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# Middle English V2: Compatible with a North Germanic source?[1]

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## 1. The puzzle of Middle English Germanic vocabulary

During more than two centuries before the Norman Conquest (1066), the country we know as England was populated and shared by two often warring peoples, the longer resident Anglo-Saxons and new waves of Scandinavian settlers, mostly farmers encouraged or at least permitted by war lords/ kings of both sides because rulers of any stripe could extract from them labour and taxes (see Wood 1986 for an overview). After a truce in 878, each side controlled roughly half the country politically and administratively; the Scandinavians (mostly Danes) the north and East Midlands (the 'Danelaw') and the Saxons the south and West Midlands. After a period of slow Saxon expansion of control, culminating in 954 with the Scandinavians in York accepting a kind of "protectorate," the tide turned with a defeat of English forces by new invaders in 987, and by 1014, the Danes rules the whole country from the English capital in Winchester.

There is ever increasing evidence of the great extent and influence of these agricultural settlements in central and eastern England from c. 870 until the Norman Conquest two centuries later (Kershaw 2009). During this time, the Norse speakers in the Danelaw, where Danes held political and economic power, were doubtlessly enriching their vocabulary with terminology from West Saxon (now termed "Old English") for new food products, farming, organization of towns, Christian life and schooling, and other local practices and beliefs. In this way, their Norse lexicon must have become Anglicized, so we can speak of their lexically evolving language as "Anglicized Norse."[2]

The Anglo-Saxons originally spoke the northernmost West Germanic tongue, since they had emigrated from the area straddling today's border between Denmark and Germany. During some 500 years had developed a written language called (West) Saxon and much later Old English.[3] The Scandinavians spoke the language of early Scandinavia Old Norse, though

[1] I thank an anonymous reviewer and Krisztina Szécsényi for thoughtful and helpful comments on earlier versions on drafts of this article, which have definitely improved it.

[2] In contrast, the Saxon-dominated southern and western English found no need to borrow from the language of the Scandinavian newcomers:

> Up until the time of the Norman Conquest the Scandinavian language in England was constantly being renewed by the steady stream of trade and conquest. . . . [M]any of the newcomers . . . continued to speak their own language at least as late as 1100 . . . [Relations between them] and the English were too hostile to lead to much natural intercourse. . . . The number of Scandinavian words that appear in Old English is consequently small, amounting to only about two score . . . associated with . . . sea-roving and . . . the social and administrative system of the Danelaw. (Baugh and Cable 2002: 96, 99)

[3] The earlier name for OE was in fact Saxon or Anglo-Saxon: 'In the early 19th century, Old English was called "Anglo-Saxon,," the English of the 12th and 13th centuries was known as "Semi-Saxon" or "Old English," and "Middle English" was applied to material dating after

in this period they left in England no significant texts. Nonetheless, because of extensive North Germanic influence on Middle English, traditional and current scholarship agrees that that throughout this period, they maintained in England, perhaps in modified form, their North Germanic tongue, which here I refer to as simply Norse or Anglicized Norse.

The term Early Middle English (EME) is usually applied to English texts after 1150. The lexicon of this language, prior to the great influx of French words starting in c. 1250, contained a majority of words with *both* Norse and West Germanic cognates, quite possibly 2/3rd of them. The two languages were thus pretty close to mutually understandable (Townende 2002). Moreover, in the ME non-cognate (pre-French) vocabulary, roughly the same percentages lacked sources in Old English (OE) as in Old Norse (Emonds and Faarlund 2017). An even higher percentage of Norse roots in Middle English seems suggested by Baugh and Cable (2002: 97).

> …many of the more common words of the two languages were identical, and if we had no Old English literature …, we should be unable to say that many words were not of Scandinavian origin.

A very notable characteristic of this lexical union is that the words with only Norse sources were typically daily life and grammatical words.

Nonetheless, these same rough groupings also contained many words with only OE sources. The fact is, we cannot currently estimate with any accuracy how much English vocabulary Norse had borrowed during two centuries prior to the Conquest. Because of common Germanic cognates, a high percentage of at least the daily life and grammatical lexicon of West Saxon had already become part of Norse.

