

***The Germanic languages  
Alphabets, Vocabulary  
and semantics***

*Lecture 4*

# **Germanic alphabets**

# Types of alphabets

## ● Non-phonologically based

- **Pictographic** Egyptian, Mesopotamian (3000 BC), Chinese (1500 BC)
- **Ideographic** (c. 2500-100 BC): Near East (Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Egyptian)
- **Logographic** (China, Japan)

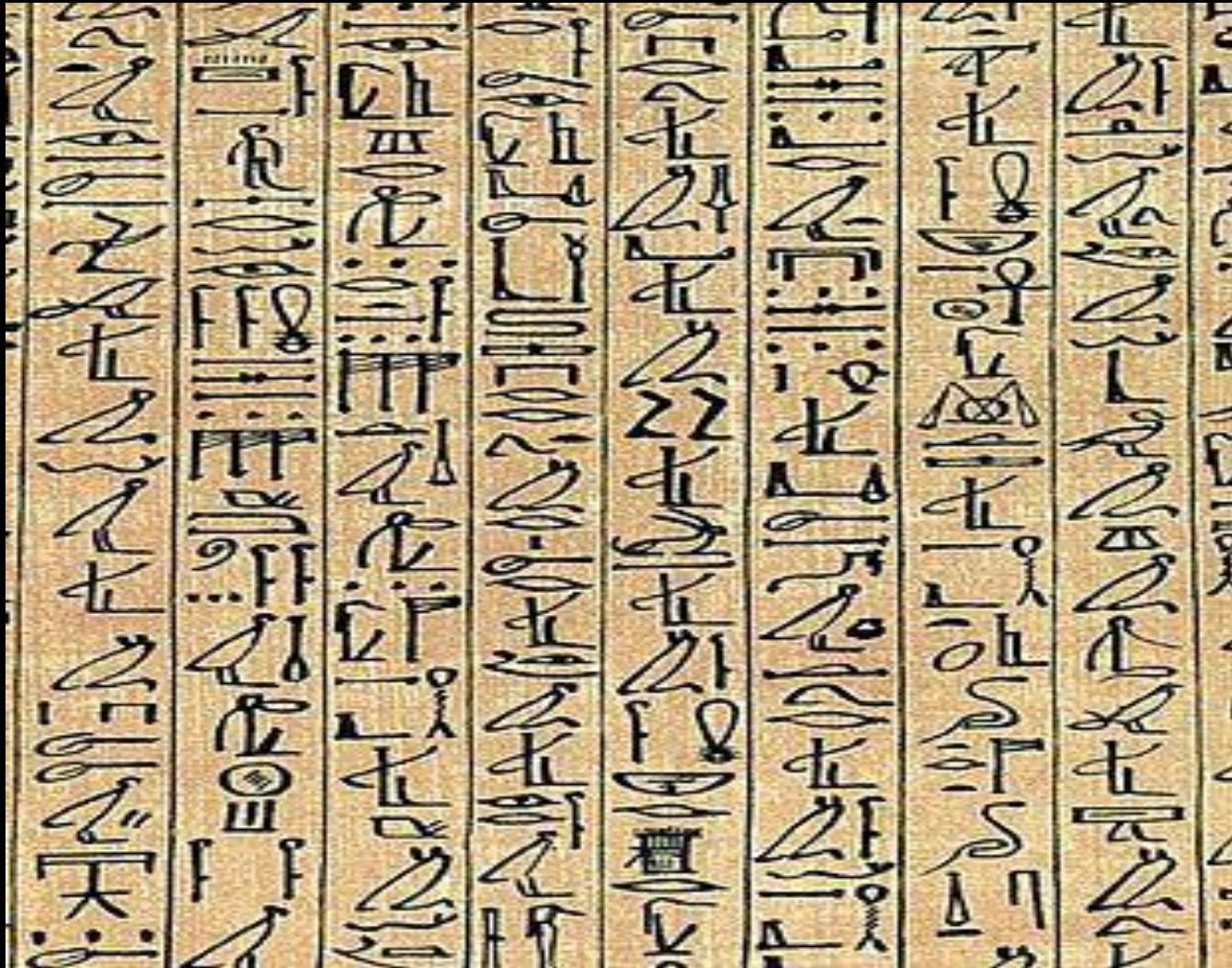
## ● Phonologically based

- Syllabarius** Greece (1300 BC)
- Latin or Roman:** western Europe
- Cyrillic alphabet** eastern Europe
- Devanagari** (Indian Sanskrit)

# Sumerian ideographic writing

	3200 BCE	3000 BCE	2400 BCE	1000 BCE
sag 'head'				
gin 'to walk'				
šū 'hand'				
še 'barley'				
ninda 'bread'				
a 'water'				
ud 'clay'				
mušen 'bird'				

# Egyptian hieroglyphs



# ***Germanic alphabets***

**Runic** (Gothic 'runa', O. Icelandic 'runar', OE 'run' = secret, secret talk)

**Gothic** IV c

**Latin**

# Runic alphabet

- Futhark is a writing system of uncertain origin used by Germanic peoples of northern Europe, Britain, Scandinavia, and Iceland from about the 3rd century to the 16th or 17th century AD.



























