THE MORPHOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC TYPES OF LOST OLD ENGLISH ADJECTIVES

1. Aims and Scope

While there is agreement among scholars on the fact that most Old English words have disappeared from the lexicon (85% according to Kastovsky 1992 and 60% according to Trask 1996) the characteristics of the lexical items that have not survived in the lexical stock have drawn less attention. For this reason, the aim of this journal article is to deal with lexical loss by focusing on the category of the adjective. More specifically, this research addresses two main questions: first, how to quantify the lexical losses of Old English adjectives and, second, how to classify such losses. While the former question is more descriptive, the latter can be explanatory if considered from two perspectives, namely the morphological aspect of word-formation and the concept of semantic fields and dimensions. Ultimately, the discussion that follows is geared towards finding points of contact between semantic taxonomy and derivational morphology on the one hand, and lexical loss on the other.1

Put in these terms, this piece of research is a contribution to the fields of Old English word-formation and lexical semantics, which, with the exception of Wang (2009), reviewed in more detail in the following section, have not raised the question of the nature of lexical losses, in spite of its relevance to the structure of the lexicon. With regard to word-formation, Kastovsky (1986, 1989, 1990, 1992,
2005, 2006) deals with the typological shift from variable bases to invariable bases of inflection and derivation, while Martín Arista (2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, fc.) explains the derivational processes of Old English within the framework of structural-functional morphology, by means of morphological templates displaying word positions and functions. Martín Arista and Cortés Rodríguez (fc.) also adopt a structural-functional perspective to explain the grammaticalisation of directionals in the complex verbs of a number of languages including Old English. Haselow (2011), in the wake of Kastovsky (2006), takes issue with the change from stem-formation to word-formation in English and describes the rise of some analytic tendencies. Finally, Trips (2009) is concerned with the productivity of word-formation processes and its impact on the overall structure of the lexicon. With regard to lexical semantics, Weman (1933) and Ogura (2002) focus their analysis on verbs of motion while Strite (1989) offers a simplified version of the type of lexical organisation based on fields and dimensions found in the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary. Other works, of a more semantic orientation, carry out an analysis of Old English semantic primes. Martín Arista and Martín de la Rosa (2006), de la Cruz Cabanillas (2007) and Guarddon Anelo (2009a, 2009b) belong in this group.

The relevance of the topic of lexical loss is related to the layout of the Old English lexicon, which is consistently Germanic in two respects. In the first place, it is comprised almost completely of Germanic lexical items, the number of loanwords representing, according to Kastovsky (1992: 294), about 3% only. In the second place, word-formation, which is preferred over borrowing for lexical expansion, inputs native bases to the processes of derivational morphology. Regarding this question, Kastovsky (1992: 308) finds the main reason for the small number of loanwords in Old English in “the astonishing versatility with which the native vocabulary could be used in order to render a foreign concept”. A far-reaching consequence of the importance of word-formation in Old English is that the lexicon is characterized by the existence of large morphologically-related word families which hold formally-analysable and semantically-transparent relations (Kastovsky 1992; Lass 1994; Mugglestone 2006), as is the case with the set of derivatives of (ge)springan ‘to jump, leap, spring, burst forth, rise; spread, be diffused, grow; want, lack’, which includes āspringan ‘to spring up or forth, break forth, spread; arise, originate, be born; dwindle, diminish, fail, cease’, āþspringan ‘to spring up, arise’, āþspringan ‘to rise up’, þōspringan ‘to spring apart’, onspringan ‘to spring forth’, æspringan ‘to rush forth’, etc. These analysable and transparent morphological relationships, along with the lexical items that bear them, disappear to a large extent as a consequence of the massive lexical borrowing brought about by the Norman Conquest (Burnley 1992: 211), which eventually resulted in a dissociated lexicon (Kastovsky 1992: 293). In a dissociated lexicon, morphological
relationships are replaced by lexical relationships among words of different historical origin, as in hand (Germanic) \~ manual (Romance). Leaving aside the survival of a small part of the Old English lexical stock, the dissociation of the lexicon of Present-day English cannot be attributed to lexical borrowing only. It is also a consequence of lexical loss. Thus, in a pair like father \~ paternal, it is important to recognise that the presence of the Romance form paternal is mirrored by the absence of the Germanic fæderen ‘paternal’.

Once the discussion has been set in its background, the article can be outlined as follows. Section 2 explains the methodology adopted in the remainder of the article, sections 3 and 4 describe the results of the morphological and semantic analyses respectively, and section 5 draws the conclusions of this research.

2. Research Methodology

In the previous section the point has been made that, in spite of the relevance of the phenomenon of lexical loss, the question of the morphological and semantic nature of lost lexical items remains largely untouched. A remarkable exception in this respect is the work by Wang (2009), who has identified a number of relationships between the old and the modern tongue: (i) an Old English compound disappears, although its components remain, as is the case with winberige ‘grape’ (‘wine-berry’) and heafod-bæn ‘skull’ (‘head-bone’); (ii) a Modern English compound contains a component that is no longer used independently, as in werewolf, the only word where Old English wer ‘man’ survives; (iii) an Old English word no longer survives, but either its derivative or base does, as is the case with winsome, derived from the Old English base wynn ‘joy’, or wedding, derived from wedd ‘pledge’; (iv) an Old English word survives in form, but no longer in conjunction with a meaning it had during the Old English period, as can be seen in the form gewêde, ‘clothing, raiment, dress, apparel’ which, survives as weeds but with the more specific meaning ‘mourning clothes’; (v) an Old English word survives only in a limited speech community like Scottish English, which keeps forms like eith ‘easy’ (Old English ēðe) and nesh ‘soft’ (Old English hnesce); and (vi) the process of reanalysis has brought an Old English word into Modern English in an unpredictable altered form, as is the case with guma ‘man’, which was reanalyzed as groom in bridegroom.