To illustrate the above points, it is instructive to examine a concrete sample of Old English vocabulary.[4] A *Collins Dictionary* publicity page enthusiastically invites the reader to check that 148 Modern English words have an Old English source.[5] Tellingly, 115 of these can *as well have come from Old Norse*. The forms of the Old Norse and Old English cognates in (1) are, overall, equally plausible ancestors of these words. One is indeed "unable to say that [the words in (1) are] not of Scandinavian origin."

(1) **Words with Old English and Old Norse cognates.** *ale, alive, apple, awake, axe, back, bath, blood, brother, can, carve, chicken, child, clean, cold, cup, daughter, dead, deer, door, drink, dusk, ear, elbow, end, eye, fair, fall, feather, find, fish, friend, game, gate, god, gold, good, ground, green, hammer, harbour, hand, high, honey, house, husband, I, ice, if, in, it, keen, kind, king, kiss, knife, knot, land, laugh, lip, listen, long, love, make, man, marsh, milk, moon, nail, name, night, now, nut, oak, of, open, owl, pin, pipe, plough, pretty, queen, quick, rag, rain, rat, read, ride, right, say, see, send, sister, sword, take, thank, thirst, thumb, udder, under, up, us, vat, wag, wake, walk, west, winter, woman, wrong, yard, yarn, year, you, young*

Only the 33 words in (2), 22% of the *Collins* sample, lack close cognates in Old Mainland Scandinavian.

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1250.' (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 275).

[4] This discussion of the words in (1) and (2) is from Emonds and Faarlund (2017).

[5] The webpage in question is titled "Anglo-Saxon Words" and was posted by Collins in March 2012 at http://www.collinsdictionary.com/word-lovers-blog/word-origins/anglo-saxon-words,7,HCB.html

(2) **Only Old English cognates**. *abide, above, bed, bird, body, daft, each, evening, evil, fox, island, itch, keep, ladle, meadow, mouth, needle, nest, on, old, orchard, path, plant, poppy, rock, shadow, sheep, thimble, today, tomorrow, yawn, yes, yolk* [6]

A similar proportion of common words in Modern English have Old Norse but not OE cognates. (More exact comparative figures await further research.)

From these considerations of vocabulary, it thus seems that one cannot easily decide whether the ME written from say 1170 onwards is a descendant of Old English or Old Norse. The ME lexicon seems some kind of amalgam of both. Moreover, since the Norse words had not been borrowed into OE, but started to appear only when English texts were recognizably ME (see note 1), we cannot simply follow tradition and claim that OE is the predecessor of ME.

Indeed, the rather sudden appearance of so much daily life and function word vocabulary in Early Middle English has led some scholars to consider that Middle English is at least lexically, some kind of creole, or before this term came to be the linguistic fashion, an 'amalgam' of Norse and Old English (Poussa 1982; Baugh and Cable 2002). Nonetheless, most traditional and even current scholarship has steadfastly held that Middle English is unquestionably a West Germanic language with copious borrowings from Norse, even in those parts of the lexicon where similar borrowing *almost never occurs*, namely the daily life vocabulary and grammatical lexicon.

## 2. The solution suggested by a new syntactic appraisal

There is another discrepancy between OE and ME that can actually become the key to understanding the puzzle posed by the nature and dates of the specifically Norse influx into ME. To do this, we must leave aside the traditional focus on word origins. If one instead assembles the data patterns of ME syntax, recent research shows that the language groups typologically with North Germanic (NG), while OE has unmistakable West Germanic (WG) syntax (Gianollo, Guardiano and Longobardi 2008: 133). Based on such patterns, Emonds and Faarlund (2014) argue that in particular ME shares with Old Mainland Scandinavian more than twenty syntactic properties that OE and other WG languages such as Dutch and German lack. They conclude (3):

(3) **English as North Germanic.** Early Middle English was a direct descendant of the Anglicized Norse spoken by Scandinavian settlers in England.

Conversely, next to no language-particular ME constructions can be traced to OE but not Norse; this essay's purpose (section 3) is to refute a recent claim that at least one such construction exists.

The presence of Scandinavian daily life and grammatical vocabulary in the ME lexicon (but not the OE lexicon) is then accounted for by the North Germanic claim in (3).[7] Under this view, in the realm of syntax the hypothesis leaves essentially nothing to explain, since ME does not in fact share any syntax or morpho-syntax with OE that is not common to Germanic languages in general.