# Runic alphabets

three main varieties:

- **Early, or Common, Germanic (Teutonic)**, used in northern Europe before about 800 AD;
- **Anglo-Saxon, or Anglian**, used in Britain from the 5th or 6th century to about the 12th century ad;
- **Nordic, or Scandinavian**, used from the 8th to about the 12th or 13th century ad in Scandinavia and Iceland.



# Elder Futhark (150-800)

 f	 u	 th	 a	 r	 k	 g	 w
 h	 n	 i	 j	 ae	 p	 z	 s
 t	 b	 e	 m	 l	 ng	 d	 o

# Facts about Futhark

- **Type** : C&V, phonologically based
- **Origin** : 1) the alphabet was probably created independently rather than evolving from another alphabet.
- 2) Runic writing was probably first used in southern Europe and was carried north by Germanic tribes.
- 3) the Runic alphabet is thought to have been modelled on the Latin and/or Etruscan alphabet.
- **Shape**: angular
- **Territory** : Europe
- **chronology**: c. 200
- **direction**: early Runic inscriptions is variable. Later settled down into a left to right pattern

## Runic inscriptions

ріг з Галегуса (с. 400 AD)

Транслітерація:

ek hlewagastir holtijar  
horna tawido

























Переклад

I, Hlewagastir Holtson,  
horn made

- с. 160 AD Vimose гребінець знайдений у Vimose острів Funen, Данія
- Harja = "army" or "warrior-troop"



# Anglo-Saxon Futhork

							
feoh (cattle, weath)	ur (aurochs)	þorn (thorn)	ōs (god)	rād (journey/riding)	cen (torch)	giefu (gift)	wyn (joy)
f	u	þ	o	r	c	g[ɪ]	ɣ
							
hægl (hail)	nied (necessity/trouble)	is (ice)	gear (year)	ēoh (yew)	peor (?)	eolh (sedge?)	sigel (sun)
h	n	i	j	3	ɸ	x	s
							
tiw/tir (Tiw - a god)	beorc (birch)	eoh (horse)	man (man)	lagu (water/sea)	Ing (a god)	epel (land/estate)	dæg (day)
t	b	e	m	l	ng	ce	d



# Marcommanic Runes

Asch	ᚱ ᚲ ᚳ	a	His	ᚲ	i	Rehit	ᚱ ᚲ ᚳ	r
Birith	ᚷ ᚸ	b	Gilch	ᚷ ᚸ ᚹ	k	Suhil	ᚷ ᚸ	s
Khen	ᚹ ᚺ	ch	Lagu	ᚻ	l	Tac	ᚹ	t
Thorn	ᚾ ᚿ ᚰ	þ	Man	ᚾ	m	Hur	ᚿ ᚰ ᚱ	u
Eho	ᚰ	e	Not	ᚰ ᚱ	n	Helahe	ᚰ ᚱ ᚲ	x
Fehc	ᚰ ᚱ	f	Othil	ᚱ ᚲ	o	Huyri	ᚰ ᚱ ᚲ	y
Gibu	ᚰ ᚱ	g	Perch	ᚱ ᚲ ᚳ	p	Ziu	ᚰ ᚱ	z
Hagale	ᚰ ᚱ ᚲ	h	Khon	ᚰ	q			

# Dalecarlian Runes

X†	β	<	ƆƆ	∥∥	ƆƆ	ƆƆ	* * Ɔ	il	∩Y
ar	birkä	knäsol	dors	er	fir	gir	hagal	is	kan
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	k
∩L	Y M	∩K	ΦO	YƆ	ƆC	RƆ	I'∩	↑T	
lagh	madhär	nådih	or	pir	qua	re	sol	tir	
l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	
∩V	Y Y Ɔ	* * Ɔ	* * Ä	Ö	∩				
ur									
u	y	å	ä	ö					



# Lord's prayer in Gothic writing style

ΑΤΤΑ ΠΝΣΑΚ ΨΠ ΙΝ ΗΙΜΙΝΑΝ ΥΕΙΗΝΑΙ ΝΑΗΩ ΦΕΙΝ  
ΩΙΗΑΙ ΦΙΠΔΙΝΑΨΣΠΣ ΦΕΙΝΣ ΥΑΙΚΨΑΙ ΥΙΛΑΨ ΦΕΙΝΣ  
ΣΥΕ ΙΝ ΗΙΜΙΝΑ ΓΑΗ ΑΝΑ ΔΙΚΨΑΙ  
ΗΛΑΙΨ ΠΝΣΑΚΑΝΑ ΨΑΝΑ ΣΙΝΤΕΙΝΑΝ ΓΙΨ ΠΝΣ ΗΙΜΜΑ ΔΑΔΑ  
ΓΑΗ ΥΕΙΣ ΑΨΛΕΤΑΗ ΨΑΙ ΣΚΠΛΑΗ ΠΝΣΑΚΑΙΗ  
ΓΑΗ ΝΙ ΒΚΙΓΓΑΙΣ ΠΝΣ ΙΝ ΨΚΑΙΣΤΠΒΗΓΑΙ  
ΑΚ ΛΑΠΣΑΙ ΠΝΣ ΩΨ ΨΑΗΜΑ ΠΒΙΛΙΝ  
ΠΝΤΕ ΦΕΙΝΑ ΙΣΤ ΨΙΠΔΑΗΓΑΚΑΙ  
ΓΑΗ ΜΑΗΤΣ ΓΑΗ ΥΠΛΨΠΣ ΙΝΔΙΥΙΝΣ  
ΑΜΕΝ

