Reassessing the semantic history of OE *brēad* / ME *brēd*[1]

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ABSTRACT

Our etymological understanding of PDE *bread* has been influenced, to a considerable extent, by Otto Jespersen's comment that 'An Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to the daily fare'. This paper analyses the evidence behind the possibility that PDE *bread* might represent a Norse-derived semantic loan, i.e. that OE *brēad* acquired the meaning 'bread', which was more frequently expressed by OE *hlāf*, because of the influence of its Viking Age Norse cognate (cp. OIc *brauð* 'bread'). On the basis of an in-depth study of the attestations of OE *brēad* and *hlāf* and their early Middle English reflexes, as well as the use of their cognates in various Germanic languages, the paper challenges the traditional view that OE *brēad* originally meant 'piece, morsel of bread' and concludes that Norse influence is not needed in order to account for the semantic history of PDE *bread*.

1 INTRODUCTION

The etymological understanding of Present-Day English (PDE) *bread* by various generations of English philologists has been influenced, to a considerable extent, by Otto Jespersen's (1938: §78) comment on the lexical impact of Old Norse on English: 'An Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to the daily fare'. The general sense of the quotation is indisputable: Norse-derived terms have had a very significant impact on English non-technical vocabulary, including grammatical terms such as *they* (cp. Old Icelandic [OIc] *þeir* 'they'), *till* (cp. OIc *til* 'to') and *though* (cp. OIc *þó* 'yet, though' < **þauh*).[2] However, the terms that Jespersen has chosen to make his point are somewhat problematic. Even though Jespersen does not give any explanation about his use of italics to single out specific terms, probably the reader is invited to think that the italicized terms have been influenced in one way or another by Old Norse. The list includes terms at various points in an imaginary scale of certainty about Norse

[2] For a general overview of the lexical influence of Old Norse on English, see Björkmann (1900–02), Miller (2012: 106–20) and Durkin (2014: Part IV). For more detailed studies, see Pons-Sanz (2007 and 2013) on the Norse-derived terms first attested in Old English texts, and Dance (2003) on terms attested during the Middle English period. The Gersum Project: The Scandinavian Influence on English Vocabulary (http://www.gersum.org) also promises to offer a very important contribution to our understanding of Norse-derived terms recorded in late Middle English texts in particular, and English more generally.

derivation. PDE *egg*, whose phonological structure clearly identifies it as Norse-derived because it exhibits the effects of Holtzmann's Law (cp. OIc *egg* 'egg', Old English (OE) *ǣg* 'egg') should be placed at one end of the continuum, while PDE *bread* should be at the other end because nothing in its phonological or morphological structure is suggestive of Norse derivation. In fact, there are some factors that point towards its native origin (cp. Pons-Sanz 2015: 204–10):

(1) the existence of cognates in other West Germanic languages (cp. Old Frisian [OFris.] *brād*, Old Saxon [OS] *brōd*, Old High German [OHG] *brōt*; cp. as well Crimean Gothic [Crim. Go.] *broe*);

(2) the fact that the term is already attested, as part of the compound OE *bēobrēad* 'honeycomb with honey', in texts where Norse influence on food terms seems unlikely: a text copied in ninth-century Canterbury, albeit of Mercian origin (viz. PsGlA (Kuhn) 18.10, 118.103, cp. Latin [L] *favus* 'honeycomb'; see Hofstetter 1987: no. 223), and King Alfred's translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (BoHead 23).[3]

Yet, we could argue that the term might be a Norse-derived semantic loan (cp. Johannesson 2006: 69). This would lead us to think that OE *brēad*, which is attested with the meaning 'piece, morsel of bread', acquired the new meaning 'bread, food prepared by moistening, kneading, and baking meal or flour, generally with the addition of yeast or leaven', which was more frequently expressed by OE *hlāf*, because of the influence of its Viking Age Norse cognate (cp. OIc *brauð* 'bread'; see the *Dictionary of Old English* [*DOE*] 2007: s.v. *brēad*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* [*OED*] 1989:

[3] Quotations from Old English texts and abbreviations for their titles follow the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (*DOEC*).

s.v. *bread*, n., senses 1 and 2a). The apparent semantic change undergone by OE *brēad* could have been the main reason for the semantic narrowing exhibited by the reflex of OE *hlāf*: while OE *hlāf* could mean both 'bread', as a food substance, and 'a portion of bread baked in one mass; one of the portions, of uniform size and shape, into which a batch of bread is divided' (*OED* 1989: s.v. *loaf*, n.[1], sense 2.a), PDE *loaf* is much more commonly used with the second meaning (see below, section 4). In this respect, we should not forget that two of the *lausavísur* by the eleventh-century Icelandic skald Sneglu-Halli already present a similar distribution of the lexico-semantic field between OIc *brauð* and *hleifr* (cp. OE *hlāf*): in Lv 3 (l. 4) we find OIc *brauð* meaning 'bread' and Lv 1 (l. 8) records the compound OIc *rúghleifr* 'rye-loaf', where OIc *hleifr* has the meaning that the *OED* (1989: s.v. *loaf*, n.[1]) gives for PDE *loaf* under 2.a.[4]

It is only by exploring the lexico-semantic field of BREAD in Old and early Middle English texts and, in particular, the rivalry between OE *brēad* / Middle English (ME) *brēd* and OE *hlāf* / ME *lōf* that we can shed further light on the processes of semantic change outlined above and establish to what extent Norse-influence should be invoked to account for some of those changes. As the sections below show, while the evidence from the etymological connections of the two terms cannot offer conclusive results,

[4] The stanzas are accessible through the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* project, which includes new editions and translations of the texts as well as scans of previous editions. See < https://abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?if=default&table=home&val=&view=>, accessed on 2 February 2015. On the reliability of skaldic poetry as a source of linguistic data, see Pons-Sanz (2013: 16–17).

bringing into the discussion data from other West Germanic languages proves very helpful for two reasons:

(1) We only have limited sources for Old English lexical practices and, therefore, comparable additional data are welcome.

(2) It is well-known that Old Saxon and Old High German were much less influenced by Old Norse than Old English; accordingly, these languages can be treated, to some extent, as testing grounds for the identification of native processes of semantic change.