[6] It is easy to imagine that many Saxon words in (2) might have represented objects or concepts different from those previously encountered in Scandinavia, e.g., *bed, fox, harbour, ladle, meadow, needle, orchard, poppy, path, thimble.*

[7] Norse influence is minimal in the only OE for which we have ample texts, those of Wessex.

In this new perspective, there remains no reason why the earliest ME texts must follow the last OE texts, which were produced until about 1140. Consistent with this, a British Library webpage http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126539.html suggests that the first text in ME, a translation of a Latin homily, dates from c. 1150. But this dating may be simply to conform to the traditionally agreed boundary of the mid-12th c., after the last texts acknowledged as OE. The fact is, Robert d'Escures's original must have pre-dated his debilitating stroke in 1119 (d. 1122). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_d'Escures Though traditional histories of English don't entertain the possibility of any dating overlap, works arguably in OE, e.g. the poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*, were written at least until close to 1200.[8]

The first reactions to the North Germanic hypothesis (1) of many specialists in the history of English have been sceptical, to say the least.[9] In most cases, these reactions are restatements of previous ways to rationalize the OE/ ME gap, or newer formulations based on disputable "language contact" scenarios (see section 4). Occasionally, the critiques have more content; for some discussion, see Emonds and Faarlund (2016). Perhaps the strongest prima facie argument taking OE as at least a partial syntactic source for ME concerns a claim that Old and Middle English share a construction that is lacking in Scandinavian.

## 3. Verb Third: a Saxon black sheep in the Norse herd?

### *3.1 So-called Verb Third word orders*

As just mentioned, Emonds and Faarlund (2014) discuss over 20 morpho-syntactic properties indicating that ME has NG syntax. In oral presentations, the most disputed of their arguments for (3) concerns whether ME shared the Scandinavian version of Germanic "Verb Second" or whether its Verb Second patterns were more akin to that of OE. In a review of this book Bech and Walkden (2016: Sect. 3.3.1) claim that the existence of so-called "Verb Third" sentences through the OE and ME periods are an "insurmountable obstacle" to the claim that ME main clauses reflect Norse word order.

Emonds and Faarlund do indeed fail to observe that ME and OE share this construction that appears to be missing in Mainland Scandinavian (MS). However, the critique in the review is based on a purely empiricist method; the insurmountable obstacle consists of unanalysed surface patterns of main clauses. The analysis of these clauses below suggests that the lack of Verb Third sentences in MS is due to a language-particular property of a single morpheme that was lost in Anglicized Norse. This loss, once understood in terms of a structural analysis, turns out to be similar to two other NG properties also absent in Anglicized Norse, namely disappearance of the reflexive suffix on Vs and the definiteness suffix on Ns (Emonds and Faarlund 2014: Ch. 8).

I thus grant that Bech and Walkden have exemplified a grammatical difference between MS and both OE and ME. But I will argue that the appropriate account of this difference assimilates it to a type of change in the path Norse ➔ ME duly recognized in Emonds and Faarland (2014: Sect. 6.8). As a result the similar "Verb Third" patterns of OE

[8] This poem is said to be in the 'southern dialect' of ME, again to preserve the idea that OE 'changed into ME' diachronically in a short period around 1150. Historians of English allude to a long hiatus in written English to allow for this 'development', but in fact the two written languages may even have co-existed for a short time.

[9] For examples, the review of Bech and Walkden (2016), and at least five of the commentators in the exchange in the journal *Language Dynamics and Change,* 6.1. One representative commentary there is Thomason (2016), answered in Emonds and Faarlund (2016).

and ME are due to Universal Grammar, rather than to a specific (West Germanic) line of genealogical descent.

### *3.2 The initial position of scene-setting adverbials*

Main clauses in Old and Middle English (prior to c. 1400), as in other Germainc languages, display "Verb-Second" word orders, whereby a finite verb immediately follows an initial phrase XP , whether XP is a subject or not. Since Chomsky (1986), such sequences have generally been taken to exemplify a structure (4), where V is raised out of VP in root or root-like clauses to the head position Y of a clausal CP or IP.

