*. This replacement of *sweven* by *dream* also occurs most often in the heavily Scandanavianised areas (*MED* drēm, n.2).

However, there is also another explanation, which is of a native kind. The modern meaning of 'sleeping vision' could have been an unrecorded secondary meaning of *dream.* This would mean that *dream* would have had multiple connotations: firstly, the sense of 'joy, noisy merriment, mirth and music' and secondly the meaning of 'sleeping vision', as was the case in Old Saxon, which was closely related to Old English (Ehrensperger, 1931, p. 87). The second meaning could have been avoided in literature, as the primary meaning of 'joy, noisy merriment, mirth and music' was more predominant. Lindheim (1949, p. 200) argues that the 'sleeping vision' connotation could be unattested, because the 'joy, noisy merriment' etc. meaning probably had a very pagan connotation and was inseparable from the Germanic warrior and images of the mead hall. Thus, the secondary meaning was exiled from Christian records, as the word was tainted for Anglo-Saxon writers.

In this case, the shift in the meaning of *dream* would not have been a case of semantic displacement because of Old Norse, as the sense of 'sleeping vision' already existed and was used in Old English, albeit unrecorded in literature. So, the 'sleeping vision' meaning existed in Old English and contact with Old Norse would have supported the greater use of this Old English meaning. As the Old Norse word for *dream, draumr,* only denoted 'sleeping vision', this sense becomes more prevalent in English when the two languages came in contact.

Further indirect support for a possible native explanation for the history of *dream* in English is provided by Pons-Sanz (2017). Just like the word *dream,* the word *bread* has traditionally been considered an example of semantic displacement due to Old Norse influence. In her study, she challenges the traditional view that Old English *bread* originally only meant 'piece, morsel of bread' and changed its meaning because of Old Norse influence. This traditional view would mean that Old English *brēad* acquired the new connotation 'bread', which was more often expressed by Old English *hlāf,* because of the influence of its Viking Age Norse cognates (e.g. Old Icelandic *brauð,* which meant 'bread'). By researching

the semantic change of *bread* during the Old and Middle English language periods, she concludes that Norse influence is not needed in order to account for the semantic history of Modern English *bread*. She shows that while 'piece, morsel' is the predominant meaning, a secondary meaning referring to 'food substance' exists, which later become the principle meaning. This notion suggests that the idea that *dream* had minor, secondary meanings that acquired greater importance in Early Middle English is more plausible.

In both cases, *dream* and *bread,* contact with Old Norse could have reinforced the growing importance of the secondary meanings. This ties in with Versloot's ideas on what he calls 'lexical support'. In recent work (Versloot, forthcoming), which reconsiders the Old Norse impact on Old English, he suggests that when two languages have share words or meanings for one word, these shared words or meanings will win out as opposed to the words or meanings that just one language has. His discussion of the word *knife* exemplifies the idea of lexical support. He mentions that it is sometimes considered a loan from Old Norse *knifr*, even though it is attested in a multitude of West Germanic languages, including even late Old English *cnīf.* He mentions that West-Germanic languages had both the words **knīfa-* and **saxa-* for 'knife' with different specialized meanings. According to Versloot, the current distribution of the reflexes of the synonyms *knīfa- and *saxa- (English knife, Dutch mes, West Frisian mês, North Frisian knif and Danish kniv) shows the influence of language contact between different Germanic languages, and the effect of lexical support the distribution of these synonyms. He says that the same may hold for English in contact with Scandinavian, so that *cnīf* existed in Old English as well as the *saxa- reflex, but that the former was reinforced by contact with Old Norse and thus became the general term.

The present paper does not set out to prove either a native or contact-induced development for the 'sleeping vision' sense of *dream* in English, because there is not enough data to prove either idea. By carrying out a substantial overview of the contexts in which

dream was used in the Old English and Middle English time periods, it hopes instead to show that the essentially Christian nature of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition might well have obscured the more neutral secondary sense of 'sleeping vision'. Certain words in Old English with strong connotations associated with Germanic culture are explicitly Christianised. This happens for instance in *Cædmon's Hymn*, where *rices weard* 'kingdom's guardian' and *dryhten* 'lord' are modified to *heofonrices Weard* 'heaven-kingdom's guard' and *ece dryhten* 'eternal lord'.