2 THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE TERMS

The etymology of OE *hlāf* and *brēad* is sometimes brought into the discussion in order to establish their meaning. However, the ultimate origin of their etyma (viz. Proto-Germanic [PGmc] **hlaiƀa-* and **ƀrauđa-*, respectively) is fairly problematic and hence cannot be easily taken as a sure guide of their meaning. The etymology of PGmc **hlaiƀa-* (> Go. *hlaifs*, OIc *hleifr*, OE *hlāf*, OFris. *hlēf*, OHG *hleib*, *leip*) remains obscure, as attempts to associate it with Greek [Gr.] *κλίβανος* 'oven, furnace', which might be a loanword from an unidentified language (cp. von Grienberger 1900: 114 and Kluge 2011: s.v. *Laib*), are not necessarily accurate (Schrader 1917–29: I.164, de Vries 1961: s.v. *hleifr*, Lehmann 1986: s.v. *hlaifs*, Bammesberger 1990: 52, Orel 2003: s. v. *xlaiƀaz*, Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: s.v. *leiv*, and Kroonen 2013: s.v. **hlaiba-*). OE *brēad* and its cognates have received three main etymological explanations, which associate them with the concepts of BREWING and BREAKING, as well as the production of grain (cp. Liberman & Mitchell 1993: 59–62, and Kluge 2011: s.v. *Brot*):

(1) Nowadays, the terms are most frequently derived from PGmc **þrauđa-*, a *to*-stem (< Proto-Indo-European [PIE] **b^hrouh$_1$-to-*) based on a root with an original meaning 'to whirl, seethe' that also gave rise to OE *brēowan* 'to brew' and its cognates (e.g. OFris. *briouwa* 'to brew' and OS *gibreuwan* 'to brew'; < PGmc **brewwan-* 'to brew' < PIE *b^hreuh$_1$-* 'to boil, brew'). This root could also be associated with L *defrutum* 'grape juice boiled down into a syrup' (< PIE **b^hru(h_1)-to-* 'boiled'). It is likely, therefore, that these terms are also related to PGmc **þrennan-* (> Go. *brinnan* 'to burn', OE *beornan* 'to burn' and OIc *brinna / brenna* 'to burn'). A connection with OE *beorma* 'ferment' (cp. Middle Low German *barme* 'ferment') and L *fermentum* 'ferment, yeast' is also possible, albeit less clear (cp. Falk 1925: 117–18, Schrader 1917–29: I.164, Pokorny 1959: I.144–5, de Vries 1961: s.v. *brauð*, Holthausen 1974: s.v. *bréad*, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Althochdeutschen* [*EWA*] 1988–: s.v. *brôt*, Pfeifer 1989: s.v. *Brot*, Bammesberger 1990: 79, Schrijver 1991: 252–6, Orel 2003: s.v. *þrauđan*, Boutkan & Siebinga: 2005: s.v. *breda*, Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: s.v. *brød*, de Vaan 2008: s.vv. *dēfrutum* and *fermentum*, and Kroonen 2013: s.v. **brauda-*).

Lehmann (1986: s.v. *hlaifs*) records two suggestions regarding the distribution of the Proto-Germanic lexico-semantic field that have been put forward on the basis of this etymological explanation:

(1.a) According to Schrader (1917–29: I.166; cp. *EWA* 1988–: s.v. *brôt*, Kluge 2011: s.v. *Laib*, and Yanushkevich 2010: 101), PGmc **hlaiba-* might have been the common term to refer to unleavened bread,[5] while PGmc **þrauđa-* might have been the term of

[5] However, notably, the term has sometimes been associated, again rather tentatively, with OE *hlīfian* 'to rise high, tower'; see the *OED* (1989: s.v. *loaf*, n.[1]).

choice when referring to the (more modern) leavened bread, i.e. bread made with fermentation (cp. 'to brew'). As noted by Kluge (2011: s.v. *Brot*), the problem faced by this interpretation (and the derivation of the terms from a root meaning 'to brew' more generally) is that the extant records do not record such a distinction (cp. OHG *derbbrōt* 'unleavened bread', which can render L *azymus* 'unleavened (bread)'; cp. OE *ðeorf* 'unleavened'; see further below in this section and section 3). Kluge also finds it difficult to make sense of OE *bēobrēad* 'honeycomb with honey' and its equivalents in other Germanic languages (OHG *bīabrōt* and OS *bībrōd*) in connection with this interpretation.[6] However, we could account for these terms in two different ways: (1) the structure of the honeycomb might have looked similar to that found inside some leavened bread / cakes; (2) the head of the compound might be a reminder that honey can also ferment because of the yeasts it includes (see Dyce 1931), and this is something that the Anglo-Saxons would have been familiar with because of its relevance to mead production (Banham 2004: 42).[7]

[6] It is of course difficult to tell whether the compounds originated in Proto-Germanic or they have been coined independently in the various languages.

[7] The *OED* (1989: s.v. *beebread*) also records the meaning 'pollen, or a compound of honey and pollen, consumed by the nurse-bees' for PDE *beebread*. Kitson (2006: 621) suggests that the meaning might have been known in Anglo-Saxon times. Yet, it is not attested until the seventeenth century and this makes more difficult the association of OE *brēad* in this compound with the meaning 'food, nourishment' more generally (cp. OE *picgbrēad*; see below). Schrader (1917–29: I.166) does not seem to be aware of the fact that using this later meaning of the compound to argue in favour of the association

(1.b) Dieffenbacher (1907: I.95) points out instead that PGmc **hlaiƀa-* is likely to have referred to the baked product and PGmc **ƀrauđa-* probably meant 'dough'. This interpretation is, again, difficult to substantiate, although the connection of PGmc **ƀrauđa-* with the basics of applying fire to something might argue against it.

(2) Some scholars prefer to associate OE *brēad* and its cognates with a root referring to the concept of BREAKING: for instance, the *OED* (1989: s.v. *bread*, n.) rejects the previous explanation on the basis that it identifies 'piece, bit, fragment' as the original meanings of the terms and prefers to associate them instead with PGmc **ƀrauđoz-* and L *frustum* 'piece, fragment' (< PIE **b^{h}rus-to-*; de Vaan 2008: s.v. *frustum*). Although this dictionary rejects the connection of these terms with OE *brēotan* and its cognates (< PGmc **ƀreutan-*) on phonological grounds, it records Sievers's (no reference given) argument in favour of bringing them together with German [G] *Brosam* 'crumb' (cp. OHG *brōsama* 'crumb' and OS *brōsma* 'crumb' < PGmc ****ƀrauđsmon-*** < PIE *b^{h}rous*(*s*)*men-*; cp. OE *brȳsan* 'to bruise, crush' and *brosnian* 'to crumble, decay'). Wood (1910: 73) associates the terms not only with OHG *brōsama* but also with the hapax legomenon OE *brēað* 'brittle'. The *EWA* (1988–: s.v. *brōsama*) explains that one cannot reject the possibility that PIE **b^{h}rous-* might be related to PIE **b^{h}roud- / *b^{h}rout-* and this root with a final dental could indeed have given rise to the terms under consideration (*pace* Feist 1939: s.v. *broe* and Seebold 2011: s.v. *Brot*).[8] Seebold (2011:

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of OHG *brōt* and related terms with BREWING appears to involve an element of anachronism.