*Vocabulary* - all the words contained in a language

Germanic vocabulary

Words of IE origin

Common Germanic words

Words of unattested origin

Specific for a given language words

Borrowed words

# Germanic words of IE origin

- **Family relations** : Sanscr. *mātar*, Gr. *mātēr*, Lat. *māter*, укр. *мати* (матері), OE *mōdor*, Ger. *Mutter*
- **Names of animals, plants, artefacts**: Lat. *piscis*, Rus. *пескарь*, Goth. *fisks*, E. *fish*, Germ. *Fisch*; Rus. *зерно*, Lat. *granum*, Goth. *kaurn*, E. *corn*, Germ. *Korn*; рус. *дом*, Sanscr. *domah*, Gr. *dōma*, Lat. *domus*, Goth. *timrjan* *будувати*, E. *timber* *лісоматеріали*, Germ. *Zimmer* *кімната*,
- **Parts of body**: Sanscr. *nāsā*, Lat. *nasus*, укр. *ніс*, E. *nose*, Ger. *Nase*, Gr. *kardiā*, Lat. *cor* (*cordis*), укр. *серце*, Goth. *hairto*, E. *heart*, Ger. *Herz*

# Germanic words of IE origin

**Natural phenomena:** Ukr. вода, Sanscr. udan, Gr. hydōr, Lat. Unda хвиля, Goth. wato, E. water, Germ. Wasser; укр. ніч, Sanscr. nakti, Gr. нyx, Lat. nox, Goth. nahts, OE niht, Ger. Nacht.

- **Adjective 'new'** укр. новий, скр. navas, греч. ne(w)os, лат. Novus

## Numerals

**Pronouns** personal, demonstrative, interrogative, reflexive

# Germanic words proper (pre-Germanic substrat)

Names of parts of the body: Goth. *handus*, OE. *hand*  
*рука*, OE. *bān* кістка

- Names of animals and plants: OE. *fugol* птах, OE. *hors* кінь, Goth. *kalbō*, OE. *sealf* меля, Goth. *laufs*, OE. *lēaf* лист
- Natural phenomena, geographic notions: Goth. *rign*, OE. *regn*, OE. *storm*, Goth. *saiws*, NE *sea* (cf. IE *mare* болото, ставок), *land*, *strand*, *mew* (\**maiwa* вид чайки), *eider*, *auk*, *seal*, *sturgeon*, *herring*.

# Germanic words proper

- **Specific lexics (isolated words)** occurring only in separate Germanic languages.
- Goth. *rohns* двір, *iutjō* натовп,
- OE *aglæca* чудовисько, *wlanc* гордий, *wlencan* владарювати, NE *girl*, *bad*, Ger. *krieg* війна.
- *A great deal of old Germanic words disappeared*

# *The OE vocabulary*

- The OE vocabulary was almost purely Germanic, except for a small number of borrowings.
- Native OE words are subdivided into etymological layers coming from different historical periods.
- The three main layers in the native OE words are: Common IE words, Common Gmc words and Specifically OE words.
- Words belonging to the Common IE layer constitute the oldest part of the OE vocabulary.



# Sources of OE borrowings

- Celtic and Latin.
- Very few Celtic loan-words in OE vocabulary: place-names (element «*llan*» ie «church»: **Llandaff**, **Llandoverly**, **Llanduduo**).

# *Latin borrowings in English*

- Entered the English language at different stages of OE history.
- The first layer. Early OE borrowings from Latin indicate the new things and concepts learnt from the Romans: war, trade, agriculture, building and home life.
- The second layer of Latin borrowings refer to religion.
- Latin borrowings fall into two main groups:
  - 1) pertaining to religion
  - 2) connected with learning.

# *Scandinavian borrowings*

- Dialectally restricted; increased the range of language variation;
- The number of Scandinavian loan-words in the Northern dialects has always been higher than in the Midlands and in the South.
- Total number of Scandinavian borrowings in English is about 900; about 700 of them belong to Standard English.

# *Middle English borrowings*

- In ME > 500 words borrowed from Scandinavian and > 3500 words borrowed from French.
- French words: everyday life of the Norman ruling class, government, court, legal procedure, army, military life, religious, church items, names of town occupations and terms of art.

# Earth apples

- late 14c., from O.Fr. *cocombre*, from L. *cucumerem* (nom. *cucumis*), perhaps from a pre-Italic Mediterranean language. The Latin word also is the source of It. *cocomero*, Sp. *cohombro*, Port. *Cogombro*. Replaced O.E. *eorþæppla* (pl.), lit. "*earth-apples*."
- Phrase *cool as a cucumber* (c.1732) embodies ancient folk knowledge confirmed by science in 1970: inside of a field cucumber on a warm day is 20 degrees cooler than the air temperature.



# *Ea replaced by river*



- c.1300, from O.Fr. *riviere*, from V.L. *\*riparia* "riverbank, seashore, river" (cf. Sp. *ribera*, It. *riviera*), noun use of fem. of L. *riparius* "of a riverbank". The OE word was *ea* "river," cognate with Goth. *ahwa*, L. *aqua*.

