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The American *Blade*: Etymologies of a Newspaper Name

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Some American newspaper names include the element *Blade*, as in *The Toledo Blade* or *The Washington Blade*. One might assume that all newspaper *Blades* are the same, but they are, in fact, etymologically distinct, used by namers of their respective newspapers for different reasons. The residues of those etymologies figure in regional and subcultural identities, and *Blade* reflects various aspects of American history and culture depending on the circumstances of its use. At the finest historical scale, *Blade* may be a "lexical doppelgänger," used in mixed communities by immigrant populations for one etymological reason, but by the established Anglo-American strata for another. While purposeful, metaphorical uses of *Blade* make flamboyant iconic claims about regional or subcultural identity, doppelgänger *Blade* is forged in the crucible or melting pot of language contact and essentially overlooked in the history of American speech.

KEYWORDS language contact, etymology, lexical doppelängers, *Blade*, newspaper names, Wisconsin newspapers, *The Toledo Blade*, *The Washington Blade*

Considering the whole history of the American newspaper, from Colonial times to the present day, from urban dailies to rural weeklies, several papers have been called *The Blade* or *The Daily Blade* or *The Weekly Blade*, or some other combination with *Blade* in the paper's name. Not all *Blades* are equal, however, insofar as their etymologies differ in ways important to local and regional identity, especially historical identities easily lost when we lack material about them, and when our language contact and word historical models tend to miss some fine-grained, outlying evidence in favor of bigger pictures and regularities. We can learn some things about the history of American speech only by means of irregularities, and *Blade* counts as one of these.

In the American context, the newspaper name *Blade* can figure noticeably in a historical regional identity, as it does in the case of *The Toledo Blade*, but it can also help to configure a non-regional social identity, as in the case of *The Washington Blade*. One salient difference between these two *Blades* is the difference between

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Toledo and *Washington*, of course, but another is the difference between their etymologies, which speak to the cultural aspirations of their respective newspapers and mythologize the histories and values of the communities to which those newspapers belong. The *Toledo* and *Washington Blades* are newspapers on a large scale, but small-scale *Blades*, those in the names of local Wisconsin newspapers, for instance, suggest an entirely different type of etymology, one in which non-English words important to immigrant identities are naturalized into American names. These are often overlooked markers of immigrant experience and the successful accommodation of immigrants to American speech and American culture.

In the Anglo-American tradition, sixteenth-century black-letter broadsheets announcing surprising news — marvels and mysteries — were succeeded in the seventeenth century, particularly during the Civil War and Interregnum (roughly 1640–1660), by newsbooks and political pamphlets that began to look like newspapers — serials, but not yet periodicals. The first daily newspaper, London's *Daily Courant*, began publishing in 1702 (see Aitchison, 2007: 50–95). For a long time afterwards, however, newspapers were mostly ephemera and often treated as such — many of those mentioned here, published more than a hundred years after the *Daily Courant*, survived for less than a decade — and so we imagine there were more of them around than libraries and museums have collected and preserved. Some of these may have been called *The Blade*, but — as far as I have been able to determine — we have no record of *Blade* as an element of a newspaper name in either the United Kingdom, the British colonies in North America, or the United States until the nineteenth century. The publicly accessible record of early English language newspapers is incomplete, however, so earlier instances may appear to view someday.[1]

Blade is not a frequent newspaper name. The Wisconsin State Historical Society's *Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers 1833–1957* (Oehlerts, 1958) itemizes 2259 newspapers.[2] Of these, 6 percent include *Times* as an element of a newspaper's name, and 4 percent include *Herald*; in contrast, *Blade* appears as an element only nine times in the history of Wisconsin newspapers, that is, in only .04 percent of Wisconsin newspaper names. If *Blade* is in any sense significant, it is easy to see why that significance has been overlooked.

Nonetheless, one *Blade* has proved durable and ranks among the most prominent regional newspapers in America today, namely, *The Toledo Blade*. We know about the sense of *blade* originally intended in *The Toledo Blade* because of an editorial titled "Our Name," presumably written by its founding editor, George Way, in the first and only extant issue of the paper under his editorship, dated December 19 1935:

> Our readers will immediately perceive that the name we have assumed was suggested by the notoriety a certain city in Old Spain obtained for a peculiar kind of manufacture ... We know there is much temerity in assuming such a name; but we wish to be perfectly understood that we send forth, concealed under it, no menace, and do not threaten to be tart, smart, witty, severe, ironical, caustic or provoking ... We should prefer to keep our sword always in its scabbard ... We should not like, however, to have it rust in its sheath ... Our blade has no elasticity — it will break before it will bend. (qtd. in Harrison, 1985: 5)

The context Way lays out for the name is somewhat delusional, for surely few of the *Blade*'s readers would immediately associate the name of their city with the armaments manufacture of medieval Toledo. It does, however, establish an etymology.