[8] Holthausen (1929: 330) wrongly interpreted Crim. Go. *broe* as a mistake for Go. **broc* (cp. Go. *gabruka* 'broken piece, morsel, crumb', OE *broc* 'fragment', OHG *broh*

s.v. *Brot*) suggests that, in the light of this etymological explanation, OE *bēobrēad* and equivalent compounds would have referred to a delicacy, a tit-bit. Yet, the association of *brēad* and its cognates with the concept of BREAKING seems erroneous because, other than in Old English (see below, section 3), these terms do not tend to mean 'piece, fragment'.

(3) Much less common is the attempt to associate the nouns under consideration with OE *brucan* 'to brook, use, enjoy' and its cognates Go. *brūkian*, OFris. *Brūka*, OS *brūkan,* OHG *brūhhan* (> G *brauchen*; < PGmc **þrūkan*-), on the basis of its connection with L *frumentum* 'fruit of plants, corn, grain' (cp. L *frui* 'to enjoy the produce of'; < PIE **b*^{h}*ruHg-ie/o*- 'to use'; de Vaan 2008: s.v. *fruor, fruī*). Despite the clear connection between the terms under consideration and grain, and the fact that they are also recorded with the meanings 'food' or 'nourishment' more generally (see below, sections 3 and 4; cp. PDE *beebread*, on which see above, fn. 7), it is difficult to associate them with this Proto-Germanic root from a phonological perspective.

While the etymology of OE *brēad* and *hlāf* and their cognates remains disputed, what is clearer is that **hlaiþa*- was probably the main term to refer to bread as a food substance in Proto-Germanic. This is suggested by various complexes across the Germanic languages which encapsulate the centrality of bread as 'the mainstay of existence' in (early) medieval times (Duby 1968: 79; cp. Hagen 1992: 11–13 and

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id.). This form should rather be analysed as an example of the loss of a dental consonant (cp. Middle High German *brüje* 'brew'; Feist 1939: s.v. *broe* and *EWA* 1988–: s.v. *brôt*).

Banham 2004: 16–24).[9] In Gothic we find the derivative *gahlaiba* ‘messmate, comrade, companion’, which presents companionship in terms of food sharing,[10] whereas in Old English there are three compounds that indicate social status in terms of whether one provides or receives food: OE *hlāford* ‘lord’ (< OE *hlāf* ‘bread’ + OE *weard* ‘guardian, keeper’), OE *hlǣfdige* ‘lady’ (< OE *hlāf* ‘bread’, with *i*-umlaut possibly caused by the presence of PGmc */-ij-/ in the second element, + OE **dīge* ‘kneader’ < PGmc **đig-* ‘to form of clay, to knead’, cp. OE *dāh* ‘dough’) and OE *hlāfǣta* ‘servant’ (< OE *hlāf* ‘bread’ + OE *ǣta* ‘eater’; *OED* 1989: s.v. *lord*, n., *OED* 2000–: s.v. *lady*, n., Bammesberger 2002 and Brink 2008).[11] Pelteret (1995: 292) explains that

[9] In Ælfric’s *Colloquy* we read that ‘buton hlafe ælc mete to wlættan byþ gehwyrfed’ (‘without bread all food is turned to vomit’; ÆCol 189–90). We might want to consider as well the compound OE *hlāfgang*, whose wider meaning is ‘participation in a meal’ (e.g. BenR 35.59.17).

[10] OHG *gileipo* ‘comrade, companion’ is likely to have been borrowed from Gothic. Cp. PDE *companion* < Anglo-Norman (AN) *compaingnun, cumpainun, companioun* < post-classical L *companio* < L *com-, cum-* ‘with’ + *panis* ‘bread’; its relationship to Go. *gahlaiba* remains unclear (see the *OED* 2000–: s.v. *companion*, n.[1], and Della Volpe 2004).

[11] OE *hlāford* is recoded as the full compound <hlafwearde> in the *Paris Psalter* (PPs 104.17). For a playful reference to the preparation of dough by a *hlǣfdige*, or rather a “þeodnes dohtor” (‘the daughter of a lord’), see Exeter Riddle no. 45 (see further Hill 2002 and Rudolf 2012).

> [t]hese words must date from early in the Anglo-Saxon settlement, when social and economic conditions dictated that the main social unit be an extended household whose dominant activity was the production of food.

Perhaps we should compare OE *hlāford* with the compound (in dative singular) **wita(n)da-halaiban** '(for him) who looks after bread, bread-protector',[12] recorded in the Tune runic inscription (Norway, *ca*400; see de Vries 1961: s.v. *witadahalaiban*, Krause 1966: no. 72, Grønvik 1981: 91 and Brink 2008: 24–5).[13]

Similarly, Go. *hlaifs* is the preferred term by Wulfila, a near-contemporary of the Tune rune-carver, to refer to bread in his translation of the Greek Bible. He uses it in the following contexts:[14]

(1) As a term for both unleavened and leavened bread: see, for instance, John 13.18, where we are told about the bread that Christ and his disciples consumed in the Last Supper (it took place around or during Passover, when unleavened bread had to be

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[12] OIc *lávarði* / *lávarðr* 'lord' was borrowed from Old English; see de Vries (1961: s.v. *lávarði, lávarðr*).

[13] In Old English we also find the compound OE *hlāfbrytta* 'bread-dispenser' (Rec 19 (Earle) 5) but it is applied to a steward or a slave, someone in charge of the bread store or distributing food more generally (Bosworth-Toller 1898: s.v. *hláfbrytta* and Clark Hall 1960: s.v. *hlāfbrytta*). On these social terms, see further Brink (2008); on the social status of the *hlāfæta*, a term which is only recorded in Æthelberht's law-code (viz. LawAbt 25), and the *hlāfbrytta*, see Pelteret (1995: 292–3).

[14] Wulfila's text, together with the Greek original and a translation into Present-Day English, can be found at <http://www.wulfila.be>, accessed on 19 August 2015.

eaten); and Mark 8.16 and 8.17, where Christ and his disciples talk about bread after he has warned them against the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and Sadducees.[15]

(2) As both a countable and a mass noun: the term refers to loaves of bread (e.g. John 6.9, 6.11, 6.13 and 6.26); and bread as a food substance, be it literally (e.g. John 6.5, 6.7, 6.23, 6.31 and 6.32) or metaphorically, in connection with the spiritual nourishment provided by God from heaven and through Christ (e.g. Matthew 6.11; John 6.32, 6.33, 6.34, 6.35, 6.41, 6.48, 6.50 and 6.58).