(4) $[_{YP}\ [_{SPEC}\ XP\ ] - [_{Y'}\ V - VP\ ]\ ]$

OE subject pronouns Spr sometimes violate this pattern and are pre-verbal, occurring in XP___V, as pointed out in van Kemenade (1987). She argues that they are then proclitics on V, as in (5). Consequently, the apparent "Verb Third" pattern still conforms to Verb Second, i.e. V serves as $Y^0$.

(5) $[_{YP}\ [_{SPEC}\ XP\ ] - [_{Y'}\ [_{V}\ Spr+\ V\ ] - VP\ ]\ ]$

It is often overlooked, however, that the sequences XP - Spr – V can exemplify *two* structures, one the preceding OE variant of (4), and the second containing a simple left adjunction to YP of a 'scene setting' adverbial, usually PP, as in (6).[10]

(6) $[_{YP}\ PP - [_{YP}\ [_{SPEC}\ XP\ ] - [_{Y'}\ V - VP\ \mathbf{]}\ ]\ ]$, where V has been raised to Y = C or I.

As a reviewer points out, there is nothing about (6) that would confine its distribution to when *pronominal* subjects, or even to subjects, as occupants of SpecYP – indeed, (7) below gives examples with pronominal and non-pronominal elements following the scene-setting PP, and what follows the PP in (7a) is not a subject. Although the V3 order talked about in the literature on the history of English seems confined to pronominal subjects in second position, the fact is that after the Old English period, the second element did not have to be a subject.

The scene-setting left-adjoined PPs in (6) not only can appear in OE and at least sparingly elsewhere in West Germanic (K. Abels, pers. comm.), but also seem very general; they occur freely in Modern English and in other language families, e.g. Romance and Slavic.

(7) a. *During that play, who/ which role did Mary like the most?*

*b. Dans le noir, le jeune homme, il ne pouvait pas voir le voleur.* (French)
'In the dark, the young man, he could not see the thief.

*c. Kvůli Petrovi, Eva, ona ne-jela nikam.* (Czech)
because of Peter, Eva, she not-went nowhere
'Because of Peter, Eva, she didn't go anywhere.'

It can be easily appreciated that sequences PP - Spr – V need not be taken as instances of (5), but can straightforwardly realize (6), containing an initial scene-setting adverbial XP

[10] These PPs usually indicate place, time, manner, or instrument, and in modern writing are often set off by commas. Many of the "bare NP adverbials" studied in Larson (1985) are usually, perhaps always, best analyzed as PPs with licensed empty Ps (Emonds 1987).

and a subject, pronoun or not, in a SPEC position. In the three Old and Middle English examples of this word order in Bech and Walkden (2016: 20), the Modern English glosses of the initial XPs are *in the seventh year*, *thereafter*, and *through (=by means of) his manhood.* As they note, at least their two examples with non-pronominal subjects cannot be instances of van Kemanade's OE structure (5) either. In addition, the fact that subject pronouns can be generated pre-verbally in two ways explains why pronouns are more frequent than lexical NPs in pre-verbal position in OE. Finally, the availability of the plausibly universal structure (6) throughout ME explains why pre-verbal pronoun subjects most frequently follow PPs or adverbials (patterns noted by Bech and Walkden 2016: 20).[11]

After these useful observations about OE and ME main clause word order, these authors launch into a discussion about how van Kemanade's (1987) account of the OE data has been superseded by more "refined" syntactic models (left undescribed) and by "a much better understanding of the facts due to the large electronic corpora that have been made available." This author's work, at least in 1987, "does not study empirical data systematically," and so Emonds and Faarlund are mistaken in using her analysis of OE and endorsing its theoretical acumen (for which of course van Kemenade also furnishes empirical support). To avoid such errors, readers are then referred in quick succession to nine alternative publications dated between 2009 and 2015. Although Emonds and Faarlund (2014) is faulted for not using these developments, their reviewers don't say how they use them either; their summary of the issues simply trails off: "English word order has such an unruly history that agreement has still not been reached on the matter of exactly how to account for it in syntactic terms.:" (Bech and Walkden 2016: 22).[12]

In contrast to this method, this and the following sub-section present an explicit proposal about Verb Second and Verb Third orders in OE, ME and MS. Van Kemanade's account of the peculiarity of OE subject pronouns still has validity for aspects of OE (and as stated in Emonds and Faarlund 2014, is not a property of ME or North Germanic). Otherwise, with a variation in MS to be examined below, all three languages exhibit the common cross-linguistic, perhaps universal phrase structure (6).