That etymology is at once referentially oblique and metaphorically robust. Toledo's *Blade* was by no means the only one to trade on the "weapon- or tool-edge" sense identified in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth *OED*, s.v. *blade n* in sense 6.a), but others depended on different semantics or different cultural associations. For instance, from 1896 to the present day, the *Tomahawk Leader* has conveyed news weekly to the citizens of Tomahawk, Wisconsin, in Lincoln County, and its environs. But, before that, they relied on the *Tomahawk Blade* (1887–1896?), in which the *Blade* element is a meronym of *Tomahawk*, not the only pun involving *Blade* in a newspaper name, as we shall see. For a while in 1884, Sheffield, in the South Riding of Yorkshire, was home to a satirical magazine called *The Blade*, apparently not "tart, smart, witty, severe, ironical, caustic, or provoking" enough to survive into 1885. The name, however, was brilliant, because Sheffield was then and still is famous for its cutlery manufacture, so it is more culturally relevant than Toledo's rather fanciful *Blade*.

Another newspaper named with the "weapon- or tool-edge" sense in play, though historically and indirectly, is the *Washington Blade*, the website of which explains, "In October 1969 [. . .] 'The Gay Blade' came out of the closet as the publication of record of the gay community in Washington DC taking an ironic shot at a phrase that once was used to enforce a culture of hiding and shame." Originally, the site asserts, *gay blade* meant "dashing and charming swordsman" — the oblique connection between this *Blade* and those of Toledo, Sheffield, and Tomahawk — but later came to mean "confirmed bachelor" (see <http://www. washingtonblade.com/contact-us/about/>).

The *OED* certainly agrees that *gay blade* can mean "homosexual man," though no dictionary I have consulted records the nuanced meaning "confirmed bachelor" among its senses of *blade* or *gay blade*, something for the lexicographers to look into. In *Green's Dictionary of Slang* (Green, 2010, henceforth *GDoS*), the sexual connotations of *blade* "gallant, sharp fellow" are attested as far back as 1607 (*GDoS* s.v. *blade n* in sense 1(a)), and the phallicism of *blade* "penis," also dating from the first decade of the seventeenth century (*GDoS* s.v. *blade n* in sense 2(a)), is obvious, but whether these *sword*-related sexual terms are relevant to the etymology — understood but not articulated — whether the newspaper name is meant, not only ironically but as provoking about sex and sexuality, is unclear. Anyway, that sort of swordsman would no longer appropriately represent the newspaper, which now serves the District's entire LGBT community.

As John Saeed puts it, "Names after all are labels for people, places, etc., and often seem to have little other meaning" (2003: 27). Newspaper names are more or less bleached of lexical meaning: no one registers the lexical semantic difference among *Call*, *Register*, *Herald*, or *Gazette*, though, at what Saul Kripke calls the "the initial baptism" (1972: 302), namers must have had some reason to use one possible newspaper name over the others, a gut feeling that *Gazette* "small newspaper" was more appropriate to a certain publishing context than *Herald* "credentialed proclaimer," and vice versa. *Blade* is similarly innocuous, unless it punningly calls attention to itself and therein proposes an etymological meaning. Nevertheless, what looks to us on its bleached surface as one name used for any number of newspapers, interchangeable with other names in its onomastic field, in subtle semantic terms, several *Blades* have several etymologies and, on that account, distinct if conceptually related meanings.

Newspaper names — indeed, most names — are less inert than the standard semantic account allows. Among other social roles, newspaper names focus local and regional identities. To the thoughtful and informed, a locally or regionally significant newspaper name etymology matters in that identity, and the fact that some members of a community are aware of it contributes to that identity — it is never the case that all members of a community are conscious of all particles of social meaning pulled into a meaningful structural relationship by what we might call "the identity force." When an American town's newspaper is called the *Democrat* or the *Republican*, the name still reminds some citizens of bygone political affiliations, the historical identities in which their ancestors were fully implicated and which leave residues of social meaning in local identities to the present day.