(3) As a term for a fragment of bread: Wulfila chooses Go. *hlaifs* to translate Gr. *ψωμίον* 'morsel, crumb' in John 13.26, 13.27 and 13.30, where we are told about the sop that Christ offered Judas before telling him that he knew that he would betray him later on.[16]

3 Common use of the terms in Old English

[15] When referring to the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread in Mark 14.12, he prefers to use a loanword based on the Greek term in his source, 'azwme' (cp. PDE *azyme*).

[16] Go. *hlaifs* does not seem to have been Wulfila's favourite term to express this meaning, though. He renders Gr. *κλάσμα* 'fragment, morsel' with Go. *gabruka* 'morsel, crumb' in Mark 8.8, 8.19, Luke 9.17 and John 6.13, where we are told about the fragments that were left after feeding a multitude with two fish and five loaves of bread.

The Old English textual records similarly suggest that OE *hlāf* was the main term to refer to bread as a food substance,[17] as it is this noun rather than OE *brēad* that collocates with terms indicating both leavened and unleavened bread (see the *Thesaurus of Old English* [*TOE*] 2000: 04.01.02.01.07.03.01):

(1) Unleavened bread: OE *ðeorf* was the main adjective meaning 'unleavened' and, therefore, it is the term chosen most frequently to render L *azymus* 'unleavened', whether used literally in connection with bread (particularly in relation to the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread; e.g. MkGl (Li) 26.17, AntGl 4 (Kindschi) 843 and ClGl 1 (Stryker) 308), or metaphorically referring to lack of corruption and purity (e.g. DurRitGl 1 (Thomp-Lind) 25.10, HyGl 2 (Milfull) 70.4 and HyGl 3 (Gneuss) 70.4). The adjective collocates a number of times with OE *hlāf* to render L *azymus* (*panis*), either as a direct translation (e.g. Exod 12.8, 12.39, 34.18, Lev 8.2, Josh 5.11, and ByrM 1 (Baker/Lapidge) 3.1.71 and 3.1.100) or as a reference to the Latin phrase (e.g. ÆCHom II 15 150.14, 151.27, 158.262 and 158.270, which rely on Exodus 12–13). Furthermore, OE *hlāf* also refers to the unleavened wafers used in the sacrament of the Eucharist: think, for instance, about the compounds OE *oflǣthlāf* 'bread used for the sacrament' (with OE *oflǣte*, the term that commonly refers to such wafers, as its determinant; GDPref and 4 (C) 57.343.15) and OE *hlāfgang* 'partaking of the Eucharist' (e.g. LawGrið 27; see also above, fn. 9).

[17] The dominance of OE *hlāf* over OE *brēad* can easily be seen in the number of their attestations: while the latter is only attested with the meanings 'bread' or 'food' more generally on 16 occasions (see further Table 1), OE *hlāf* is recorded with that meaning more than 200 times.

(2) Leavened bread: there are many terms in Old English referring to leavened (bread) or to the leaven used to make bread rise, and, again, we sometimes find them with OE *hlāf*: e.g. OE *gehæfen* 'leavened' (AntGl 4 (Kindschi) 842, where 'gehafen hlaf' renders L *fermentacius* 'leavened bread'), OE *beorma* 'leaven' (MtGl (Ru) 16.12, where 'beorma hlafa' renders L *fermento pauium, recte panum*) and OE *dærst* 'leaven' (MtGl (Li) 16.12, where L *fermento panum* is rendered as 'dærstum ðara hlafa').

The uses of OE *brēad* are rather more restricted, in terms of numbers and chronological spread. The table below represents the chronological and dialectal distribution of all the occurrences of the two main meanings of the term in Old English texts: viz. 'fragment, morsel' and 'bread'. Please note that the chronology and dialect given here for each attestation refers to the date and location of the text as it has reached us (i.e. the date and origin of the manuscript in most cases), and not necessarily to the composition of the text itself, although, as far the extant evidence suggests, there do not seem to be significant disparities in these respects for our purposes.

	'Fragment, morsel''	**'Bread'**
Middle of the 10th century		

Danelaw	JnGl (Li) 13.27, 13.30 = JnGl (Ru) 13.27, 13.30 (Hogg 2004)[18]	JnGl (Li) 6.23 = JnGl (Ru) 6.23, LkGl (Ru) 24.35 (Hogg 2004)
Non-Danelaw	LchII (2) 6.1.2–3[19] (Hofstetter 1987: no. 203)	LchII (2) 26.1.4, 49.1.5 (Hofstetter 1987: no. 203)

[18] The part of the Rushworth glosses that these contexts belong to, i.e. the so-called Rushworth 2, is generally believed to rely very heavily on the Aldred's glosses to the Lindisfarne Gospels. However, although it is clear that the glosses are somehow connected, the actual relationship between them remains problematic (see Kotake 2016 with references).

[19] Here we are told that we should give 'wermod oððe þreo bread, gedon on scearp win' ('wormwood or *þreo bread*, put into sharp wine') to someone who suffers from lack of appetite or nausea. The *DOE* (1986: s.v. *brēad*) cites in connection with this recipe an extract from the *Passionarius Galeni* (2.34), a text also known as *Gariopontus*, on the basis that the eponymous eleventh-century Salernitan author is said to have been its editor. However, Cockayne (1864–66: II.184, fnn. 2 and 3; cp. Talbot 1965: 159) suggests that OE *brēad* here might be associated with honeycomb with honey (OE *bēobrēad*) on the basis that Gr. *πρόπολις* 'bee-glue' appears in a recipe by the sixth-century Byzantine physician Alexander Trallianus (see Book 7, chapter 7 of Alexander's *Twelve Books*; Puschmann 1878–79). Cameron (1983: 156–8, 163–6 and 170) mentions the two texts amongst the sources of *Bald's Leechbook*, and points out that the compiler of the *Leechbook* often conflated various sources together, thus not

Unknown	PsGlD (Roeder) 147.6 (Hofstetter 1987: no. 226)	
Second half of the 10th century		
Danelaw		
Non-Danelaw		
Unknown	OccGl 50.1.2 (Brook) 147.17 (Ker 1990: no. 287)[20]	
First half of the eleventh century		
Danelaw		

making it easy to identify the specific sources that he might have used in a particular passage. Leonhardi (1905: 55) does not provide any explanation for this passage.