Since Wang (2009) does not focus on absolute losses, this journal article aims at analyzing lexical items that no longer remain in the lexicon. As Wang’s methodology demonstrates, semantic analysis goes hand in hand with morphological analysis. Lost Old English adjectives are considered from two perspectives. On the morphological side, the category and inflectional class of the base of derivation as
well as the affixes and the type of derivational process are taken into account, while
the semantic analysis yields a classification of these Old English adjectives.

For the reasons given above, the methodological steps of this research include the
gathering of the inventory of lost adjectives and their morphological and semantic
analysis. In order to identify lexical losses, two lexicographical sources are used: a
lexical loss is identified whenever an adjective appears in the Old English
lexicographical source but not in the Present-day English one. The Old English data
has been retrieved from the lexical database of Old English Nerthus (www.
nerthusproject.com), which is based mainly on A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary
and, to a lesser extent, on An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary and The Student’s Dictionary
of Anglo-Saxon.2 This online database provides meaning definitions and morphological
information of a total of 29,992 Old English words, including 16,694 nouns, 5,788
adjectives, 5,618 verbs and 1,892 members of grammatical classes.3

The comparison of the two lexicographical sources yields a figure of 4,825 Old
English adjectives listed by Nerthus that are not included in the The Oxford English
Dictionary. Some instances of lost Old English adjectives follow in (1):

(1)

ācæglod ‘studded with pegs; locked with a key’, āgimmed ‘set with precious stones’,
ānhyrned ‘having one horn’, āðhtboren ‘born in bondage’, féowertynenihhte ‘fourteen
nights old’, gesperod ‘armed with a spear’, mylenscearp ‘sharpened on a grindstone’,
symbelwlonc ‘elated with feasting’, tæfle ‘given to dice-playing’, twihynde 1 ‘having
wergilf of 200 shillings’.

The comparison of these lexicographical sources has also attested the survival of
963 out of the 5,788 Old English adjectives provided by the lexical database
Nerthus. That is, 16.63% of Old English adjectives have survived without much
change, in spite of the foreign influences and generalized lexical loss on which I
have commented above. Conversely, a remarkable 83.36% (4,825) have been lost.
Several types of semantic relationship between Old English and Present-day English
adjectives have been established, including (a) no meaning change, (b) addition of
new senses, (c) loss of some senses, (d) simultaneous addition and loss of senses and
(e) meaning change. These categories are illustrated in (2a)-(2e) below:

(2)

a. No meaning change: oferfæt ‘too fat’, unlæred, unlearned, hyrnen ‘of horn’,
gelæstful ‘helpful, serviceable’.

b. Some senses added: gesweordod ‘provided with a sword’ (added senses: ‘having
some part resembling a sword’), behōflic ‘necessary’ (added senses: ‘of use; useful,
profitable; needful’), letsum ‘backward’ (added senses: ‘slow, sluggish; late’),
dolebyrde ‘patient’ (added senses: ‘bearing patiently; forbearing, submissive’).
The morphological and semantic types of lost Old English adjectives

Table 1 provides a quantitative overview of the kinds of semantic relationship just distinguished.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic relationship</th>
<th>Number of adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No meaning change</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some senses added</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some senses lost</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some senses added and other senses lost</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning change</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Semantic relationships between Old English and Present-day English adjectives.
and that linguistic evolution entails meaning expansion. Regarding radical meaning changes, they are often the result of changes in the bases of derivation of the adjectives that convey new meanings, as in *cnihtlic* ‘boyish, childish’ and its Present-day English translation *knightly* (< *knight*).

Among all the possible relationships between Old English and Present-day English adjectives, this article concentrates on instances of absolute loss of adjectives and aims at providing a morphological and semantic analysis of such adjectives. On the morphological side, the category and inflectional class of the base of derivation as well as the affixes and the type of derivational process are taken into account, while the semantic analysis yields a classification of these Old English adjectives in terms of the categories of the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* and the additional ones discussed in section 4.