# *Semantic change*

- *is the evolution of word usage - usually to the point that the modern meaning is radically different from the original usage.*
- *In diachronic (or historical) linguistics, semantic change is a change in one of the meanings of a word.*



# The unpredictability of semantic change

"[I]n the majority of cases **semantic change** is as fuzzy, self-contradictory, and difficult to predict as lexical semantics itself. This is the reason that after initial claims that they will at long last successfully deal with semantics, just about all linguistic theories quickly return to business as usual and concentrate on the structural aspects of language, which are more systematic and therefore easier to deal with."

(Hans Henrich Hock and Brian D. Joseph, *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship*. Walter de Gruyter, 1996)

# *Semantic change*

*(semantic shift, semantic progression  
or semantic drift)*

- is the evolution of word usage — usually to the point that the modern meaning is radically different from the original usage.
- In diachronic linguistics, semantic change is a change in one of the meanings of a word

# *Semantic change*

A variety of senses and connotations of a word can be

+ *added,*

- *removed,*

*altered* over time, often to the extent that cognates across space and time have very different meanings.

*The study of semantic change can be seen as part of etymology, onomasiology, semasiology, and semantics.*

# *Typology of semantic change*

# *Typology by Paul* (1880)

*Specialization*: enlargement of single senses of a word's meaning



*Specialization on a specific part of the contents*: reduction of single senses of a word's meaning

*Transfer on a notion* linked to the based notion in a spatial, temporal, or causal way

# *Typology by A. Darmesteter (1887)*

- *Metaphor*
- *Metonymy*
- *Narrowing of meaning*
- *Widening of meaning*



- *The last two are defined as change between whole and part, which would today be rendered as synecdoche.*

# *Typology by Bréal* (1899)

- *Restriction of sense*: change from a general to a special meaning
- *Enlargement of sense*: change from a special to a general meaning
- Metaphor
- *"Thickening" of sense*: change from an abstract to a concrete meaning



# Typology by Ullmann

- Ullmann distinguishes between nature and consequences of semantic change:
- *Nature of semantic change*
  - Metaphor: change based on a similarity of senses
  - Metonymy: change based on a contiguity of senses
  - Folk-etymology: change based on a similarity of names
  - Ellipsis: change based on a contiguity of names
- *Consequences of semantic change*
  - Widening of meaning: raise of quantity
  - Narrowing of meaning: loss of quantity
  - Amelioration of meaning: raise of quality
  - Pejoration of meaning: loss of quality

# *Types of semantic change*

Narrowing  
Widening  
Metaphor  
Metonymy  
Synecdoche  
Hyperbole  
Meiosis  
Degeneration  
Elevation



Leonard Bloomfield

# Narrowing

- *Change from superordinate level to subordinate level.*
- *skyline* formerly referred to any horizon, but now in the USA it has narrowed to a horizon decorated by skyscrapers

- *Are all birds fowls?*
- *They seemed to be.*



- **Fowl** O.E. fugel "bird," representing the general Germanic word for them, from P.Gmc. \*foglaz (cf. O.Fris. fugel, O.N. fugl, M.Du. voghel, Du. vogel, Ger. vogel, Goth. fugls), probably by dissimilation from \*flug-la-, lit. "flyer," from the same root as O.E. fleogan, modern fly. Originally "bird;" narrower sense of "domestic hen or rooster" is first recorded 1570s. *Narrowing*

# Where do you exactly go when you go to sea? Hmm...

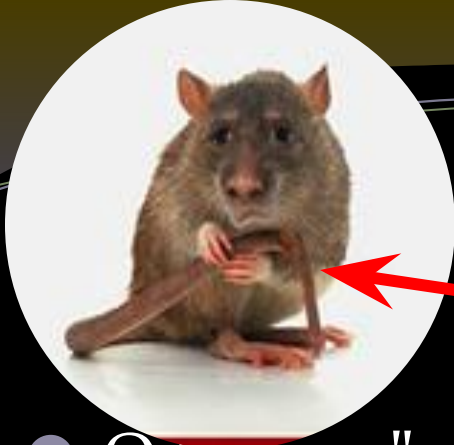
- E. *sæ* "sheet of water, sea, lake," from P.Gmc. \**saiwaz* (cf. O.S. *seo*, O.Fris. *se*, Du. *see*), of unknown origin, outside connections "wholly doubtful". Germanic languages use the general IE word (in English *mere*), but have no firm distinction between "sea" and "lake," either by size or by salt vs. fresh.
- The two words are used more or less interchangeably, and exist in opposite senses (e.g. Goth. *saiws* "lake," *marei* "sea;" but Du. *zee* "sea," *meer* "lake"). Cf. O.N. *sær* "sea," Dan. *sø*, usually "lake" but "sea" in phrases. Ger. *See* is "sea" (fem.) or "lake" (masc.).

# Maid: HE or SHE?

- **Maid** late 12c., "a virgin, a young unmarried woman," shortening of maiden (n.). In ME used of unmarried men as well as women (c.1200, used of both sexes, reflecting also the generic use of man).