[20] Pulsiano (2001: xxv–xxvi) would rather associate this gloss to the Blickling Psalter with the eleventh century. He explains that these glosses might originate from a centre under the influence of Canterbury or Northumbria, albeit Canterbury is more likely.

Non-Danelaw		AntGl 5 (Kindschi) 174 (Ker 1990: no. 2)[21] Seasons 122 (Ker 1990: no. 180 and Pulsiano 2014: 105)[22]
Unknown		HomU 46 (Napier 57) 139 (Hofstetter 1987: no. 97)
Late 11th or early 12th century		

[21] While the manuscript was 'almost certainly' written in Abingdon (Ker 1990: no. 2), the origin of the glosses compiled here is difficult to establish because, although some of them are based on Ælfric's *Glossary*, that is certainly not the case for all of them (see further Porter 1999 and below, fn. 29).

[22] The poem was included in London, British Library MS Cotton B.xi, a manuscript written in Winchester in the middle of the tenth century and in the first half of the eleventh century; it was very badly damaged by the 1731 fire. Pulsiano (2014: 105) suggests that the poem is likely to originate from the late tenth century, 'a time of monastic reform and renewed ecclesiastical rigor'.

Danelaw		Rec 5.3 (RobbApp II 8) 3 and 6 (Ker 1990: no. 76)[23]
Non-Danelaw	PsGlK (Sisam) 147.6	PsGlK (Sisam) 13.4, 104.16 (Hofstetter 1987: no. 229)[24]
Unknown		
First half of the 12th century		
Danelaw		
Non-Danelaw		
Unknown		HomS 22 (CenDom 1) 256 (Ker 1990: no. 153)

[23] Robertson (1939: 501) would rather assign the writing of the text to the middle of the twelfth century.

[24] Other versions of Psalm 104.16 (ABCDEFGHIJ) record forms of OE *hlāf* instead.

		LS 14 (MargaretCCCC303) 12.1, 12.2 (Clayton & Magennis 1994: 103–7)[25]
Middle of the 12th century		
Danelaw		
Non-Danelaw		PsCaE (Liles) 17(13).4 (Hofstetter 1987: no. 227)[26]
Unknown		

Table 1: Chronological and dialectal distribution of the attestations of OE (-)*brēad* (except OE *bēobrēad*)

[25] Clayton & Magennis (1994: 107) suggest that the text is likely to originate from the south and to date from the late eleventh or early twelfth century; they specifically refer to the presence of OE *brēad* meaning 'bread' as one of the indicators of its late origin. Yet, as this table shows, the use of this meaning for dating purposes is problematic. The manuscript probably originates from early twelfth-century Rochester (Ker 1990: no. 57).

[26] L *panem* receives here a double gloss: 'breod ł hlaf'.

The data recorded in this table show a number of interesting points with regard to the use of OE *brēad*:

(1) Even though the first attestations of the term are rather late (middle of the tenth century), we see that the two meanings of the noun, viz. 'fragment, morsel' and 'bread' are present from the beginning. In fact, the attestations of the term with the meaning 'fragment, morsel' are not particularly dominant, even in the earliest texts. The *OED* (1989: s.v. *bread*, n.) suggests that the attestation of the term in JnGl (Li) 6.23 = JnGl (Ru) 6.23 should actually be associated with the meaning 'fragment, morsel' not 'bread' because the context seems to refer to 'broken bread'. However, there is no direct mention of this in the text, of course, other than the fact that this is a reference to John 6:11, where we are told that Christ distributed five loaves of bread and two fish amongst a multitude of followers by Tiberias (cp. 'hlaf' in Jn (WSCp) 6.23). A better case could be argued for LkGl (Ru) 24.35, where 'on bretinge breodes' renders L *in fratione panis* 'in the breaking of the bread'; yet, interestingly, the closely-related Lindisfarne glosses do not make any specific reference to fragments either, using OE *hlāf* in the equivalent context (viz. LkGl (Li) 24.35). Thus, it is difficult to accept fully the *OED*'s comment that in the Northumbrian glosses '*bréad* was not yet identified with *panis*'. In any case, we see that in *Bald's Leechbook*, which was copied on its manuscript in the second or third quarter of the tenth century from an exemplar likely to date from *ca*900 (Nokes 2004: 54), OE *brēad is* identified with L *panis* and means 'bread'. This does not render evident that 'fragment, morsel' might have been the original meaning of the term, as suggested, for instance, by the *OED* (1989: s.v. *bread*, n.). Thus, instead of an example of *pars pro toto* in the semantic development of this term (cp. the northern dialect use of *piece* in British English to mean 'bread' and Slovenian *'kruh* 'bread' but literally 'a

piece, something broken off'; *OED* 1989: s.v. *bread*, n.), the Old English texts might record a case of *totum pro parte* (cp. G *Brot* 'bread; slice of bread' and Go. *hlaifs* meaning 'fragment'; see above, section 2).

The significance of the meaning 'bread' for OE *brēad* already in its earliest attestations tallies with the use of its cognate OS *brōd* in the ninth-century poem *Heliand* (ll. 1066, 2844, 2851 and 4633).[27] While in l. 2844 it means 'loaf' ('girstin brod fibi', 'five loaves made with barley'), in its other three occurrences it means 'bread'. We might want to compare OS *brōd* in l. 1066, which refers to the Devil's temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4.3 and Luke 4.3), with OE *hlāf*, for instance, in Mt (WSCp) 4.3, Lk (WSCp) 4.3, MtGl (Li) 4.3 = MtGl (Ru) 4.3, LkGl (Li) 4.3 = LkGl (Ru) 4.3, Sat 671, and ÆCHom I 11 266.13, 267.47 and 272.169. The use of OS *brōd* in the *Heliand* agrees as well with what we find in the ninth-century Old High German poem *Evengelienbuch* by Otfrid von Weissenburgh: OHG *brōt* means both 'loaf' ('finf girstînu brôt'; III.6.28) and 'bread', as is the case when it renders L *panem* in Matthew 7.9 (II.22.32).[28]

(2) From the eleventh century onwards OE *brēad* shows evidence of significant integration into the lexico-semantic field of BREAD:

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[27] For an edition of the text, see Cathey (2002); for a translation into Present-Day English, see Murphy (1992). On the date of the text, see Cathey (2002: 21–2).

[28] Matthew 7.9 reads 'aut quis est ex vobis homo quem si petierit filius suus panem numquid lapidem porriget ei?'; the Douay-Rheims Bible translates it as follows: 'Or what man is there among you, of whom, it his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone?'. For an edition of Otfrid's text, see Kleiber & Hellgardt (2004–).