3. Morphological Analysis

By morphological process, lost adjectives can be broken down as follows in Table 2, which compares the figure of lost adjectives to the total of adjectives formed by means of each process of word-formation that applies in Old English, namely prefixation, suffixation, compounding and zero derivation. The result is called *rate of loss* and is based on the information provided by *Nerthus*. The term *basic* refers to adjectives without derivatives, while *primitive* types are those primary adjectives around which a derivational paradigm can be gathered. An instance of a primitive adjective would be *biter* ‘bitter, sharp, cutting; stinging; exasperated, angry, embittered; painful, disastrous, virulent, cruel’, with its derivatives *(ge)biterian* ‘to be or become bitter; make bitter’, *biternes* ‘bitterness, grief’, *biterlic* ‘sad, bitter’, *biterlīc* ‘bitterly’, *bitre* ‘bitterly, sharply, painfully, severely; very’, *bitrum* ‘bitterly’, *oferbiternes* ‘excessive bitterness’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Total (type-frequency)</th>
<th>Rate of loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primitive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefixed</td>
<td>1,154</td>
<td>1,305</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffixed</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>2,081</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero derived</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2: Rate of loss by morphological process.**
While all the other rates of loss in Table 2 are over 80%, primitive adjectives turn out a remarkably lower figure, for which two complementary explanations can be proposed. The first reason why primitive adjectives survive in the lexicon more than the other classes distinguished in Table 2 is to be found in the derivatives of these adjectives: the presence of derivatives anchors the primitive lexical item from which they derive. This is the case with the primitive adjective *grēat* ‘great’, which has been preserved together with its derivative *grēatnes* ‘greatness’, even though other members of the derivational paradigm like *grēto* ‘greatness’, *grēatian* ‘to become great’ and *grētan* ‘to flourish’ have been lost. However, it can also be the case that the primitive adjective is preserved despite all its derivatives disappearing. A case in point is *atol* ‘dire, terrible, ugly, deformed, repulsive, unchaste’, which is found in the *OED*, although it is marked as obsolete, but all its derivatives, including *atol* ‘terror, horror; evil, wretchedness’ and *atolian* ‘to deform, disfigure’, have disappeared. It is interesting to note, at this stage, the affixed adjective *ǣmelle* ‘insipid’ which has disappeared together with its derivatives: *ǣmelnes* ‘slackness, slackness, sloth, weariness, disgust’, *ǣmellian* ‘to become insipid and *ǣmellad* ‘emptied out, brought to nought’. The second reason for the lower rate of loss of primitive adjectives is related to the nature of these adjectives and, more specifically, to their degree of atomicity and analysability and their formal and semantic contribution to hyponymy as shown by derivational paradigms. As regards analysability, primitive adjectives, such as *bær* ‘bare’ or *beald* ‘bold’, cannot be decomposed morphologically, which reflects their unanalysable meaning. An outstanding consequence of morphological and semantic atomicity is that the form and meaning of a primitive adjective are central to lexical organisation because they are kept, with the modifications resulting from subsequent word-formation processes, throughout the derivation. For example, consider the traits of formal and semantic inheritance in the derivational paradigm of *dēop 1* ‘deep, profound; awful, mysterious; heinous; serious, solemn, earnest’, which includes *bedīpan* ‘to dip, immerse’, *dēop 2* ‘depth, abyss; the sea’, *dēope* ‘deeply, thoroughly, entirely, earnestly, solemnly, *dēopic* ‘deep, profound, thorough, fundamental; grievous’, *dēoplic* ‘deeply; ingeniously’, *dēopnes* ‘depth, abyss; profundity, mystery; subtlety, cunning’, *dīpan* ‘to make deeper’, *(ge)dīopian* ‘to deepen’, *(ge)dīpan* ‘to dip; baptize’, *indīpan* ‘to dip in, immerse’ and *undēop* ‘shallow, low’. The existence of derivatives reinforces the primitive term, because its form and meaning are present, to different degrees, in all derivatives of the paradigm, with which the primitive is likely to survive in the lexicon even though some or all of its derivatives have been lost, as is the case with *dēop 1*.5

Turning to the relationship between affixation and lexical loss, Table 3 offers the rates of loss by affix. The most type-frequent affixes, according to the data provided by Nerthus, have been selected.
As is shown in Table 3, the rates of loss by affix range from 73.1% (-ig) to 100% (-bære). In general, rates of loss under 85% are shown by affixes still used in Present-day English, including un-, ofer-, -ful, -ig and -lēas. However, the fact that an unproductive suffix like -en displays a low loss rate of 75% indicates that there is not a direct relationship between affix productivity and adjective survival. Regarding frequency, rates of loss over 90% occur with less frequent affixes such as the prefix twi-, and the suffixes -fæst and -iht. Again, the generalization cannot be pushed too far because the prefix ge-, with a low frequency of 36 derivatives has a rate of loss lower than that of the prefix un-, which stands out as the most type-frequent. Apart from the two exceptions just mentioned, a clear tendency can be identified in the relationship between lexical loss and affixation pattern: Old English affixation patterns surviving into Present-day English and type-frequent affixation patterns show lower rates of lexical loss than less type-frequent and lost affixation patterns.