# Mouse



- O.E. *mus* "small rodent," also "muscle of the arm," from P.Gmc. \**mus* (cf. O.N., O.Fris., M.Du., Dan., Swed. *mus*, Du. *muīs*, Ger. *Maus* "mouse"), from PIE \**mus-* (cf. Skt. *mus* "mouse, rat"). *Narrowing*

*Metaphor* Computer sense is from 1965, though applied to other things resembling a mouse in shape since 1750, mainly nautical.





## *Narrowing of meaning*

- O.E. hund "dog," from P.Gmc. \*hundas (cf. O.S., O.Fris. hund, O.H.G. hunt, Ger. Hund, O.N. hundr, Goth. hunds), from PIE \*kuntos, dental enlargement of root \*kwon- "dog". Meaning narrowed 12c. to "dog used for hunting."





# Food



- O.E. foda "food, nourishment; fuel," also figurative, from P.Gmc. \*fodon (cf. Goth. fodeins), from Germanic root \*fod-, equivalent of PIE \*pa- "to tend, keep, pasture, to protect, to guard, to feed" (cf. Gk. pateisthai "to feed;" L. pabulum "food, fodder," panis "bread," pasci "to feed," pascare "to graze, pasture, feed," pastor "shepherd," lit. "feeder;" Avestan pitu- "food;" O.C.S. pasti "feed cattle, pasture;" Rus. pishcha "food").

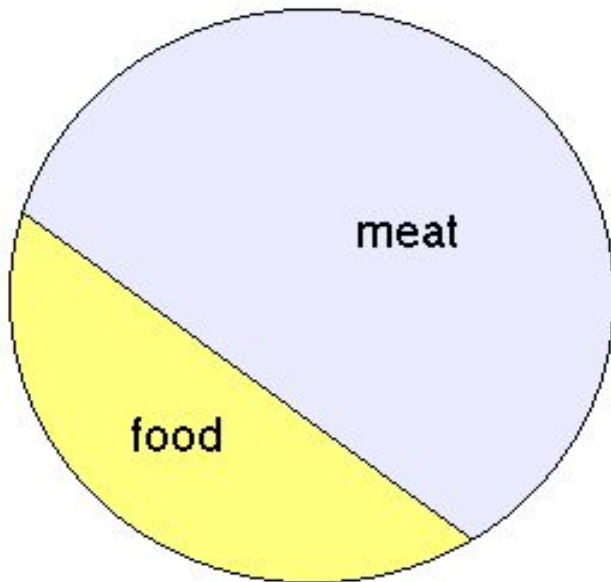
# Meat

- O.E. mete "food, item of food" (paired with drink), from P.Gmc. \*mati (cf. O.Fris. mete, O.S. meti, O.N. matr, O.H.G. maz, Goth. mats "food," M.Du., Du. metworst, Ger. Mettwurst "type of sausage"), from PIE \*mad-i-, from root \*mad- "moist, wet," also with reference to food qualities, (cf. Skt. medas- "fat" (n.), O.Ir. mat "pig")

Narrower sense of "flesh used as food" is first attested c.1300.

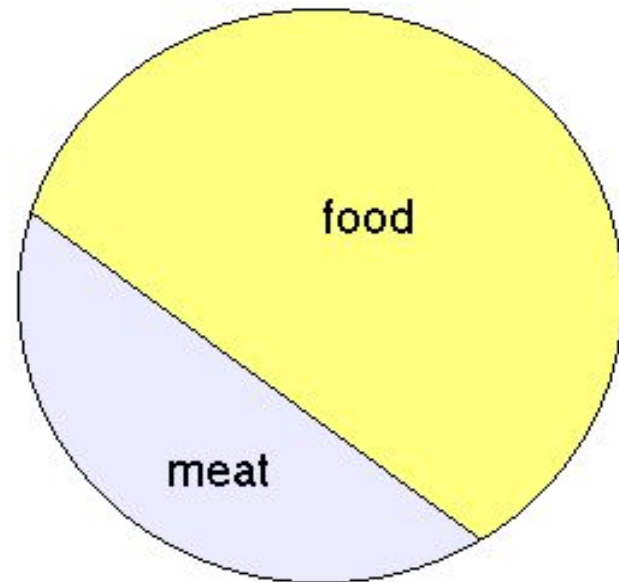
# Meat = food? Narrowing

Word field in Middle English



meat = "food in general"  
food = "provisions; item of food"

Word field in Modern English



meat = "animal flesh"  
food = "all types of nourishment"

# *Fruit or vegetable? Narrowing*

- Fruit late 12c., from O.Fr. fruit "fruit, fruit eaten as dessert; harvest; virtuous action" (12c.), from L. fructus "an enjoyment, delight, satisfaction; proceeds, produce, fruit, crops," from frug-, stem of frui "to use, enjoy," from PIE \*bhrug- "agricultural produce," also "to enjoy". Originally in English meaning vegetables as well.