(2.a) It is recorded in compounds for which there are no equivalents with OE *hlāf*: OE *symbelbrēad* 'feast-bread' (Seasons 122) and *picgbrēad* (AntGl 5 (Kindschi) 174). We cannot say that the use of OE *brēad* in the poem *Seasons for Fasting* responds to alliterative needs, because it is OE *symbel* rather than the head of the compound that alliterates; therefore, OE *hlāf* could have easily been used here as well. The presence of OE *brēad* in the other compound is even more interesting: OE *picgbrēad* renders L *glans* 'acorn',[29] which suggests that OE *brēad* is used here metonymically to refer to 'food' more generally.

(2.b) The fact that OE *brēad* could refer to 'food' more generally paved the way for its use to render L *panem* in the Lord's Prayer, where bread is to be understood as 'a metaphor for all that is necessary for human nourishment' (Brown 2000: 605).[30] Thus, as noted above, fn. 26, we find the double gloss 'breod ł hlaf' in this context in the twelfth-century Canterbury Psalter (PsCaE (Liles)). This is particularly significant because the language in prayers tends to be rather conservative (think about the use of archaic forms, such as the second-person pronoun 'thou' and the verb form 'art', in the version of the Lord's Prayer still used by some Christian denominations nowadays; see further Kohnen 2010 and 2012). The usage of (a reflex of) OE *brēad* in the Lord's Prayer can frequently be seen in the early Middle English period (see below, section 4).

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[29] Cp. ÆGl 312.6 = AntGl 4 (Kindschi) 340, where the Latin lemma is rendered by OE *æcern* 'acorn'; see above, fn. 21.

[30] Cp. OHG *zuht* 'maintenance, food' in Otfrid's rendering of the Lord's Prayer (II.21.33). In the near-contemporary translation of Tatian's Gospel-Harmony, we do find OHG *brōt* (Masser 1994: 151).

(3) OE *brēad* meaning 'bread' is recorded in some texts that originate from the Danelaw and include a significant number of Norse-derived terms: the Northumbrian glosses to the Lindisfarne and Rushworth Gospels, and the will, probably from around Bury St Edmunds, referred to as Rec 5.3 (RobApp II 8) (see Pons-Sanz 2013: 134 and 144). Yet, this meaning is also recorded in other texts without a clear connection with the areas settled by the Scandinavian newcomers already from its attestation in *Bald's Leechbook*. Therefore, the evidence in favour of suggesting that OE *brēad* might have developed the meaning 'bread' because of Norse influence does not seem to be particularly compelling. As shown below, the dialectal distribution of ME *brēd* does not argue either in favour of identifying any Norse influence on the meaning of the term. The fact that its Old Saxon and Old High German cognates are also recorded with the same meaning in the ninth century similarly points towards a more generalized use of the term and not necessarily a semantic loan.[31]

4 USE OF THE TERMS IN EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH

While OE *hlāf* is clearly the main term to refer to 'bread' during the Old English period, the situation in the early Middle English period is very different, as indicated by Tables 2 and 3. They present the distribution of the uses of ME *lōf* and *brēd*, respectively, in

[31] This is something that Allard & North (2014: 354) are likely to have realized, as they do not highlight (in bold rather than italics) *bread* in their reproduction of Jespersen's quotation.

terms of chronology and association with the Scandinavianized areas on the basis of the documents included in the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (*LAEME*).[32]

	'bread'	**'loaf'**
Second half of the 12th century		
Danelaw	ormt.tag (no. 301) (?)	ormt.tag (no. 301)
Non-Danelaw		
Unknown		
First half of the 13th century		
Danelaw		
Non-Danelaw	worcthgrglt.tag (no. 173)	
Unknown		

[32] The list of documents included in *LAEME*, and the text and manuscript that the abbreviations refer to can be found at < http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme2/DOCS/TextKeys.pdf>.

Late 13th or early 14th century		
Danelaw		
Non-Danelaw	aberdeent.tag (no. 163) (?)	laud108at.tag (no. 1600)
Unknown		
First half of the 14th century		
Danelaw		merton248t.tag (no. 169) havelokt.tag (no. 285)
Non-Danelaw		corp145selt.tag (no. 286)
Unknown		

Table 2: Chronological and dialectal distribution of the attestations of ME *lōf* in the *LAEME* corpus

	‘fragment’	**‘bread’**
Second half of the 12th century		
Danelaw		trinpmt.tag (no. 4)[33] ormt.tag (no. 301) trhomAt.tag (no. 1200) trhomBt.tag (no. 1300)
Non-Danelaw		bod34t.tag (no. 1000)
Unknown		
Late 12th or early 13th century		
Danelaw		
Non-Danelaw		lampmt.tag (no. 5)

[33] The original text of the *Poema Morale* is thought to have been composed in or around Middlesex or London *ca*1170–90 (Hill 1977: 114 and Laing 1992: 569).

		add27909t.tag (no. 232) lamhomA2t.tag (no. 2001)
Unknown		
First half of the 13th century		
Danelaw		vvat.tag (no. 64) vvbt.tag (no. 65)
Non-Danelaw		digpmt.tag (no. 8) caiusart.tag(no. 276)
Unknown		
Middle of the 13th century		
Danelaw		cotcleoBvit.tag (no. 231)
Non-Danelaw		egpm1t.tag (no. 6) egpm2t.tag (no. 7)
Unknown		

Second half of the 13th century		
Danelaw		adde6at.tag (no. 160)
Non-Danelaw		iacobt.tag (no. 158) ccco59t.tag (no. 229) tr323at.tag (no. 246) tr323bt.tag (no. 247) salisbury82t.tag (no. 258) vitelld3t.tag (no. 271) jes29t.tag (no. 1100) digby86mapt.tag (no. 2002)
Unknown		digby86hendingt.tag (no. 218) digby86siritht.tag (no. 220) cotlastdayt.tag (no. 242) cotsermont.tag (no. 244)

Unknown date in 13th century		
Danelaw		culhht.tag (no. 266)
Non-Danelaw		
Unknown		gandccreedt.tag (no. 265)
Late 13th or early 14th century		
Danelaw		arundel292vvt.tag (no. 300)
Non-Danelaw		fmcpmt.tag (no. 10) laud108at.tag (no. 1600)
Unknown		
First half of the 14th century		
Danelaw		genexodt.tag (no. 155)[34]