To continue with the morphological part of the analysis, lost adjectives are analyzed with respect to their derivational paradigm. Most of them belong to strong verb paradigms: 2,115 lost Old English adjectives have strong verbs as direct or indirect bases of derivation, 43.8% of the total number lost. Table 4 displays the ten derivational paradigms of verbs with the highest rates of adjective loss (all of them belong to the strong class, although witan and cunnan are traditionally labelled preterite-present):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affix</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Total of derivatives (type-frequency)</th>
<th>Rate of loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ge-</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offer-</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twi-</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un-</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-bære</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ed</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-en</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-fæst</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ful</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ig</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iht</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lēas</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lic</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ol</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3: Rate of loss by affix.
The morphological and semantic types of lost Old English adjectives

2,526 lost Old English adjectives derive from categories other than the strong verb. That is, 52.35% of lost Old English adjectives select a non-verbal base of derivation. The ten derivational paradigms with the highest number of lost adjectives appear in Table 5, together with the corresponding rates of loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Adjectives in paradigm</th>
<th>Rate of loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERAN</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUNNAN</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÉADAN</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GANGAN</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALDAN</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*LÉOSAN</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METAN</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEORDAN</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WINDAN</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITAN</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4: Rate of loss by derivational paradigm (strong verbs).**

Two aspects of Table 4 and Table 5 deserve some comment. In the first place, the derivative of a strong verb is less likely to be lost than one of another morphological class or lexical category. This fact can be explained in terms of the central role played by the strong verb in the derivational morphology of Old English, not only because it is the starting point of derivation (Hinderling 1967; Kastovsky 1992).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other classes</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Adjectives in paradigm</th>
<th>Rate of loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CYNN 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFEN 1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FÆST 1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FULL 1</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLD</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HYGE</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MÒD</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWÍD</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORD 1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 5: Rate of loss by derivational paradigm (base different from strong verb).**
but also because it gives rise to larger derivational paradigms (Novo Urraca fc.), which eventually results in a higher rate of survival of paradigms based on strong verbs. In the second place, the average rates of loss shown by Table 4 and Table 5 are similar (76.2% in strong verbs and 75.6% in other classes). By paradigm, the only instances of total loss correspond to strong verb derivatives (although there are also rates of loss in the region of 90% in Table 4). That is to say, the rate of loss in the class of the adjective depends on the category of the base of the paradigm, but also has a strong idiosyncratic component as even the paradigms based on strong verbs can display rates of 100%.

4. Semantic Analysis

The semantic classification of adjectives follows basically that of *A Thesaurus of Old English* and the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary*, which distinguishes the following semantic categories and subcategories:

**The external world**

- The world
  - 01.01 The Earth
  - 01.02 Life
  - 01.03 Physical sensibility
  - 01.04 Matter
  - 01.05 Existence in time and space
  - 01.06 Relative properties
  - 01.07 The supernatural

**The mental world**

- The mind
  - 02.01 Mental capacity
  - 02.02 Emotion
  - 02.03 Philosophy
  - 02.04 Aesthetics
  - 02.05 Will/ faculty of will
  - 02.06 Refusal/ denial
  - 02.07 Having/ possession
  - 02.08 Language

**The social world**

- Society
  - 03.01 Society/ the community
  - 03.02 Inhabiting/ dwelling
  - 03.03 Armed hostility
  - 03.04 Authority
  - 03.05 Morality
  - 03.06 Education
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03.07 Faith
03.08 Communication
03.09 Travel/travelling
03.10 Occupation/work
03.11 Leisure

FIGURE 1: Semantic categories and subcategories from the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary.

To the categories given in Figure 1, the following have been added from the taxonomy of semantic categories of A Thesaurus of Old English:

11. Action and utility
   11. Action, operation
      11.09 Peril, danger
      11.10 Safety, safeness
12. Social interaction
   12. Power, might
      12.06 A province, country, territory
13. Peace and war
14. Law and order
16. Religion

FIGURE 2: Additional semantic categories from A Thesaurus of Old English.

The inventory of semantic categories resulting from Figure 1 and Figure 2 has been adapted to the semantic characteristics of the class of the adjective by adding the categories Size, Auditory qualities, Shape, Tactile, Evaluative, States of living (Givon 1993) and Similarity (Dixon 2006). The category of States and conditions draws on Givon’s (1993: 63) Transitory states. Finally, it has also been necessary, in order to be able to account for all shades of meaning involved by the inventory of adjectives of the corpus, to add the following categories: Accession and access, Blood, Cookery, External appearance, Opposition and concord, Pardon and condemnation, Payment and price, Production, Reward and compensation, Variation and change, Truth and falsehood, and Weapons.

Lost Old English adjectives can be classified semantically as shown in (3). The number of lost lexical items follows each class, within parentheses. In those instances in which the semantic category corresponds to that of the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary, the relevant category code is given after the figure of losses. For illustration, one or more lost adjectives are provided by class.6
A province, country, territory (66)

Accession, access (14)
cærfødère ‘difficult to pass through’, ġefère 3 ‘accessible’, dríblídede ‘having three openings’

Blood (11)
blōden ‘bloody’, blōdfyrg ‘blood-stained, bloody’, blōdġeotende ‘bloody’

Colour (126) 01 The world: 01.04 Matter: 01.04.09 Colour
Colour. Brightness (57)
æčlēce ‘lustless, pale, pallid’, æhlīwe ‘pallid; deformed’, ælfscīne ‘bright as an elf or fairy, beautiful, radiant’

Colour. Colour (69)
æscgrēg ‘ashy-gray’, asedun ‘dun-coloured like an ass’, basu ‘purple’

Cookery (26)
āfigen ‘fried’, aschbacen ‘baked on ashes’, elebacen ‘cooked in oil’