# Lake: what the hell is it?

- "body of water," early 12c., from O.Fr. lack and directly from L. lacus "pond, lake," also "basin, tank," related to lacuna "hole, pit," from PIE \*laku- (cf. Gk. lakkos "pit, tank, pond," O.Ir. loch "lake, pond"). The common notion is "basin." There was a Germanic form of the word, which yielded cognate O.N. lögr "sea flood, water," O.E. lacu "stream," lagu "sea flood, water," leccan "to moisten" . In ME, lake, as a descendant of the OE word, also could mean "stream; river gully; ditch; marsh; grave; pit of hell," and this might have influenced the form of the borrowed word. *narrowing*

# *Country: shift and narrowing*

- mid-13c., "district, native land," from O.Fr. *contree*, from V.L. *\*(terra) contrata* "(land) lying opposite," or "(land) spread before one," from L. *contra* "opposite, against".
- Sense narrowed 1520s to rural areas, as opposed to cities. Replaced O.E. *land*.

A circular illustration in the top left corner shows a woman with dark hair and a white cat with blue eyes. The woman has a neutral expression, and the cat is looking towards the viewer.

# *What was spinster busy with?*

mid-14c., "female spinner of thread," from M.E. *spinnen* + *-stere*, feminine suffix.

Spinning commonly done by unmarried women > word came to denote "an unmarried woman" (1600s -1900s), by 1719 was being used generically for "woman still unmarried and beyond the usual age for it".



# *Soil: folk etymology, narrowing*

"the earth or ground," c.1300,  
from Anglo-Fr. soil "piece of ground, place" (13c.), from  
L. solium "seat," meaning confused with that of L.  
solum "soil, ground." Meaning "mould, earth, dirt"  
(especially that which plants grow in) is attested from  
mid-15c.

# Widening

There are many examples of specific brand names being used for the general product, such as with *Kleenex*. Such uses are known as generonyms



# *Widening of meaning*

- O.E. *macian* "to make, form, construct, do; prepare, arrange, cause; behave, fare, transform," from W.Gmc. \**makon* "to fashion, fit" (cf. O.S. *makon*, O.Fris. *makia* "to build, make," M.Du., Du. *maken*, O.H.G. *mahhon* "to construct, make," Ger. *machen* "to make"), from PIE \**mag-* "to knead, mix; to fashion, fit". If so, sense evolution perhaps is via prehistoric houses built of mud. Gradually replaced the main OE word, *gewyrcean*.

# Goat: He or She? (widening)

- O.E. *gat* "she-goat," from P.Gmc. \**gaitaz* (cf. O.S. *get*, O.N. *geit*, Dan. *gjed*, M.Du. *gheet*, Du. *geit*, O.H.G. *geiz*, Ger. *Geiß*, Goth. *gaitis* "goat"), from PIE \**ghaidos* "young goat," also "play" (cf. L. *hædus* "kid"). The word for "male goat" in OE was *bucca* until late 1300s shift to *he-goat*, *she-goat* (*Nanny goat* is 18c., *billy goat* 19c.).



# Widening: Tree



- O.E. *treo*, *treow* "tree" (also "wood"), from P.Gmc. \**trewan* (cf. O.Fris. *tre*, O.S. *trio*, O.N. *tre*, Goth. *triu*), from PIE \**deru-* "oak" (cf. Skt. *dru* "tree, wood," *daru* "wood, log;" Gk. *drys* "oak," *doru* "spear;" O.C.S. *driervo* "tree, wood;" Serb. *drvo* "tree," *drva* "wood;" Rus. *drevo* "tree, wood;" Czech *drva*; Pol. *drwa* "wood;" Lith. *derva* "pine wood;" O.Ir. *daur*, Welsh *derwen* "oak," Albanian *drusk* "oak").

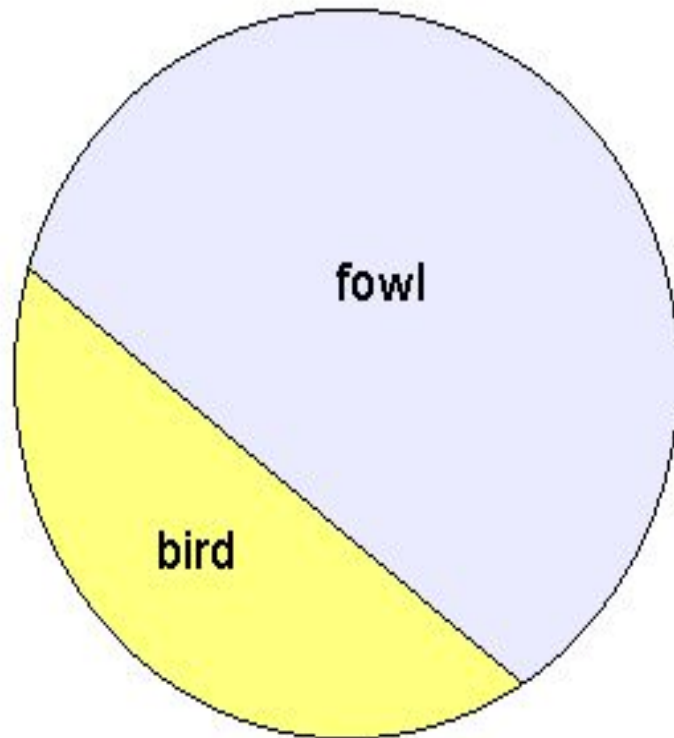
Importance of the oak in mythology is reflected in the recurring use of words for "oak" to mean "tree." In OE and ME, also "thing made of wood," especially the cross of the Crucifixion and a gallows