[34] We also find here the compound ME *brēdwrighte* 'bread-maker, baker'. Cp. ME **brēdman* 'baker', which is present in the name of the church St Mary's Bredman, Canterbury, *ca*1200 (see *The vocabulary of English place-names* 1997–: s.v. *brēad*).

		merton248t.tag (no. 169) edincmct.tag (no. 296) edincmbt.tag (no. 298)
Non-Danelaw		emmanuel27t.tag (no. 140) ayenbitet.tag (no. 291)
Unknown		tituslang2t.tag (no. 119) titushmt.tag (no. 121)
Unknown date in 14th century		
Danelaw		cotvespcmat.tag (no. 295)
Non-Danelaw		
Unknown		

Table 3: Chronological and dialectal distribution of the attestations of ME *brēd* in the *LAEME* corpus

The documents included in *LAEME* do not necessarily reproduce whole texts and, therefore, do not present us with the whole picture; moreover, we need to take into account that some of the documents included in Table 3 are various versions of the

same text: for instance, digpmt.tag (no. 8), egpm1t.tag (no. 6), egpm2t.tag (no. 7), fmcpmt.tag (no. 10), jes29t.tag (no. 1100), lampmt.tag (no. 5) and trinpmt.tag (no. 4) include various overlapping fragments of *Poema Morale*. Therefore, the figures for the attestation of the two terms are somewhat skewed. In spite of these issues, we can see some important changes in the lexico-semantic field, in terms of both the main term to express the meaning 'bread' and the semantic space covered by each term:

(1) At a glance, it is obvious that ME *brēd* is attested much more widely than ME *lōf* and has already become the main term to refer to 'bread'. From very early on we find it in contexts that had previously been dominated by OE *hlāf*, whether it refers to bread *per se* (e.g. ormt.tag (no. 301); cp. Johnannesson 2006: 70–1); or bread as metonymic for food or nourishment more generally (cp. the *Middle English Dictionary* [*MED*] 1952–2001: s.v. *brēd*, n.1, sense 4.a), as in references to the Lord's Prayer (arundel292vvt.tag (no. 300), ayenbitet.tag (no. 291), cotcleoBvit.tag (no. 231), culhht.tag (no. 266), gandccreedt.tag (no. 265), lamhomA2t.tag (no. 2001), merton248t.tag (no. 169), salisbury82t.tag (no. 258) and trhomAt.tag (no. 1200)), or to 'heavenly bread', the 'bread of life' and the bread used in the Eucharist (add27909t.tag (no. 232), ccco59t.tag (no. 229), emmanuel27t.tag (no. 140) and trhomBt.tag (no. 1300)). Thus, besides the Lord's Prayer, it is not difficult to find direct correspondences between Old and Middle English texts where OE *hlāf* has been replaced by ME *brēd*:

(1.a) In vvbt.tag (no. 65) ME *brēd* renders L *panes* in 'Fuerunt mihi lacrimae meae panes die ac nocte' ('my tears have been my bread day and night', as translated by the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible; Psalms 41.4), while the Old English versions have the plural *hlāfas* as the direct equivalent for L *panes* (PsGlA (Kuhn) 41.3, PsGlB (Brenner) 41.4, PsGlC (Wildhagen) 41.4, PsGlD (Roeder) 41.4, PsGlF (Kimmens) 41.4, PsGlG (Rosier)

41.4, PsGlH (Campbell) 41.4, PsGlI (Lindelöf) 41.4, PsGlJ (Oess) 41.4, PsGlK (Sisam) 41.4). It might have been the plurality of the noun (and hence its use as a countable noun) that steered the glossator of PsGlK (Sisam) away from the use of OE *brēad* in this context, while he was happy to use it elsewhere (see Table 1); in vvbt.tag (no. 65) the seemingly singular form <bred> is recorded instead.

(1.b) We can compare Ælfric's rendering of Genesis 3.19 with the text given in the piece *Louerd asse þu ard on god*, as recorded in the thirteenth-century manuscript Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.39 (fols. 36r–42r): 'On geswincum þu leofast and on swate þu etst þinne hlaf on eorðan' (ÆLS (Ash Wed) 16) vs 'Wid suore & wid suinke þi breit þu salt biyeten' (tr323at.tag (no. 246)).[35]

(2) In our corpus, ME *lōf* is only clearly attested with the meaning 'bread' in one document, worcthgrglt.tag (no. 173), which actually represents Old English usage in the sense that it includes a copy of Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Glossary*. ME *lōf* here appears as a gloss for L *panis* in various grammatical explanations on gender and tense (cp. ÆGram 55.7, 165.7 and 293.2). The situation in ormt.tag (no. 301), the *Ormulum*, is somewhat more complicated and this is the reason for the presence of the question marks in Table 2. In his study on the make-up of the lexico-semantic field of BREAD in the text, Johannnesson (2006: 69) explains that

[35] Genesis 3.19: 'In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane, donec revertaris in terram' ('in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till you return to the earth'), as given in the Douay-Rheims Bible.

> LAF [‘unit of production, loaf’] and KECHELL [< OE *coecil* ‘little cake’] stand in a unit-of relationship to BRÆD [‘bread as a substance’], and *CRUMME [< OE *cruma* ‘crumb’] stands in a meronymic relationship to the other three.

It is clear that in some contexts of the text not included in *LAEME* ME *lōf* means ‘loaf’: in l. 11788 it appears in a context referring to Christ’s temptation in the wilderness by the Devil (‘Off staness makenn lafess’; cp. L *panes* in Matthew 4.3);[36] and in l. 15511 we find a reference to Christ’s feeding his followers with ‘fife barrliȝ lafess’. Yet, the meaning of the term in ll. 1470, ll. 1474, 1478, 1480, 1492, 1565, 1578 and 1602 is not as obvious. When explaining some of these lines, Johannesson (2006: 74–5) gives both ‘bread’ and ‘loaf’ as translations of ME *lōf*:

⁊ ȝiff þin herrte iss arefull.	«And if your heart is merciful, and
⁊ milde. ⁊ soffte. ⁊ nesshe.	mild and soft and gentle, so that you
Swa þa*tt* tu mihht wel árenn himm.	are capable of showing mercy to him
Þatt iss ȝæn þe forrgilltedd.	who has trespassed against you, and
⁊ all forrȝifenn hi*mm* full neh.	spare him the vengeance of just
Þe rihhte domess wræche ·	judgement; whenever you cease to
Aȝȝ whann se þu forrȝifesst tuss.	harbour wrath and a wish for
Þi wraþþe. ⁊ ec þi wræche ·	vengeance, then through your
Aȝȝ þanne lakesst tu þin godd.	manners you make a spiritual
Gastlike i þine þæwess.	sacrifice to God of bread that has
Wiþþ laf þa*tt* iss wiþþ elesæw.	