Old English *dream* with the sense of 'revelry, noise, mirth' was heavily associated in the Anglo-Saxon conscious with the revelry of the mead hall and thus with pagan warrior culture. There is a deliberate effort in the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition to ingrain the word with Christian associations. From a Christian perspective, the word was tainted to such a degree that Anglo-Saxon writers avoided using it to denote the sense of 'sleeping vision', preferring instead Old English, *sweven*, which had no warrior culture associations. The present paper's discussion of how *dream* was used by Anglo-Saxon writers militates in favour of the view that a secondary meaning of the word, that was of less concern to Anglo-Saxon Christian writers, might have existed in speech, but not in writing.

The present paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the use of *dream* in Old English, using data taken from the *Dictionary of Old English: A to I* (*DOE: A to I* dream, n). It also provides a quantitative study on the Christian use of *dream* in Old English. Using data from Lindheim (1949) and the *Middle English dictionary* (*MED* drēm, n.2), section 3 evaluates the use of *dream* during the Middle English period. The paper finishes with a conclusion in section 4.

2. The use of *dream* in Old English

A number of Old English words seemed to have signified concepts that were so vital to the Anglo-Saxon mind that they held a special position in the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. Lindheim (1949, p. 202) gives Old English *spēd* as an example of this. According to him, *spēd* is comparable to *dream*, as it is equal in importance and it conveyed numerous meanings that were modified as well. As with *dream,* an array of modifiers was used to give *spēd* multiple connotations (e.g. *land-, woruld-, wundor-,* etc.). *Spēd* had six different meanings, of which 'abundance, wealth' was the most frequent, 'power' was frequent as well and the present day meaning of 'speed, quickness' was quite rare. This means that with *spēd* we are on safer ground than with dream, because the present day meaning for *spēd* is attested in Old English, albeit very rarely, but the use of *spēd* by the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition opens up the possibility of *dream* having other unrecorded meanings.

Traces of the sense of 'quickness, speed' for *spēd* existed in Old English. An example of this meaning is found in Genesis B, 2667:

> *Him ða broðor þry* **spedum** *miclum hældon hygesorge heardum wordum*
>
> "Then the three brothers very quickly spoke to him, soothing his heart-sorrow with firm words"[1]

However, those few instances are practically inconsequential compared to the predominance of the other senses. Those other senses are much greater in frequency of use in Old English and can be found for example in *Beowulf*. *Here-spēd* and *wig-spēd* were both faculties required and longed for in battle, which empowered men to be courageous, successful and wise. Other examples of these senses are in *Genesis A*. When the people began

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[1] Modern English translations of the Old English and Middle English are my own or rely on either Lindheim (1949) or on the Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry Project (https://anglosaxonpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/).

to build the Tower of Babel for instance, they lost their *spǣce spēd* 'power of speech' and God punished them with his *mihta spēd* 'mighty power'. The Genesis poet also indicates that God is an almighty Lord with phrases such as *mægna spēd.* Lindheim notes that these other meanings seemed to have signified concepts that were so vital to the Anglo-Saxon mind that they mostly obscured the idea of 'quickness, speed' (Lindheim, 1949, p. 204). He then shows that all Old English meanings of *spēd* survive into Middle English, using examples of *spēd* from Middle English. However, *spēd* meaning 'quickness', which was barely attested in Old English, is the best recorded meaning in Middle English in Genesis and Exodus (Lindheim, 1949, p. 206). He argues that this shift exemplifies the deteriorating influences of the decline of Anglo-Saxon culture on the development of a language (Lindheim, 1949, p. 207). This might have been the case with the semantic development of *dream* as well.

Dream had multiple connotations, and the word occurs circa 225 times in Old English texts (*DOE: A to I* dream, n.). The three main senses of the words are 'joy, bliss', 'sound, music, noise, that which produces sound or music' and 'frenzy, delirium, madness, demonic possession'. However, as Lindheim notes: with regard to how words like *spēd* and *dream* were used by Anglo-Saxon writers, "the dictionaries fail to bring out the striking power and suggestiveness of the underlying ideas" (203). Therefore, it is necessary to look at the different senses in close detail.