In some cases, the social meaning embedded in a newspaper name is immediate. For instance, *The Washington Blade* is currently an iconic cultural institution in the Washington, DC, LGBT community, so much so that its staff bought it when its parent company failed in 2009 and secured *The Washington Blade* name in bankruptcy court — the name mattered because it was identified with two communities, one social and one regional, though while the social community can be transregional, the regional community is also always social. Similarly, *The Toledo Blade* is a cultural institution promoting regional pride and identification with life in northern Ohio, as well as a newspaper that outsiders recognize as nationally as well as regionally significant, and that out-group recognition actually serves to support the in-group identity.

Most of the time, however, evidence of a newspaper name's social significance is so mundane as to escape notice: certainly in Toledo and Washington today, and one suspects in Tomahawk, Wisconsin, back in the day, residents of the newspaper's area of influence spoke of the newspaper familiarly, not as *The Toledo Blade*, *The Tomahawk Blade*, or *The Washington Blade*, but simply, *The Blade*. Inside the community, its newspapers' place — Toledo or Tomahawk — can be assumed, and such ellipsis — in any *Blade*, *Times*, *Herald*, or *Gazette* — both marks one's participation in the community identity and encodes familiarity with community institutions as part of one's individual identity.

In Wisconsin, several *Blades* are on record, but their etymologies are less flamboyant, culturally subtler than those of *The Toledo* or *The Washington Blade*. Besides *The Tomahawk Blade*, one finds *The Cadott Blade* (Chippewa County, 1890–1914), *The Neillsville Blade* (Clark County, 1890–1892?), *The Badger Blade* (Rio, Columbia County, 1902–1925), *The Kenosha Blade* (Kenosha County, 1890–1894?), *The Blanchardville Blade* (Lafayette County, 1887–present), *The Wisconsin Enterprise-Blade* (Milwaukee, 1916–present), *The Osseo Blade* (Trempealeau County, 1887–1894), and *The Elkhorn Blade* (Walworth County, 1891–1905). Without etymological narratives like those available for *The Toledo Blade* and *The Washington Blade*, it is hard to know just what the *Blade* in these newspaper names meant before the meaning was bleached into "name of a newspaper." Are these also sword/knife/ax allusions in service of their respective newspapers' rhetorical or political personalities, or are other etymologies possible?

They are certainly possible, yet improbable. The "tool- or weapon-edge" sense of English *blade* is a metaphorical extension of Germanic **bladaz* "leaf," ultimately from PIE **bhel-* "thrive, bloom" through the suffixed zero-grade **bləh-to-*. The Old English reflex of these forms, *blæd*, is semantically problematic: there is an early use to mean "leaf" in the Old English *Genesis*, but then *blade* is not used in that sense again until the eighteenth century. According to the *OED*, however, *blade* is used frequently in Old English to mean "The broad, flattened, leaf-like part (as distinguished from the shank or handle) of any instrument or utensil, as a paddle, oar, battledore, bat, spade, forceps," which suggests that the extension may have been accomplished already in one or more of the Germanic dialects that became Old English.

Eventually, at least by 1330 according to the *OED*, the "flattened, leaf-like" sense specialized into the "sharp-edged" sense with which we are most familiar. Throughout the period of this semantic narrowing, there is no recorded use of *blade* to mean "leaf." Eventually, of course, *blade* came to mean "leaf of grass," but not until 1450, so, as the *OED* suggests, "It would almost seem then that the modern 'blade' of grass or corn is a later re-transfer from 'sword-blade.'" This is important to note, because it is unlikely, then, that English *blade* extends metaphorically to mean "page," in the way that *leaf* does. There is no reason why it could not, but we would expect to find evidence of the development outside of names as well as in them, and that evidence is hard to find.

A very few newspaper names show consciousness of the unfulfilled possibilities: for a few years, from 1886–1910, Lexington, Kentucky, had *The Blue-grass Blade* in which we move beyond weapons and tools, their edges, and so on; and the town of Warren, in Marshall County, Minnesota, has had *The Warren Sheaf* from 1880 to the present day.[3] Certainly, we talk about sheaves of paper, which might be a newspaper, and though the *OED* gives no evidence of this application *per se*, the compound *sheaf-catalogue*, meaning "The book-form of catalogues with separate leaves," supports it. Note that both of these names are especially tied to local or regional identities — Kentucky has a lot of bluegrass, Minnesota a lot of grain. But while all of this is close to *blade* "leaf or leaves of paper," it is not close enough.