[36] Cp. ‘Macc bræd off þise staness’ in l. 11340. Line numbers refer to Holt’s (1878) edition. Cp. also above, p. X.

All smeredd wel. ⸢ nesshedd. (H1460–71) — been smeared well with oil and made soft.»

We should note that the type A bread is no longer called *bulltedd bræd*, but is referred to as *laf þatt iss wiþþ elesæw. / All smeredd wel. ⸢nesshedd* (H1470f.), «a loaf that is smeared well with oil and made soft». It is only the fact that it is the first of the bread sacrifices to be given a Christian interpretation, as well as the insistence on oil and softness, that allows us to identify it with the *bulltedd bræd* of type A.

Moreover, although the glossary at the end of Holt's edition gives 'loaf' as the only meaning for ME *lōf* in the text, the *MED* (1952–2001: s.v. *lōf*, n.2, sense 1.c) cites ll. 1480–1 ('ȝiff þatt tu willt makenn laf / Þu þresshesst tine shæfess') amongst the examples where the term should be interpreted as meaning 'bread'; yet, Johannesson (2006: 75) tells us that these lines introduce a 'digression […] on the making of a loaf'. The meaning of the term depends, to some extent, on the use of the indefinite article in the text: if Orm were consistent in his use of ME *an* as an indefinite article, the *MED*'s interpretation would seem more appropriate because we might have expected the article to be present if ME *lōf* meant 'loaf'. However, the presence or absence of ME *an* in this context cannot be taken as indicative of the meaning of the term. Firstly, on the basis of the structure of the noun phrases where it occurs and its inflexional pattern, Palmatier (1969: 113) argues that ME *an* in the text still acts as a numeral and not as an article, as is the case with ME *þe*. Secondly, even if ME *an* were to act as an indefinite article in the text, its use in early Middle English was far from fully established (Mustanoja 1960: 231 and 259–72). Given Orm's concern about (obsession with?) the metrical structure

of his work,[37] it would have been fairly easy for him to omit it in order to stick to his syllabic count (cp. Fulk 2012: 94). The range of meanings of ME *lōf* in the Ormulum, then, has to remain unclear.

The meaning of ME *lōf* in a stanza included in aberdeent.tag (no. 163; fol. 368v of Aberdeen, University Library, MS 154; cp. James 1932: 51) is equally problematic:

> Wane þe niþi(n)g his deyd me buriieth him cove
> comez þe yunge strupling and wocth is loue
> he drinket of his god ale an het of his lowe
> an singez for his soule giuele goue.
> 'When the wretched man is dead, he is buried in a pit; the youngster comes and woos his lover; he drinks from his good ale and eats from his *lōf*, and sings nonsense for his soul'.

It is difficult to establish whether ME *lōf* here means 'loaf of bread', 'bread' or 'food' more generally; the latter is the meaning that the *MED* (1952–2001: s.v. *lōf*, n.2, sense 1.d) attributes to the term, while Hargreaves (1969: 146) prefers 'bread'.[38]

In any case, even if these two problematic texts are included amongst those where ME *lōf* means 'bread', we see a clear predominance of the meaning 'loaf' for this term and, therefore, a change in its semantic space. This state of affairs anticipates the

[37] On the metrical structure of the *Ormulum*, see Solopova (1996).

[38] London, British Library, MS Add. 33956, fol. 95, records a French version of this lyric, together with a slightly different Middle English version (see Hargreaves 1969: 149). However, the French text cannot help us here because it does not make any reference to eating the deceased man's bread.

situation in Present-Day English: the *OED* (1989: s.v. *loaf*, n.[1], sense 1) marks the meaning ‘bread’ for PDE *loaf* as obsolete except in dialectal usage.

(3) The change in the semantic space covered by OE *brēad* and its Middle English reflex is even more dramatic, as none of the texts in our corpus records it with the meaning ‘morsel, fragment’. The situation in our corpus is fully in keeping with what we find elsewhere in Middle English because the *MED* (1952–2001: s.v. *brēd*, n.1) does not record that meaning for ME *brēd*; similarly, the *OED* (1989: s.v. *bread*, n., sense 1) associates that meaning only with the Old English period. In the corpus we find that other terms are used to express the meaning ‘morsel, fragment (of bread or food more generally)’. As we would expect, most of them go back to the Old English period:

- ME *crome* (cp. OE *cruma* ‘crumb’): e.g. ayenbitet.tag (no. 291), caiusart.tag (no. 276), laud108at.tag (no. 1600) and ormt.tag (no. 301)
- ME *morsel* (cp. *morsel*, ultimately related to L *mordere* ‘to bite’): e.g. ayenbitet.tag (no. 291)
- ME *shrēde* (cp. OE *scrēade* ‘shred, cutting, scrap’ and *scrēadian* ‘to shred, peel, prune, cut off’): e.g. havelokt.tag (no. 285)
- ME *snōde* (cp. OE *snǣd* ‘piece, slice’ and *snīðan* ‘to cut’): e.g. ayenbitet.tag (no. 291)
- ME *stiche* (cp. OE *stycce* ‘piece, portion, bit, fragment’): e.g. digpmt.tag (no. 8), egpm1t.tag (no. 6), egpm2t.tag (no. 7), fmcpmt.tag (no. 10), and jes29t.tag (no. 1100), lampmt.tag (no. 5) and trinpmt.tag (no. 4).

5 Conclusion

This paper has analysed in detail the uses of OE *hlāf* and *brēad* in Old and early Middle English and, in doing so, has argued against traditional views on the meaning of OE *brēad*. The paper has established that, while OE *hlāf* is indeed the preferred term to refer to 'bread' in Old English texts, OE *brēad* is also recorded with that meaning from its earliest attestations. In fact, the earliest records of the text do not provide significant evidence in defence of considering that 'fragment, morsel' was its original meaning. This evidence, the dialectal distribution of the texts where OE *brēad* means 'bread' or 'food' and the use of its cognates in other West Germanic languages suggest that it is very unlikely that this noun represents a Norse-derived semantic loan. Instead, Jespersen's quotation seems to reflect the Victorian infatuation with the Vikings and their influence on Britain's cultural heritage (cp. Wawn 2000). Given the difficulty in identifying Norse-derived terms in English, particularly when there is no clear phonological or morphological evidence in favour of their Norse origin, it is fundamental to consider the extant data very carefully in order to gain a better understanding of the make-up of the vocabulary of medieval English and not to reproduce information that might owe more to ideology than philology.

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