Ehrensperger (1931, p. 87) suggests that the original meaning of Germanic *dream* could have been 'joy, noise, etc.' and that later the word underwent semantic change and the meaning changed to 'sleeping vision'. This change in progress is captured in Old Saxon, as both the sense of 'sleeping vision' and the sense of 'joy, music, etc.' are attested for Old Saxon *drom* (Ehrensperger, 1931, p. 86). It is only in the epic warrior poetry that we get close to the original connotations of *dream* in Old English*,* which would be 'revelry, noise of the

mead hall, mirth'. This supposed original meaning can be found in *Beowulf* (Lindheim, 1949, p. 197):

> Beo 86. *ða se ellengæst earfoðlice þrage geþolode, se þe in þystrum bad, þæt he dogora gehwam **dream** gehyrde hludne in healle*
>
> "Then the bold spirit, impatiently endured dreary time, he who dwelt in darkness, he that every day heard **noise of revelry** loud in the hall"

Here *dream* refers to the 'noise of revelry' that can be heard in the hall. There is no Christian connotation with this word; it is used in a more pagan manner. It is used positively as well, there is no sense of temporary or fleeting joy. It was this positive side of the word with its connotations of revelry in the mead hall and of pagan warrior culture that the Anglo-Saxon Christian writers were so concerned to modify.

The Anglo-Saxon written tradition is heavily Christianised. As Lindheim (1949, p. 200) mentions, hardly any Anglo-Saxon colloquial speech has survived and the literary tradition is fragmentary. The dominance of the Church concealed and eliminated parts in the speech of the converted Anglo-Saxons which were impressible to Christian usage. This means that a lot of words were made more Christian and thus positive in literature by modifiers such as 'heavenly', 'of God', etc. *Dream* respectively was made more positive and Christian by Anglo-Saxon writers with the following modifiers: *drythnes* 'of the Lord', *ece* 'perpetual, everlasting', *engla* 'of angels', *swegles* 'of the Heaven' and *wuldres* 'of glory'. An example of this can be found in *the Seafarer:*

> Sea 64. *forþon me hatran sind **dryhtnes dreamas** þonne þis deade lif, læne on londe.*
>
> "indeed hotter for me are the **joys of the Lord** than this dead life, fleeting on the land."

In this sentence, the juxtaposition between the 'joys of the Lord' and 'this dead life' becomes very clear. The *dryhtnes dreamas* is compared to *þis deade lif, læne on londe,* 'this dead life, fleeting on land', the life on land which is merely fleeting. *Dreamas* is undoubtedly used in a very positive context, Christianized by *dryhtnes.* Another example comes from *Andreas*, this time *dream* is modified by *swegles:*

> And 640. *gastas hweorfon, sohton siðfrome* **swegles dreamas***, engla eðel þurh þa æðelan miht.*

> "souls were converted, sought out the ***joys of heaven,*** the angel's homeland, hastening on through his wondrous power."

Here again, the word is made very positive: 'the joys of heaven', it is put right next to the angel's homeland as well, which carries a very positive Christian connotation. A very similar meaning to the last one is the sense of 'jubilation, celebration, especially in honour of God or a saint'. This meaning is used in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*:

> ChronD 1023.9. *þone halgan martyr þan arcebiscope & his geferum betæhton, & hi þa mid weorðlican weorode & wynsaman* **dreame** *hine to Hrofesceastre feredan.*

> "and there entrusted the holy martyr to the archbishop and his companions, and then, in a distinguished company and with glad ***rejoicing***, they conveyed him to Rochester."

In this case, the word is not modified by a necessarily Christian word, but *wyn* is commonly used in Christian contexts (*OED3* win, n.2). This specific context is quite clearly Christian as well. A more specific connotation was the meaning 'singing of psalms'. It was used especially for the singing of psalms that was part of the liturgy.

HomS 14 46. *agifaþ nu teoþan dæl ealles þæs ceapes þe ge habban earmum mannum, & to Godes cyrican, þæm earmestan Godes þeowum þe þa cyrican mid godcundum* **dreamum** *weorþiað.*

"give now tenth part of all the possession that you have to poor men, and to God's church, to the poorest of God's servants who the church with divine **songs** honour."

This again is a very Christian context in which *dream* is used. The word is used to connotate the 'divine' song to 'honour the poorest of God's servants'. It is modified by *godcundum*, which is explicitly Christian.