In English, the natural word for "leaf, foliage" is, as we all know, *leaf*. But English is unusual in this among Germanic languages, in which the word for "leaf" tends to be a reflex of Germanic **bladoz*: German *blatt*, Swedish *blad*, Norwegian *blad*, for instance. In these languages, the *blade* cognate extended from "leaf" to "sheet of paper," and then, sometimes without further derivation, came to mean "newspaper, magazine," as in the name for the Norwegian tabloid, *Dagbladet* "daily newspaper/magazine," or *Svenske Dagbladet*, and so on. When Norwegian, Swedish, German, and Danish immigrants established communities in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they naturally promoted the community and its interests in a Norwegian-language newspaper — in other words, there has been more than one American *Dagbladet*.

The question then arises, "Is there a relationship in American English between the newspaper name *Blade* and, for instance, Norwegian *Bladet*?" If there is, then, because of etymology, some instances of *Blade* represent aspects of American cultural history quite different from those behind any of the *Blades* considered so far. Mencken notes in *The American Language* (1936: 491) that Scandinavian elements were often reanalyzed or translated into English forms in personal and place names: "Thus *-qvist* and *-kvist* become *-quist* and *-quest*; *-gren* (a bough) becomes *green* or *grain*, as in *Holmgrain* and *Youngreen*; *-blad* (a leaf) becomes *blade*, as in *Cedarblade*; and *bo-* (an inhabitant) is turned into *bow*, as in *Bowman* from *Boman*." If the process operates for other sorts of names, why would not it do so for newspaper names, as well? Perhaps some of the American *Blades* listed earlier are the result, not of Toledo's influence or the editorial intention to provoke an argument or cut the opposition down to size, but instead of gradual accommodation of Norwegian forms to counterparts in American English.

One of the nine Wisconsin *Blades* might be explained on such terms. *The Blanchardville Blade*, of Blanchardville in Lafayette County, was founded by Thurston J. Rostad (1870–1907), who edited *The Blanchardville Blade* from 1887–1892. He probably spoke some Norwegian — his parents were both Norwegian speakers, though they immigrated to North America in childhood. We know all of this from a biographical sketch of his father, K. T. Rostad, in the *History of Lafayette County, Wisconsin* (1881: 788). For the Rostad family, *Blade* was just as likely to derive from Norwegian *bladet* as from English *blade*. *The Blanchardville Blade* probably predates all the other Wisconsin *Blades* — the Osseo and Tomahawk *Blades* also began publishing in 1887, in July and September respectively, but no issue from the first five volumes of *The Blanchardville Blade* is extant, so we cannot be certain which newspaper came first.

Thurston Rostad's biography is even inferentially so thin that it cannot by itself guarantee a Norwegian etymology for his *Blade*. To buttress the idea, though, we should consider the milieu into which *The Blanchardville Blade* was introduced. For one thing, because it was a newspaper name, its *Blade* would have been understood as Americanized *bladet* by any number of local American-Norwegian and bilingual speakers who expected *bladet* as a newspaper name element. According to the *History of Lafayette County* (1881: 253), in 1875, the population of Blanchardville was 529. Also according to the *History* (1881: 786–788), five of fifteen notable citizens, those worth biographical sketches within its pages, were born in Norway, and three of those had Norwegian wives. K. T. Rostad and his wife, Sofia née Rockstad, had four sons. On that pattern, and assuming that not all Norwegian-Americans in the community were "notable," it does not take long before Norwegian is spoken by more than 10 percent of the town. One wonders how far from the Norske tree Thurston Rostad fell.[4]

Whether *Blade* from *bladet* acknowledged the Norwegian-speaking stratum of Blanchardville society or the Norwegian-speaking stratum there perceived *Blade* as a reflex of *bladet*, in what we usually call a "folk etymology," is unclear. Either is culturally significant — it will not do simply to dismiss the folk etymology. In either case, the Norwegian speakers, while assimilating into an English dominated (but multilingual) society and accommodating to forms of English speech also project a linguistic and cultural authority — an ownership, if you will — by using or confusing Norwegian *bladet*, by calquing it or assuming it had been calqued. This is by no means a story unique to *Blade*, but it is interesting in its details and a story worth retelling, for the moral it tells about American speech and how it got that way.