- *Are all birds fowls?*
- *They seemed to be.*



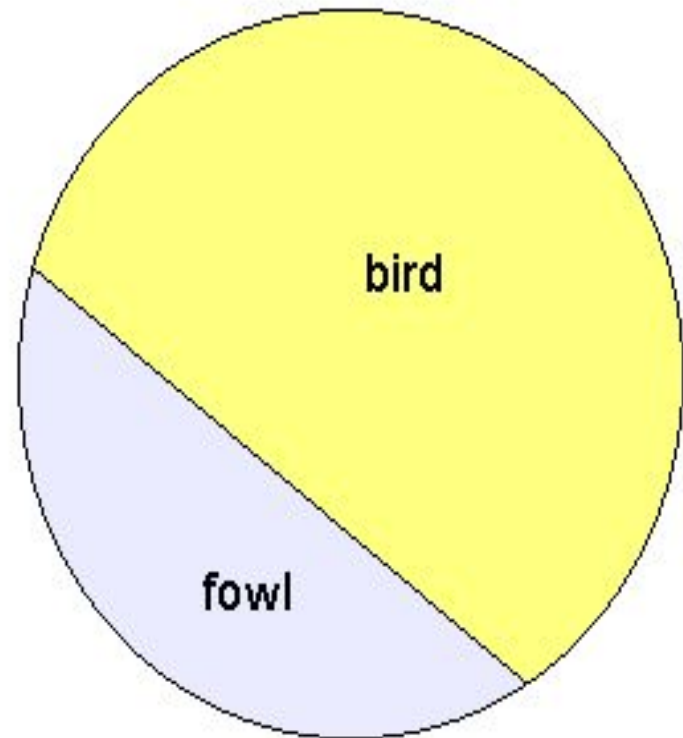
- O.E. *bird*, rare collateral form of *bridd*, originally "young bird, nestling" (the usual O.E. for "bird" being *fugol*), of uncertain origin with no cognates in any other Germanic language. *Widening*

### Word field in Old English



fowl = "flying animal"  
bird = "young bird, fledgling"

### Word field in Middle/Modern English



fowl = "poultry"  
bird = "flying animal"

# Metaphor

*Change based on similarity of thing.*

# *Clouds in the sky*



O.E. **clud** "*mass of rock,*" related to clod.

O.E. word for "**cloud**" was weolcan.

In ME, skie also originally meant "**cloud**."

# Clever



- late 16c., "*handy, dexterous*," from E.Anglian dialectal *cliver* "*expert at seizing*," perhaps from E.Fris. *klufer* or Norwegian dialectic *klover* "*ready, skillful*," and perhaps influenced by O.E. *clifer* "*claw, hand*" (early usages seem to refer to dexterity); extension to intellect is first recorded 1704.
- This is a low word, scarcely ever used but in burlesque or conversation; and applied to any thing a man likes, without a settled meaning. [Johnson, 1755]



# *Metonymy*

Change based on nearness in space or time, e.g., *jaw* "cheek" → "mandible".

# *Ground was deep under the sea*

- O.E. grund "bottom, foundation, ground, surface of the earth," especially "bottom of the sea" (a sense preserved in run aground), from P.G. \*grundus, which seems to have meant "deep place" (cf. O.Fris., O.S., Dan., Swed. grund, Du. grond, O.H.G. grunt, Ger. Grund "ground, soil, bottom;" O.N. grunn "a shallow place," grund "field, plain," grunnr "bottom").

No known cognates outside Germanic.

# *Synecdoche*

Change based on whole-part relation. The convention of using capital cities to represent countries or their governments is an example of this

# *Would airplanes have feathers?*

O.E. feðer "feather," in plural, "wings," from  
P.Gmc. \*fethro (cf. O.S. fethara, O.N. fiþr,  
Swed. fjäder, M.Du.

vedere, Du. veder,

O.H.G. fedara, Ger. Feder),

from PIE \*pet-ra-, from  
root \*pet-"to rush, to fly"



# A loaf of bread

- late 13c., from O.E. hlaf "portion of bread baked in a mass of definite form," from PG \*khlaibuz (cf. O.N. hleifr, Swed. lev, O.Fris. hlef, O.H.G. hleib, Ger. Laib, Goth. hlaifs "bread, loaf"), of uncertain origin, perhaps connected to O.E. hlifian "to raise higher, tower," on the notion of the bread rising as it bakes.



- O.E. bread "bit, crumb, morsel; bread," cognate with O.N. brauð, Dan. brød, O.Fris. brad, M.Du. brot, Du. brood, Ger. Brot). The basic sense being not "cooked food" but "piece of food," and the O E word deriving from a P.Gmc. \*braudsmon-"fragments, bits" (OE breotan "to break in pieces") and being related to the root of break. By c.1200 it had replaced the usual OE hlaf .

# *Hyperbole*

- Change from weaker to stronger meaning
- e.g.
- *kill* "torment" → "slaughter"

# Assassin - drug addict?

- 1530s (in Anglo-Latin from mid-13c.), via French and Italian, from Arabic hashishiyyin "hashish-users," plural of hashishiyy, from hashish. A fanatical Ismaili Muslim sect of the time of the Crusades, under leadership of the "Old Man of the Mountains", with a reputation for murdering opposing leaders after intoxicating themselves by eating hashish. The pl. suffix -in was mistaken in Europe for part of the word.