Direction (37) 01 The world: 01.01 The earth: 01.01.03 Direction
āwegēande ‘went away’, āwegweard ‘coming to a close’, andelber ‘reversed’

Evaluative (610)
āðrotsum ‘irksome’, āðwyrde ‘worthy of credit’, āberendlic ‘bearable’

External appearance (57)
āsċære ‘unshorn, untrimmed’, āsċære ‘unshorn, untrimmed’, andfeax ‘bald’

Festivity (6)
bodigendlic ‘to be celebrated’, frēols 2 ‘free, festive’, frēoldlic 1 ‘festive, festival’

Having/ possession (48) 02 The mind: 02.07 Having/ possession
āgenlic ‘own; owed, due’, ætgenumen ‘taken away’, berōfon ‘despoiled’

Hearing, noise and auditory qualities (41) 01 The world: 01.03 Physical sensibility: 01.03.08 Hearing/noise
beorhtword ‘clear-voiced’, clīpol ‘sounding, vocal; vocalic, vowel’, healfclypigende ‘semi-vowel’

Inhabiting/ dwelling (27) 03 Society: 03.02 Inhabiting/ dwelling
ābūrod ‘not inhabited’, ākēte 2 ‘desert; empty’, ākēten ‘desert, empty’

Language, literature and communication (153) 02 The mind: 02.08 Language & 03 Society: 03.08 Communication
ābyldendlic ‘enclitic’, ānsprēce ‘speaking as one’, āsciendlic ‘interrogative’

Law and order (116)
āltiedelic ‘lawful, permissible’, āsċendlic ‘to be sought’, āworpenclic ‘worthy of condemnation’

Leisure (3) 03 Society: 03.11 Leisure
flāniht ‘relating to darts’, plegendic ‘playing’, tefle ‘given to dice-playing’

Matter (155) 01 The world: 01.04 Matter
Divisibility and indivisibility (19)
betwuxgangende ‘separating’, fēðorbyrste ‘split into four’, fōberdǣled ‘quadripartite, quartered’

Dryness and wetness (14)
dān 1 ‘moist, irrigated’, dēuwigfēdera ‘dewy-feathered’, drýgscōd ‘dry-shod’
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Fixation (11)
ācēglod ‘studded with pegs; locked with a key’, ānagled ‘nailed down’, borhfæst ‘fast bound’, gedwinglod ‘bound up (of hair)’

Freshness and staleness (18)
forworen ‘decrepid, decayed’, geæcnösliende ‘degenerating’, gescrence ‘withered, dry’

Material (64)
ācen 2 ‘oaken’, āren 1 ‘made of brass, brazen; twinkling’, bēnen ‘made of bone’

Purity and impurity (11)
fullckēne ‘very pure’, beahhlētor ‘very pure’, mērehwīt ‘pure, white, sterling (of silver)’

States of matter (11)
āmolten ‘molten’, geotenlic ‘molten, fluid’, gebyllic ‘densus’

Weight (7)
gelbēfed ‘weighed down’, pis ‘heavy’, pislic ‘heavy’

Measurement, determination of quantity and amount (99) 01 The world: 01.06: Relative properties: 01.06.05 Measurement & 01.06.06 Quantity/amount
flēde ‘in flood, full, overflowing’, fullmannod ‘fully peopled’, gehwēde ‘slight, scanty, small, young’

Navigation (23) 03 Society: 03.09 Travel/ travelling: 03.09.04 Navigation
ānhyme ‘made of one trunk, dug-out (ship)’, āren 2 ‘oar-propelled’, brandstæfn ‘high-prowed’

Number (6) 01 The world: 01.06 Relative properties: 01.06.04 Number
æfterlic ‘second’, endebyrdlic ‘ordinal’, (ge)tælsum ‘in numbers, rhythmic’

Opposition and concord (46)
bīsac ‘contested, disputed’, cēaslunger ‘contentious’, cēastful ‘contentious’

Pardon and condemnation (14)
belādienlic ‘apologetic, that can be excused’, bōtwyrde ‘pardonable, that can be atoned for by’, gelēfen ‘excused’

Payment/ price (14)
gafolfrēo ‘tax-free’, gafollic ‘fiscal’, gildfrēo ‘free of tax’

Peace and war (64)
srōf ‘brave in battle’, beaducāf ‘bold in battle’, beaducraftig ‘warlike’

Peril/ danger (12)
bēalu 2 ‘baleful, deadly, dangerous, wicked, evil’, cwildhēre ‘deadly, dangerous, pestiferous; stormy’, cwildrōf ‘deadly, savage’

Production (6)
cræftlic ‘artificial; skilful’, forðberē ‘productive’, handworht ‘made with hands’

Religion (160)
æbrucol ‘sacriligious’, æfremmende ‘pious, religious’, āswic 2 ‘apostate’

Reward and compensation (8)
āngilde 2 ‘to be compensated for’, āgilde ‘receiving no wergild as compensation’, andergilde ‘in repayment, in compensation’

Safety/ safeness (9)
borphlēas ‘without a pledge, without security’, gefríðsum ‘safe, fortified’, gehealdfast ‘safe’
Shape (65)
ägrafenlic ‘sculptured’, ānegē ‘having one edge’, ānhēwe ‘of one form or colour’

Sight (27) 01 The world: 01.03 Physical sensibility: 01.03.07 Sight
ānēage ‘one-eyed, blind in one eye’, ānēagede ‘one-eyed, blind in one eye’, anśēne ‘visible’

Similarity (52)
āncorlic ‘like a hermit’, allefn ī ‘quite equal’, besibb ‘related’

Size (53)
āelungen ‘contracted’, āgrōwen ‘overgrown’, efēbrād ‘as broad as long’
Smell/odour (11) 01 The world: 01.03 Physical sensibility: 01.03.06 Smell/odour
fūlstincende ‘foul-stinking’, ĕstence ‘odoriferous’, runl ‘foul? running?; foul, stinking?’