A Christian juxtaposition between the fleeting nature of life on earth and everlasting heavenly life is created by modifying *dream* using modifiers such as *eorþan* 'earth', *læne* 'temporary', *manna* 'of men' and *worulde* 'worldly' were used. An example of this meaning is found in the *Dream of the Rood:*

Dream 132. *ac hie forð heonon gewiton of worulde* **dreamum**

"but they have gone forward from here, passed from **the joys** of this world"

Here the *worulde dreamum* 'the joys of this world' is put in a very Christian context. They have gone forward, away from the (fleeting) joys of this world. This insinuates that they have gone on to the 'heavenly' joys, which are better. This is another example of *dream* being made negative by Christian writers, this time with *laenan* as a modifier:

GuthA 2. *ofgiefeþ hio þas eorþan wynne, forlæteð þas* **lænan dreamas***, ond hio wiþ þam lice gedæleð.*

"when she gives up this earthly joy and forsakes these **loaned pleasures,** when she is parted from her body."

In this case the 'earthly joy' and 'loaned pleasures' are something to be given up. It is made negative and contrasted with the non-temporary pleasures that exist after this worldly life. When we look at *dream* modified by *læne,* this means 'temporary/fleeting joy'. Here a connection can be made between a fleeting moment of joy and a dream. A dream is essentially a fleeting/temporary moment of joy, because it disappears once you wake up.

Another way of making *dream* more negative was by giving it the connotation of 'frenzy, delirium, madness or demonic possession'. In the case of this connotation, the word is often modified by *wodan* 'insane, mad'. An example of *dream* used with this meaning comes from *Aelfric's Catholic Homilies*:

> ÆCHom I, 35 479.105. *Astriges se indisca cyning þe Bartholomeum ofsloh awedde. & on þam **wodan dreame** gewat.*

> "Astryges, the Indian king, who slew Bartholomew, became mad, and in ***a fit of madness*** departed."

As can be seen from these examples, there is clearly a concerted effort to modify *dream* in an overtly Christian way. An analysis of the examples provided by the *DOE: A to I* (*DOE: A to I* dream, n.) establishes that that effort becomes very visible when a multitude of quotations with *dream* are analysed. Of the eighty-eight examples given, seventy are used in an explicitly Christian context. Of those seventy, fifty-one are used with positive Christian connotations, and of those there are twenty-five instances where *dream* is used in combination with Christian modifiers as well. Nineteen examples of the seventy instances in Christian context are used in a contrasting manner, with modifiers such as *eorþan* 'earth', *læne* 'temporary', etc. Only eighteen instances are examples of *dream* used in a non-Christian context, with no Christian connotation. Of those eighteen, two are used with the supposed original connotations of 'revelry, mirth, etc.' in the mead hall.

As can be seen above, the more neutral meanings of *spēd* and possibly *dream* are obscured by the evangelising focus of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. During the Middle English period, the Anglo-Saxon culture and writing tradition, which was preoccupied with spreading the word of God, disappears. The decline of Anglo-Saxon culture and its concerns has a disintegrating effect on how English writers employed language. Lindheim (1949, p. 199) argues that for both *dream* and *spēd,* the older and more ordinary senses of the word, which had been obscured by the conceptual importance these words held for the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition, reappeared in writing during the Middle English period.

3. The use of *dream* in Middle English

In Middle English written history there are three words that are used to denote 'sleeping vision': *sweven,* which occurs 369 times, *vision* (184 times) and *dreme* (430 times) (Ehrensperger, 1931). The earliest examples of the 'sleeping vision' sense for *dream* can be found in *Genesis and Exodus*. In this work there is an increase of *spēd* with the 'quickness' meaning as well. There are 18 instances of *dreme*, which all mean 'sleeping vision' and there are 22 instances of *spēd,* of which 10 mean 'quickness'. One example of these instances is found in line 935:

> *Abram leuede ðis hot in **spēd***
>
> **"**Abram ***quickly*** believed his promise"

In the Middle English period, the semantic shift of *dream* and the replacement of *sweven* by *dreme* are really in transition. In the earliest Middle English texts (works written before 1250), the word for 'sleeping vision' is *sweven.* In these works, *dream* only appears with the 'joy, music' meaning. For example, in *Layamon's Brut*:

> Lay.Brut (Clg A.9) 22876. *Seoððen me bleou bemen mid swiðe murie dreme*
>
> "Then one blew with very merry joys"

In the works from 1300 to 1350 there are more instances of *dream* with the present day meaning, but the older usage still predominates. In the romances of this period*, sweven* outnumber *dreme* as 'sleeping vision' 40 to 12. An example of *dreme* as 'noise' can be found in *Bestiary*:

> Bestiary (Arun 292) 541. *Đanne remen he alle a rem, so hornes blast oðer belles **drem.***
>
> "Then they all set up a loud cry, like the blast of a horn or the ***noise*** of a bell."