### *3.3 Scene-setting adverbials in Mainland Scandinavian*

At first glance, it indeed appears that the "scene-setting structure" (6) is not available in Mainland Scandinavian even though ME has it, as seen in the preceding section. Thus, A. Holmberg (pers. comm.) corroborates the claim that MS excludes sentences of this type,: "Translations [into Swedish] of the sentences above are grossly ungrammatical without V2."[13]

Tellingly however, Holmberg observes further: "There is an interesting quirk, in that they are very commonly constructed with a kind of expletive proform *så* 'so' between the initial PP and the finite verb." He provides a Swedish translation of one of Bech and Walkden's examples (shortened):

(8) a. *Därefter (så) talade biskopen med jarl Robert.*

[11] These authors note that southern ME texts continue to exhibit frequent examples of the structure (5). This is not surprising, as speakers might have remained bi-lingual in Saxon (OE) and Anglicized Norse (ME) or been in a community that switched their first language to Anglicized Norse at a later date.

[12] In other scientific discourse, explicit analyses such as that in van Kemanade (1987) are considered to stand, unless replaced by better ones, but apparently not in this case.

[13] J.T. Faarlund (pers. comm.) also confirms these judgments for Norwegian: "… those PP-S-V structures from ME are totally ungrammatical in modern Scandinavian, even with a clear comma intonation, and I have never come across anything like it in Old Norse, either."

Thereafter (so) spoke bishop-the with earl Robert.

b. $[_{YP}$ PP $[_{YP}$ $[_{SPEC}$ *så* ] – $[_{Y'}$ V … **] ]** ]

I propose that the version with *så* realizes the "missing structure" (6) of MS; keep in mind that these adjoined PP structures are cross-linguistically optional, e.g. in Modern English, Romance and Slavic examples as in (7), etc. Consequently, nothing prevents the variant without *så* from realizing the smaller structure (4).[14]

In this analysis, there is no language-particular construction common to OE and ME but missing in MS. Rather, all the languages under consideration have a universal or at least unmarked optional structure (6). The language-particular MS property, absent in Anglicized Norse, then concerns the lexical entry for the grammatical item *så* 'so' of category SPEC(CP), for which there is one context which *tolerates no other element,* namely PP-$[_{CP}$ ___V…]. This formulation accords with Borer's Conjecture (1984: 29), to the effect that particular grammars, here MS, reduce to lexical entries for inflections, currently extended to include other purely grammatical function words such as Determiners, grammatical Prepositions, etc.

It is then perfectly possible that, in the language-particular lexical entry for the adverbial *så,* one of the contexts for this morpheme can be diachronically lost i.e. through one can say 'imperfect first language learning.'

Thus, as a reviewer points out:

> Modern English has … still allows *so* to occur in clause-initial position immediately followed by the finite verb in *Bob played the fiddle and so did Bill*. This is a remnant-V2 context [showing] persistence with lexical verbs: *So says Bill*. …*so* is one of the very few elements that, in Modern English, trigger inversion with the subject when fronted: it does not seem banned from SpecCP… All of Germanic allows *so* and its cognates in clause-initial position; but the use of *so* as a pro-form for a … non-adjectival predicate [as in the preceding example] is much less common.

Thus, as (s)he suggests, it is not *so* in clause-initial position that differentiates English from Scandinavian. In Swedish as in (8), the *så* in Spec(IP) can be *an anaphor of an immediately preceding scene-setting PP,* whereas this particular anaphoric use is excluded in Modern English and either banned or only optional in Middle English. Thus, Modern English, while retaining clause-initial anaphoric *so,* requires its antecedent to be in a separate preceding clause.

Another instance of this kind of "retreat" in contexts of use of a grammatical morpheme concerns Present Day English *as.* In one of its many uses as a subordinating

[14] If there exist Old Norse texts that systematically lack this *så,* it may be that variants with a meaningless expletive were considered bad or less literary style. Along these lines, while spoken French constantly uses left-dislocated subjects with expletives in subject position (*Ma soeur, elle dépense trop pour les parfums* 'My sister, she spends too much for perfumes'), French written style minimizes such use of expletives.