Social interaction (106)
Friendship and other social relations, conditions and states (29)
cnīhtēas ‘without an attendant’, frōondlīe ‘kind to one’s friends’,
gadrigendlic ‘collective’

Kinship, family relationship (23)
ānboren ‘only-begotten’, bearnlēas ‘childless’, brōdlēas ‘brotherless’

Marriage, state of marriage (19)
ānlegere ‘consorting with one man’, bewedденdidic ‘relating to marriage’,
ceorlēas ‘unmarried (of women)’

Sexual relations, sexuality (35)
elēngorn ‘yearning after purity, celibate; cleanly’, dyrneforlegen ‘adulterous’,
dyrneleger ‘adulterous’

Space, order, arrangement and disposition (75) 01 The world: 01.05 Existence in time and space: 01.05.07 Space & 01.06. Relative properties: 01.06.03

Order
āsnydlerlic ‘remote’, aftanweard ‘behind, in the rear, following’, ēlsyndrig ‘quite apart, single’

States and conditions (1,228)
External activity (54)
ālīsendlic ‘loosing, liberating’, āsolecn ‘sluggish, idle, indifferent, dissolute’,
āswind ‘idle, slothful’

External condition (129)
āblerd ‘bare, uncovered, bald’, ādēliht ‘filthy’, āgimmed ‘set with precious stones’

Mental-internal (942)
ādēgen ‘distended (with food)’, āberd ‘crafty, cunning’, ācōl ‘affrighted, dismayed’

Motion (54)
ārodlic ‘quick’, cwicclīende ‘moving rapidly?, tottering?’ , duniendlic ‘falling down, tottering’

Temperature (25)
ālēcald ‘altogether cold, very cold’, brandhēt ‘burning hot, ardent’,
brimecald ‘ocean-cold’
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Weather (24)

- blæwende ‘blowing hard (wind)’, gewinde ‘blowing’, herfístlic ‘autumnal; of harvest’

States of living (767)

Age (90)

- ānhundwintre ‘a hundred years old’, ānnihte ‘one day old’, ānwintr ‘one year old, yearling’

Animals (46)

- ānbyrnde ‘having one horn’, byceen ‘of a goat, goat’s’, calcrond ‘shod (of horses)’

Body (39)

- ānfête ‘one-footed’, æðyð ‘evicerata, deprived of its sinews’, belcedswéora ‘having an inflated neck’

Death (44)

- āsprungen ‘dead’, efterboren ‘afterborn, posthumous’, beliden ‘departed, dead’

Existence (7)

- æfweard ‘absent’, edwístlic ‘existing, substantive’, framwesende ‘absent’

Fertility (39)

- bearnēaca ‘pregnant’, berende ‘fruitful’, cildfēderende ‘nursing’

Health (151)

- Æblegned ‘ulcerated’, Ædlberende ‘disease-bearing’, Æðlig ‘sick, diseased’

Humankind, people (9)

- mennisclic ‘human; humane’, nāthwā ‘someone’, unmennisclic ‘inhuman’

Life (27)


Plants (54)

- ānstelede ‘one-stalked, having one stem’, Æsprindlad ‘ripped up’, ālren ‘of an alder tree’

Status, rank and power (180)

- Ærbræftig ‘respected, honourable’, Ærful ‘respected, venerable; favourable, kind, merciful; respectful’, Ærlēas ‘dishonourable, base, impious, wicked; cruel’

Strength (29)

- byrðenstrang ‘strong at carrying burdens’, cœorlstrang ‘strong as a man’, earnstrang ‘strong of arm, muscular’

Wealth (52)

- Æhtspēdig ‘rich’, Æhtwelig ‘wealthy, rich’, ælmeslic ‘charitable; depending on alms, poor’

Tactile (114)

Firmness (22)

- bōdfæst ‘firm, forced to stand out’, cope 1 ‘unsteady, rocking?’, corōfæst ‘earthfast, firm in the earth’

Inclination (19)

- clifig ‘steep’, forðheald ‘bent forward, stooping; inclined, steep’, gǣandele ‘steep’
Pointedness (14)

*edged* ‘edged’, *ecghwæ* ‘keen-edged’, *fəowergæred* ‘four-pointed’

Pressure (5)

*gebered* ‘crushed, kneaded; harassed, oppressed’, *onāslagen* ‘beaten (of metal)’, *ābygendlic* ‘bending, flexible’

Resistance (25)

*āhierding* ‘hardening’, *āstrenged* ‘(made strong) malleable’, *brēad* ‘brittle’