Even though the previous sense still predominates, there are instances attested in this time of the 'sleeping vision' meaning, such as in *Genesis and Exodus*:

> Gen. & Ex. (Corp -C 444) 2114. *Ne was non so wis man in al his lond ðe kude vn-don ðis **dremes** bond.*

> "There was no man so wise in all this land that could undo the power of this **dream**."

From 1350 to 1400, the semantic change is the most apparent. *Dreme* is now used much more frequently than *sweven* in the 'sleeping vision' sense: *dreme* is used 27 times versus *sweven* 10 times in romances of this period. One of those instances of *dreme* can be found in *Cursor Mundi*:

> Cursos (Vsp A.3) 4605. *Sir king, þis es þi visiun. Bath þi **drems** ar als an.*

> "Sir King, this is thy vision. Both thy **dreams** are like one."

There are still some instances of *dreme* with the 'noise' meaning, for example in *Ancrene Riwle*:

> Ancr.Recl. (Pep 2498) 106/12. *Hij schull on domesday arisen. wiþ þe dredeful **drem** of þe aungels bemen.*

> "He shall arise on doomsday. with the dreadful **noise** of the angel's trumpets."

In this case *dreme* is also used in a very religious context still, with the reference to doomsday and the angel's trumpets.

Ehrensperger (1931, p. 84-85) mentions that these different usages become very clear when the works of Gower and Chaucer are compared. In Gower's work the old usage predominates: *sweven* is used 41 times and *dreme* merely 5 times, while the newer words are

more present in Chaucer's work: 63 times *dreme* versus 22 times *sweven.* An example of this usage is found in the *Canterbury Tales*, the Monk's Tale:

> Chaucer CT.Mk. B.3346. *That was the wiseste child of everychon, For he the **dremes** of the kyng expowned*

> "Who was the wisest child of them all, for he expounded the ***dreams*** of the king"

> Chaucer's use of *dream* was more advanced and Gower's use was more conservative. This means that Chaucer's language is probably a more accurate reflection of the language used in the society at that point in time. This is of course very different from the Old English period, where the literary tradition actually obscured the daily language use, because of the heavy Anglo-Saxon Christianisation. Now that the religious literary tradition finally was not dictating what was written, the real language use of the time came to the surface.

4. Conclusion

This paper has analysed in detail the uses of *dream* in Old and Middle English, and in doing so has shed light on the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition in relation to *dream*. The analysis suggests that the Anglo-Saxon Christian literary tradition placed excessive pressure on how certain words, such as *dream*, which was originally ingrained with positive connotations of Germanic warrior culture, were treated by Anglo-Saxon writers. Lindheim also notes that "a great number of words, in particular those serving to express the higher aspects of mind and soul, are covered with a Christian veneer, and we seldom get a chance to penetrate to their original heathen signification. The powerful influence of the Church must have suppressed and eliminated elements in the speech of the converted Anglo-Saxons which were objectionable to Christian habits and usage" (Lindheim, 1949, p. 200). This Christian veneer was placed on the word by the use of Christian modifiers, positive ones such as *ece* 'perpetual' and *swegles* 'of the heaven', or negative ones such as *læne* 'fleeting' and *worulde* 'worldly'.

This paper did not prove a native explanation for the Middle English sense of 'sleeping vision' for *dream*, nor did it prove an Old Norse contact-induced explanation. However, the analysis of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition opens up the possibility of secondary meanings of words existing in speech that were left unattested because the concerns of the Christian literary tradition lay elsewhere.

The scope of this research was limited, so for future research it might be useful to look at other supposed examples of semantic displacement because of Old Norse and analyse the usage and contexts of the words in Old English, to see whether secondary meanings could have existed unattested. Further, more extensive research along these lines would be necessary to get a better idea of the extent of the obscuring of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition.

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