In an article titled "Language and Immigration," Einar Haugen (1972 [1938]: 8) wrote,

> When the earliest Norwegian settlers came to Illinois and Wisconsin between 1836 and 1840, there were no railroads or market outlets within easy reach. The first settlements in northern Illinois and in southern Wisconsin were founded at a time when the prairie was still wild, and chiefly inhabited by the timber wolf, the rattlesnake, and the Indian. These settlements were the foci of the entire immigration from Norway in the forties and fifties.

According to the *History of Lafayette County, Wisconsin* (1881: 788), Rostad's family settled in the area in 1854, Sophia's a year earlier. The Rostads first lived in Winnebago County, Illinois; three of the four brothers are buried in Durand, in the same county.[5] The area had a relatively high concentration of Norwegians, but, as Helge Nelson demonstrated in *The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements in North America* (1943: 1.155; see also the map on 2.70), the concentration of Swedes was also dense — "a greater percentage of inhabitants of Swedish extraction than any other county in Illinois" — which is important, because it increases the number of *Blade* readers who may have understood its *Blade* as naturalized *Blad* or *-bladet*.

The area in question was not settled by Scandinavians once and for all, but in chain migrations. As Angela Karstadt explains in *Tracking Swedish-American English* (2003: 29),

> Chain migration refers to settlement of a community over a long period of time primarily because new residents encourage their friends and family members who remained in the original homeplace to migrate. As a result of the chain migration, the community becomes an area not only dominated by one ethnic group, but also continually rejuvenate by home contacts since persons hailing from the home region continue to migrate to the daughter community.

Karstadt and others have established the impact of chain migration for the Swedes, and one can see its importance for Norwegian settlement, too, as Haugen, in *The Norwegian Language in America* (1969: 25) shows that Norwegian immigration took place in five contiguous waves — 1836/48, 1863/65, 1874/78, 1894/99, and 1915/22 — each less than a generation apart from its predecessor. Norwegian influence on the speech and lexical apprehension of Scandinavians in this area, the area including Blanchardville, would not have abated much by the 1880s, and could very well have produced a *Blade* from *bladet* or promoted interpretation of any *Blade* as a *Blade* from *bladet*, regardless of etymology.

The possibility that *Blade* in *The Blanchardville Blade* is of Scandinavian origin rather than the default English origin is interesting, because then neighbors in Blanchardville, some Norwegian speakers and some not, may have used *Blade* with different meanings, while assuming different etymologies, though on the conversational surface they would have appeared to use the same word. It suggests, too, that, taking Wisconsin as a whole, some communities were using an English *Blade*, while Blanchardville, at least, was using a Scandinavian one — or at least some Blanchardvillians were — accommodated to a misleading English form. *Blade* as a newspaper name, then, camouflages what, in more general terms, I have called "lexical doppelgängers" (Adams, 2000).

The historically distinct versions of *leave/let* substitution in German-settled areas of the British North American colonies are classic lexical doppelgängers. In those areas, a speaker might direct someone to *let the book on the table*, whereas in Standard American English we would expect *leave* rather than *let*. Similarly, as one of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*'s best quotations ever (s.v. *leave v* in sense B.1) has it, "Somebody must have left the cat out of the bag," whereas in Standard American English we would expect *let* rather than *left*. Formerly, the substitution was explained by German translation of *lassen*, which covers both "let" and "leave" meanings, variously into English, not recognizing a distinction supposedly natural to native English speakers. In fact, though, reciprocal substitution of *leave* and *let* has persisted throughout the history of English. So, one English derived farmer produces the substitution for one etymological reason, and the neighboring German farmer for another. Ultimately, one suspects, polysemy in the PIE root and therefore in its Germanic reflexes is responsible for this doppelgänger, but other lexical doppelgängers are not so easily explained.[6]

I am proposing that *Blade* as a newspaper name may also comprise a pair of lexical doppelgängers. It occurs to me, in fact, that while doppelgängers are infrequent in English lexis generally, because by the third generation or so grandchildren of immigrants have stopped translating into English and started speaking it, they may be relatively frequent in names — all kinds of names, including newspaper names. For names must be accommodated somehow (where, for instance Norwegian or German lexis need not be), and the items are used so much more frequently than, say, *throughother* "disarray, mess, confusion" — as in, "My desk is all in a throughother" — doppelgängers attested in Scots from before German settlement in North America, yet also as a calque of German *durcheinander*. Is the *Times* from English *times* or Norwegian *Tidende* or German *Zeitung*? Is one or another *Herald* from English *herald* or German *Herold* or Swedish *Harold*? It would be worth looking into.