Texture (14)

*ānhealfrēah* ‘having one side rough’, *anbrucol* ‘rugged’, *byrstig* ‘broken, rugged’

Taste and flavour (15) 01 The world: 01. 03 Physical sensibility: 01.03.05

Taste/flavour

*āfor* ‘bitter, acid, sour, sharp; dire’, *āmelle* ‘insipid’, *ātlic* ‘eatable’

Textiles (14) 01 The world: 01.02 Life: 01.02.09 Textiles

*gegierelic* ‘of clothes’, *geglōfed* ‘gloved’, *goldgewefen* ‘woven with gold’

The earth (105) 01 The world: 01.01 The earth

Air surrounding earth, atmosphere (8)

*brosnig* ‘vaporous, smoky’, *lyften* ‘of the air, aerial’, *lyftgeswenced* ‘driven by the wind’

Fire (28)

*āblēst* ‘inspired, furious; blowing fiercely (of flame)’, *brynig* ‘fiery, burning’, *fyrbēre* ‘fire-bearing, fiery’

Firmament (14)

*āstyrred* ‘starry’, *cahtanihbe* ‘eight days’ old (moon)’, *gelēomod* ‘having rays of light’

Planet (3)

*eardlic* ‘earthly, worldly’, *middangearden* ‘worldly’, *middangeardlic* ‘earthly’

Surface of the earth (24)

*beorhtte* ‘mountainous’, *dänlandisc* ‘mountainous’, *dänlic* ‘of a mountain, mountain-dwelling’

Water (28)

*cwicwelle* ‘living (of water)’, *dēawigendlic* ‘dewy’, *ēalic* 1 ‘or a river’

The supernatural (15) 01 The world: 01.07 The supernatural

*cicropisc* ‘cyclopean?; Cecropean’, *drýcrafitig* ‘skilled in magic’, *drýlic* ‘magic, magical’

Time (123) 01 The world: 01.05 Existence in time and space: 01.05.06 Time

*āndēge* ‘for one day, lasting a day’, *ātoirigendlic* ‘transitory, perishable; failing; defective’, *āwunigende* ‘continual’

Transport (2) 03 Society: 03. 09 Travel/ travelling: 03.09.01 Transport

*fəowerhmælod* ‘four-wheeled’, *twihwæle* ‘two-wheeled’

Travel/ travelling (11) 03 Society: 03.09 Travel/ travelling

*ēalōfe* ‘easy for travelling over’, *ellorfis* ‘ready to depart’, *felageonge* ‘much-travelled’

Truth and falsehood (11)

*lēasferhō* ‘false’, *lēaslic* ‘false, deceitful, sham, empty’, *bygen* 2 ‘lying, false’

Use of drugs, poison (8) 01 The world: 01.03 Physical sensibility: 01.03.03

Use of drugs, poison
ātorbēre ‘poisonous’, beweled ‘poisoned, polluted’, geolstrig ‘secreting poison, purulent’

**Variation and change (27)**
āwenedelic 1 ‘that can be changed, changeable’, āwendendelic ‘that can be changed, changeable’, fasthýdig ‘constant, steadfast’

**Weapons (37)**
ārgled ‘bright in armour’, beaduscearp ‘keen in battle (sword)’, bordhebbende ‘shield-bearing’

**Work (5) 03 Society: 03.10 Occupation/ work: 03.10.01 Work**
esnecund ‘of a labourer’, (ge)swincleæs ‘without toil’, geweorclic ‘pertaining to work’

As can be seen in (3), categories leak. For example, heofonbēah ‘reaching to heaven’ could have been included within Direction or Firmament and āmyrce ‘excellent’ within Evaluative or Status, rank and power. It seems to be the case that even well defined semantic categories are surrounded by areas of indeterminacy in such a way that overlapping and continuity among such categories are to a certain extent inevitable. Another issue arising from this semantic analysis has to do with the different senses conveyed by adjectives. For instance, swīð means ‘strong, mighty, powerful’, but also ‘active’, ‘severe’ and ‘violent’. A special case of this phenomenon arises when literal and figurative meanings overlap in the definition of a lexical item. For example, frēorig conveys the literal meaning of ‘freezing, frozen, cold, chilly’ and the figurative meaning ‘blanched with fear, sad, mournful’, thus being classifiable under Temperature as well as Peril and danger. The general solution that has been adopted is to classify adjectives under a single category according to the meaning that prevails above any other specific sense.