Kroch Taylor and Ringe (2000) cite a 15th c. writer in Northern England who seems to regularly use the structure (4), strict Verb Second, and not (6), where Verb Third is possible. It seems strange to attribute this to Old Norse influence, if, under the traditional view, that supposedly different language had not been spoken in England for centuries. More likely, that writer was either avoiding (6) for stylistic reasons (perhaps preferring a regional style), or had replaced *så* with a null allomorph, in a step toward this context for *så* being lost altogether.

conjunction, meaning 'in the same manner' (not 'same degree'), *as* is being replaced by *like,* to the discomfort of prescriptivists in my youth: *Do this like (?as) your father did it*.[15]

Some other examples of similar losses of (contexts for) free morphemes:

(9) a. The epistemic use of *shall* (that is, as a pure future marker) is being lost. The word remains current only when inverted in questions asking the addressee's advice.

b. In the course of Modern English, the context of *for* as a subordinator introducing an infinitive has become more restricted. It is now standard only if the clausal subject is overt: *We did it (*for) to please you.*

c. In several dialects of English, the grammatical item *whether* is being or has been lost. Just a few generations ago, so have others such as *hither, whither,* and *shan't.*

d. The free morpheme *have* has many grammatical uses, as a causative, a verb of obligation (*have to leave*), and as a light verb. But in its context in Modal position (perfective *have, have got,* and *had better*), non-standard dialects seem to be requiring either a contracted form or losing it entirely. (I cannot provide a more exact characterization.)

It is thus fairly common to see grammatical morphemes shedding contexts in which they have previously been grammatical, and even obligatory.

Yet it seems pretty pointless to insist that the above and similar losses result from "language contact." As the use of *så/ so* in (8b) presumably doesn't appear in ME, Anglicized Norse lost it earlier, perhaps (or not) reinforced by Saxon speakers not learning it.[16] This kind of loss groups naturally with the ME loss of two Norse inflections, the reflexive suffix *-sk/-st* and the definiteness suffix *–et/-en,* both discussed in Emonds and Faarlund (2014: Sect. 6.8). These lost grammatical function morphemes, or in the case at hand, a context for one, are the only phenomena that set off the grammar of Norse from that of ME. When the MS requirement that *så* fill SPEC(CP) in the universal structure (6) was lost, Anglicized Norse "re-entered the fold", so to speak, of the many languages, including OE, in which SPEC(CP) in (6) can contain a range of constituents, including subject NPs. Since it is not only OE and ME that allow such subjects, there is no need to speak of ME "inheriting" from OE either Verb Third structures or the absence of individual MS morphemes. Rather, ME still conforms to the North Germanic hypothesis (3), the item-particular properties of its individual grammatical morphemes notwithstanding.

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[15] Along these same lines, we can note that the French pre-verbal *ne* 'not' is disappearing in some grammatical contexts, such as in some positive bu irrealis subjunctive clauses introduced by *avant que* 'before', *a moins que* 'unless', etc.

[16] The use of English *so* in (i) may be a vestige of Norse *så* in the SPEC(CP) of elliptical root clauses :

(i) *I will go swimming today and (on Sunday), so will Ann.*
*Mary finally succeeded, and (through his labors) so has John.*
Tag = $[_{CP}\ [_{SPEC}\ so] - [_{C'}\ [_{C}\ V\ ]\ \ldots\ ]]$

We notice the optional initial scene-setting PP, and the presence of a modal or auxiliary in C, as in (8b). In this English usage, unlike MS *så* in e.g. (8b), *so* is obligatorily an anaphor of a preceding antecedent VP.

## 4. When does syntax change through Language Contact?

A second type of challenge to the North Germanic hypothesis (1) for the source of English is based on a claim that North Germanic aspects of ME syntax derive not from descent but rather from borrowing. The fact that some twenty or so changes apparently (from the surviving texts) occurred roughly within a century does not seem to deter the (traditionalist) proponents of this view. It has been articulated most forcefully perhaps by Thomason (2016): "…syntax is readily transferred in contact situations." According to her description, speakers of English throughout the whole country incorporated regional grammatical errors (in English) and daily life vocabulary of Norse speakers, just as those speakers were themselves abandoning Norse.