# *Meiosis*

change from stronger to  
weaker meaning

- e.g., *astound* "strike with thunder"  
→ "surprise strongly"



# Smart

- late O.E. *smeart* "sharp, severe, stinging," related to *smeortan*.
- "*quick, active, clever*" is attested from c.1300, probably from the notion of "cutting" wit, words, etc.;
- meaning "trim in attire" first attested 1718
- In ref. to devices, "behaving as though guided by intelligence" (e.g. smart bomb) first attested 1972. Smarts "good sense, intelligence," 1968.

# *Degeneration:*

- e.g., *knave* "boy" → "servant" → "deceitful or despicable man".

# *Examples of semantic change*

*Awful* originally "inspiring wonder (or fear)".

Originally  
a shortening for  
"full of awe"  
contemporary usage  
is of *negative* meaning.



# Pejoration of meaning

- **Silly** O.E. gesælig "happy" (related to sæl "happiness"), from W.Gmc. \*sæligas (cf. O.N. sæll "happy," Goth. sels "good, kindhearted," O.S. salig, M.Du. salich, O.H.G. salig, Ger. selig "blessed, happy, blissful"), from PIE root \*sel- "happy".

The word's considerable sense development moved from "blessed" > "pious," > "innocent" (c.1200), > "harmless," > "pitiabile" (late 13c.), > "weak" (c.1300), > "feeble in mind, lacking in reason, foolish" (1570s). Further tendency toward "stunned, dazed as by a blow" (1886) in knocked silly, etc.

# Elevation

- e.g., *knight* "boy" → "nobleman".

# Amelioration of meaning

- *Nice* late 13c., "foolish, stupid, senseless," from O.Fr. nice (12c.) "careless, clumsy; weak; poor, needy; simple, stupid, silly, foolish," from L. nescius "ignorant, unaware," lit. "not-knowing," from ne- "not" + stem of scire "to know". Developed from "timid" (pre-1300) > "fussy, fastidious" (late 14c.); > "delicate" (c.1400) > "precise, careful" (15c); > "agreeable, delightful" (1769); > "kind, thoughtful" (1830). "In many examples from the 16th and 17th centuries it is difficult to say in what particular sense the writer intended it to be taken." [OED]



# *What did lady actually do in the past?*

c.1200, lafdi, lavede, from O.E. hlæfdige "mistress of a household, wife of a lord," lit. "one who kneads bread," from hlaf "bread" + -dige "maid," related to dæge "maker of dough".

Sense of "woman of superior position in society" is c.1200; "woman whose manners and sensibilities befit her for high rank in society" is from 1861



# *What did Lord guard in the past?*

mid-13c., laverd, loverd,  
from O.E. hlaford "master  
of a household, ruler,  
superior," also "God",  
earlier *hlafeard*, lit. "one  
who guards the loaves,"  
from *hlaef* "bread, loaf" +  
*weard* "keeper, guardian".





# Amelioration: Rude

late 13c., "coarse, rough" (of surfaces), from L. *rudis* "rough, crude, unlearned," perhaps related to *rudus* "rubble."

Sense of "ill-mannered" is from late 14c.

- Rude boy (also rudie, for short) in Jamaican slang is attested from 1967. Now is increasingly common to characterize someone positively, ie "Great"



# Cool

- O.E. *col*, from P.Gmc. *\*koluz* (cf. M.Du. *coel*, Du. *koel*, O.H.G. *kuoli*, Ger. *kühl* "cool," O.N. *kala* "be cold"), from PIE root *\*gel-* "cold, to freeze". Applied since 1728 to large sums of money to give emphasis to amount.
- Slang use for "fashionable" is 1933, originally Black English, said to have been popularized in jazz circles by tenor saxophonist Lester Young.

# Anglo-Saxon

**Cow, calf,**  
**pig, ewe,**  
**goat**



# French



*Beef, veal, pork, mutton*

# *Forces triggering semantic change*

- Linguistic forces
- Psychological forces
- Sociocultural forces

# Shift in denotation

- *Handsome* c.1400, handsom "easy to handle, ready at hand," from hand (n.) + -some. Sense extended to "fair size, considerable" (1570s), then "having fine form, good-looking" (1580s). Meaning "generous" 1680s. [Americans] use the word "handsome" much more extensively than in Britain:
- *Webster made a handsome speech in the Senate:*
- *a lady talks handsomely, (eloquently:)*
- *a book sells handsomely* [Harriet Martineau, "Society in America," 1837]

# What is hen then - a cock or a hen?

- O.E. henn, < W.Gmc. \*khannjo (cf. O.Fris. henn, M.Du. henne, O.H.G. henna), fem. of \*han(e)ni "male fowl, cock" (cf. O.E. hana "cock"), lit. "bird who sings (for sunrise)," from PIE root \*kan- "to sing"
- Original masculine word survives in German (Hahn "cock"), Swedish, Danish, etc.;
- E "female of any bird species" is early 14c.



# Further reading

- С. Ульман **СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ УНИВЕРСАЛИИ**  
(Новое в лингвистике. - Вып. 5. - М., 1970. - С. 250-299)  
<http://www.philology.ru/linguistics1/ullman-70.htm>

*Thank you for your  
attention!*