Two interesting problems accompany any pair of lexical doppelgängers. First, one of them was in English before the British settled in American colonies and is not an Americanism, but the other is a translation from some language other than English, in contact with American English on American soil, so it is an Americanism. Second, while in the long run etymology does not matter to speakers, and, through persistent contact, the etymology of a form like *Blade* the newspaper name is ultimately mixed, for a period more or less extended — more as a result of chain migration, less by means of accommodation — the etymologies are actually parallel, not mixed, a matter of both historical linguistic and socio-historical significance.

Lexical doppelgängers generally and in names specifically belong to an obscure period of language contact, neither the initiation of contact nor the fulfillment of contact, but a stage at which what is deeply different but superficially shared enables accommodation overall. From either a word- or culture-historical perspective this is a short period, twenty or thirty years, and when writing some sorts of history or doing some sorts of linguistics, it is easily overlooked. The doppelgänger status of *Blade* in American newspaper names does not matter in the grand scheme of things — whatever that is. But, as the result of contact and mixing, doppelgängers represent the crucible or melting pot of American speech; they are significant, not only in a strictly descriptive historical sense, but in an American ideological sense, as well. Some iterations of the American newspaper name *Blade* are forged in that crucible.

Blade did — indeed, still does — figure in the lives of real speakers to whom, in some vague way, it did or still does matter as composing a particle of local, regional, or personal identity. This is true as a rule of names in our lives regardless of etymology, but it is sometimes also true because of etymology, which can draw communities into linguistic and cultural affiliation or distinguish them utterly. One *Blade* matters to Toledo, another to Lexington, Kentucky, yet another to the District of Columbia's LGBT community. Partly, *Blade*'s role is a question of scale, and linguistic behavior at the finest scale, the scale of nineteenth-century Blanchardville, Wisconsin, for instance, deserves some of our attention at least some of the time. Odd onomastic facts and problems are grained deeply in the American experience. To carve a history of that experience, you have to understand the wood against your blade.

Notes

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[1] There is no complete index of English-language newspapers, not even a putatively complete one. But *Blade* does not appear as an element in a newspaper name in Crane and Kaye (1927) or Smith and Head (1916) or those newspapers listed in the Library of Congress' Historic American Newspapers component of its larger project, Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers.txt>) (Accessed June 19, 2013).

[2] All facts about Wisconsin newspapers in this article derive from Oehlerts (1958), which is organized by county and, within the county listing, by locality and, within the local listing, by newspaper, alphabetically. I focus on Wisconsin *Blades* here partly (but only partly, as will become clear) because Oehlerts (1958) exists; for many states, comparable information is not available.

[3] These two newspapers are listed in the Library of Congress' Historic American Newspapers archive (see note 1).

[4] It should be noted that Rostad was capable of naming a newspaper without a trace of Norwegian influence: he was also founding editor (1892–1895) of *The Spring Valley Sun*, in Spring Valley, Pierce County, Wisconsin.

[5] Proof of this last fact can be found at <http://billiongraves.com/pages/record/ThurstonJRostad/229942> (Accessed June 19, 2013).

[6] It is important to distinguish between lexical doppelgängers and words of mixed etymology of the kind often found in Middle English, in which a word might have derived plausibly from either a Latin or an Anglo-French etymon. One salient difference is that speakers or writers of Middle English originating Middle English forms were also usually fluent in Latin and Anglo-French, so that the etymologies in question may have been mixed in the minds of speakers — the mixing is a product of their multilingualism — whereas lexical doppelgängers derive from language contact, speakers do not control both languages implicated in development of the parallel items, and they do not recognize the etymological distinction between the items. The etymologies eventually mix, but only after the social circumstances that gave rise to the parallel items disappears. In other words, etymologies of lexical doppelgängers, unlike those of the Middle English words in question, are not ambiguous but rather clearly distinct and co-existent as such for some period of time.

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