However, Thomason and other advocates of using contact to explain the North Germanic syntax of ME generally gloss over a major empirical discrepancy between the development of ME and the changes in other languages that have been attributed to contact.[17] Such syntactic changes (outside the history of English) tend to involve pairs of languages in a quite asymmetric sociolinguistic relation, between what we can call a "dominant language" and a "contracting language" spoken in the same area. Some pairs discussed in the literature are English: Irish, English: Amerindian languages, Spanish: Amerindian languages, French: Breton, Norwegian: Saami, etc. In these situations, most young adult speakers of the contracting languages are bilingual, and the contracting language is "losing ground" to the dominant one.

What then often happens is that younger speakers of the contracting languages start producing syntactic patterns of the dominant language, and indeed the contracting language undergoes syntactic change due to contact. But in contrast language contact *only rarely changes the dominant language*: French is not acquiring Breton syntax, nor Spanish Nahuatl syntax, nor Norwegian Saami syntax. Thus, the summed total of effects on the syntax of American English by the Amerindian languages it has displaced seems to be nil, even if regional varieties of American English are considered separately.

In the domain of syntactic change, I thus agree with Kroch, Taylor and Ringe (2000):

> Now almost universally, even when massive lexical borrowing is under way, native speakers maintain their grammars. Though speakers changing their language often impose not only content words but also grammatical features of their native languages on the language they are learning…. these effects ordinarily disappear in subsequent generations, but not always.[18]

In the traditional view of 12th c. English, the dominant / contracting pair was English: Old Norse. That is, OE gave rise to ME, while Norse died out. Judging by what usually happens in these situations, pre-contact OE should not have been significantly influenced by Norse as the latter died out. Nonetheless, advocates of the traditional view on the source of ME insist that massive change occurred in the dominant language (OE) *in the direction of the contracting language Norse*. In general terms, this is a most implausible, perhaps impossible scenario, but one that deriving today's English from OE cannot do without.

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[17] The point made here in the text has also been made in Emonds and Faarlund (2016).

[18] This view was also held by authorities such as A. Meillet and E. Sapir. We do not claim that second language communities *never* manage to impose an aspect of their grammar onto a language. Anglo-Normans adopting English in the 14th c. began to introduce Wh-pronouns as relative clause markers, alongside invariant *that*. This change in the dominant language, effected by the literate elite, centuries to fully take hold.

According to Emonds and Faarlund (2014), the 12th c. contact pair was rather dominant Anglicized Norse: contracting West Saxon (OE), and what should have happened did happen. Late OE shows the typical syntactic changes of a contracting language, the 'early signs' of changes in the direction of ME, e.g, in word order in VPS, a system of post-verbal particles, etc. (Emonds and Faarlund 2014: Sect. 1.1). Doubtless, early OE speakers helped denude Norse of its inflection and spoke it imperfectly, but eventually their children acquired the unchanged syntactic system of the Norse speakers around them.[19]

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[19] Again, as stated earlier and in Emonds and Faarlund (2014), with the loss of some lexically specified contexts for a number of grammatical morphemes. These losses are no greater in number, in fact probably considerably less, than the number of grammatical morphemes lost at the end of the OE period.

the title of the article,

Middle English V2: Compatible with a North Germanic source?

the author's full name, affiliation, email address,

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jeemonds@hotmail.com

an abbreviated title of the paper (not exceeding 45 characters including spaces),

Can Middle English V2 be North Germanic?

a list of five keywords,

Anglicized Norse, initial adverbs, Middle English, Verb-Second, Verb-Third

an abstract of about 100 words.

The new hypothesis that Middle English descends syntactically from Norse has been strongly contested by several specialists in ME syntax. One counter-argument contends that ME Verb-Second patterns with Old English in sharing Verb-Third with OE but not Norse. The present paper argues that a Mainland Scandinavian adverb *så* 'so', which appears after scene-setting adverbials (mostly PPs), is in SPE(IP) and there blocks the common and expected UG order "PP – [$_{IP}$ subject – finite verb – …] found in ME. When early Anglicized Norse lost *this use* of the *så* adverbial, the UG order resurfaced in ME; this was not because of direct descent from OE.