In spite of the limits of the semantic analysis that has been carried out, some generalizations can be made. If we concentrate on those categories with one hundred or more adjectives, it turns out that lexical losses of the adjectival class often consist of adjectives denoting abstract qualities, thus: Mental-internal (942), Evaluative (610), Status, rank and power (180), Religion (160), Language, literature and communication (153), Time (123), Law and order (116), Social interaction (106). The importance of categories like States of living (587), Colour (126) and The Earth (105) notwithstanding, lost adjectives express abstract qualities rather than concrete ones. In other words, we are dealing with non-prototypical adjectives coding non-permanent, abstract properties such as bedul ‘suppliant’, edlesendlic ‘relative, reciprocal’, ferhtlic ‘just, honest’, gecorenlíc ‘elegant’, hlítfend ‘threatening’, ofgangende ‘derivative’, unvitod ‘uncertain’, and the like. The higher rate of loss of abstract adjectives may have several causes. The first is to be found in textual frequency. Abstract adjectives are used less frequently than concrete ones and, consequently, they are less resistant to replacement than concrete adjectives. Secondly, abstract adjectives seldom convey nuclear meanings,
by means of which their evolution can be traced back to the more nuclear lexical items to which they are linked through relations of inheritance. This is the case with *edlesendlic* ‘relative, reciprocal’ with respect to the strong verb *lesan* ‘to collect, pick, select’, which has disappeared along with the strong verb. Thirdly, abstract adjectives are, as a general rule, more analysable than concrete adjectives, which often convey meanings that cannot be decomposed lexically. Adjectives of colour represent a paramount example of this aspect, but even in sets like *rēod 1/ wyrmbaso/wræterēad* ‘red’ the unanalysable *rēod 1* has been preserved while the analysable *wyrmbaso* and *wræterēad* count as losses.

Apart from the relevance of the type of adjective (concrete vs. abstract) for the rate of lexical loss, this analysis sheds new light on the evolution of the English lexicon. Histories of the English language link lexical loss to language contact and consider it as either random or based to a certain extent on textual frequency. The semantic analysis of adjectives shows that, at least in this lexical class, adjective type plays a role in survival or loss. Moreover, a point of contact has been found with morphological analysis, namely analysability. In a paradigmatic analysis of form and meaning that seeks paths of formal and semantic inheritance in lexical paradigms, nuclear meanings and unanalysable forms converge in adjectives more resistant to loss than semantically derived and formally analysable ones.

5. Conclusion

This article has analyzed 4,825 instances of lexical loss in the class of the adjective. Such lexical losses have been characterized from a morphological and semantic point of view in order to find points of contact between this phenomenon and derivational morphology as well as semantic taxonomy.

The data examined throughout the morphological analysis demonstrates that the presence of derivatives in the lexicon anchors the primitive lexical item from which they derive in such a way that the primitive lexical item often survives even though its derivatives do not. It has also been found that affixation patterns surviving into Present-day English and more type-frequent affixation patterns show lower rates of lexical loss than less type-frequent and lost affixation patterns.

The semantic analysis carried out has shown that lexical loss takes place mainly in the area of less prototypical adjectives with evaluative function or referring to transitory mental states. In general, more abstract adjectives than concrete ones are counted among the losses. Groups of abstract adjectives relating to time, language and communication, law and order and religion are the ones that have suffered more than one hundred losses. However, significant groups of concrete adjectives have also suffered loss: those of colour, tactile properties and states of matter.
Finally, this research has insisted on the importance of lexical primitives and semantic nuclei when it comes to accounting for lower rates of loss in the English lexicon. Moreover, it has been shown that inheritance, as reflected by word-formation and semantic organisation, can be linked to lexical loss and survival. Throughout linguistic evolution, more analysable forms (and therefore those resulting from more steps of formal inheritance) are more likely to be lost than less analysable forms. Conversely, adjectives with less nuclear meanings (those therefore resulting from more steps of semantic inheritance) are lost more easily than those with more nuclear meanings. All in all, analysability stands out as a fundamental notion for finding points of contact between the inheritance of form and meaning. To conclude, it remains for future research to determine the extent to which the addition of new senses contributes to the survival of a given adjective.

Notes

1. This research has been funded through the project FFI2011-29532.

2. This article follows the convention of numbered predicates adopted by Nerthus in order to distinguish homonymous lexical entries. Thus, regarding lexical category, ābūtan 1 ‘on, about, around, on the outside, round about’ may be considered an adposition and ābūtan 2 ‘about, nearly’, an adverb. As for morphological class, besēon 1 ‘to see, look, look round’, for example, is a Class V strong verb, whereas besēon 2 ‘to suffuse’ qualifies as a Class I strong verb. Turning to the question of variants, two or more predicates are also numbered if they have different spellings, as is the case with fodder 1 ‘fodder, food; darnel, tares’ with variants foddr 1, foddur 1, føter and følor; fodder 2 ‘case, sheath’ with variants foddr 2 and foddur 2; and fodder 3 ‘hatchet’, with variants foddr 3 and foddur 3.


4. The quantitative data exclude sets involving two or more Present-day English adjectives that can be traced back to the same Old English adjective. There are 76 instances of such sets.

5. It is hard to find instances of the loss of a lexical prime whose derivatives have been preserved. This has happened to enge 1 ‘narrow, close, straitened, constrained; vexed, troubled, anxious; oppressive, severe, painful, cruel’, which has been lost together with its derivatives enge 2 ‘sadly, anxiously’, geencgd ‘anxious, careful’, engu ‘narrowness, confinement’, etc., even though the OED has the obsolete geng (geengan ‘to constrain, distress, vex, trouble’).

6. Although the figure is nearly negligible, 12 out of the 4,825 lost Old English adjectives have not been classified because the only translation available is into Latin or because no translation is available in the major lexicographical sources. This is the case with æreldo, ût 2, and eftdrægend.
Lexicographical sources


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Received: 27 March 2013
Accepted: 15 July 2013