Rich and poor in the history of English:
corpus-based analyses of lexico-semantic variation and change
in Old and Middle English

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Abbreviations

a. adjective
adj. adjective
adj. phr. adjectival phrase
adv. adverb
cf. Latin confer (‘compare’)
CME Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse
DOEC Dictionary of Old English Corpus
e.g. exempli gratia (‘for the sake of example’) 
EMoE Early Modern English
et al. et alii (‘and others’)
f the following (line or page)
ff the following (lines or pages)
fol. folio
fols. folios
ger. gerund
HCET Helsinki Corpus of English Texts
i.e. id est (‘that is to say’)
l. line
ll. lines
LALME Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English
ME Middle English
MED Middle English Dictionary
MoE Modern English
MS manuscript
n. noun
OE Old English
OED Oxford English Dictionary
PDE Present-day English
ppl. past participle
TOE Thesaurus of Old English
v. verb
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References
1 Introduction

1.1 Preliminary remarks

The concepts rich and poor are – at first sight – prototypically associated with material wealth in contemporary society. The importance and omnipresence of material wealth in today’s world is more than obvious. But the concepts wealth and poverty do not only relate to material property and possession. Although material wealth did also play a role in medieval times, the concept of wealth does not exclusively refer to a concrete and materialised, economic notion (see Leisi 1952: 259f and Leisi 1959: 316). Further non-material concepts – especially power, bliss, success and luck – are related to wealth. This can particularly be observed in Old English words denoting the concept rich such as rice and maga, spedig, gesælig or eadig, for example (for the heterogeneity of senses covered by the term wealth, see OED, wealth, n. senses 1, 2, 4 and 5 specifically). The diachronic semantic developments of the selected lexemes in this study give sufficient evidence for changes with regard to these multifaceted senses.

Attitudes towards ‘wealth’ – in its various senses – have changed throughout history and so have the different linguistic expressions. This is demonstrated by linguistic evidence from Old and Middle English providing a vast and diverse picture of semantic variation and change of lexical items relating to the concepts rich and poor. These two concepts can be seen as stable and consistent entities at any given point in time. But relatively regular diachronic lexico-semantic developments reveal the differences in the ultimate lexical choices and the meanings in use.

1.2 “[T]he dazzling beauty of the universe of meaning”: lexico-semantic variation and change

Despite the fact that “[c]hanges in meaning excite people” (Campbell 2000: 254), historical semantics may well be called the ‘poor cousin’ in diachronic linguistics. Bloomfield has classified the study of meaning and meaning itself as “the weak point” in the study of language which „will remain so until human knowledge advances far beyond its present state,” (Bloomfield 1933: 140, cf. also Blank 1997: 47). Menner (1945: 59) referred to the fact that – although many scholars such as Stern (1931), for example, have classified meaning changes in terms of traditional taxonomies – the “fundamental

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1 On material recompense as an indicator of prestige, value and virtue see Leisi (1952). Leisi (1952: 259) points out the polysemy of a number of “Reichtumswörter” in Old English and he furthermore states that the concept ‘rich’ is coupled with further concepts such as pride, wealth and happiness among others (Leisi 1952: 261). The OED data refers to the online database, if not indicated otherwise.


3 See also Aitchison (2001: 121) stating that semantic change has been “a poor relation within historical linguistics” [emphasis added, B.K.].
causes or the processes of semantic change” have mostly been left in the dark in early research on semantic change.\textsuperscript{4} Semantic change has traditionally been characterised as “fuzzy” and “highly irregular” (Hock 1986: 308) or as a “hazy realm” (Evans 1992: 475). Furthermore, diachronic semantic shifts are “felt to be random, whimsical, and irregular” (Sweetser 1990: 23) and “very difficult to describe and explain” according to Stockwell and Minkova (2000: 149), while Koch (2001: 11) mentions seemingly chaotic lexical innovations.\textsuperscript{5} Such assumptions are derived from the fact that semantic change is a highly complex and multidimensional phenomenon (cf. Bloomfield 1984 [1933]: 441; Blank 1997: 131). In contrast to the aforementioned characteristics of historical semantics, Traugott (1999a: 93), however, maintains that semantic change “is in fact highly regular.”

After decades of “a particular dearth of publications” (Kleparski 1990: 9) and Bloomfield’s postulated ‘semophobia’ (cf. Blank 1997: 8, footnote 3), the discipline of diachronic semantics has been rehabilitated in historical linguistics to a certain extent. It is mainly the cognitive branch of linguistics that attempts to explain semantic changes from a new perspective and to provide a more ‘systematic’ mode of explaining semantic change in contrast to “superficial and anecdotal” studies (Kleparski 1990: 9). Most of the recent studies in historical semantics have focussed on grammaticalisation in particular, as well as on metaphor and metonymy. An overview of the different approaches – from traditional structuralist to cognitive approaches – is given in chapter 2. An outline is provided tracing the major aspects of structuralist semantics in terms of the lexical or semantic field approach and more recent approaches such as cognitive metaphor, metonymy, prototype theory and the role of pragmatics within historical semantics. Furthermore, the traditional philological or socio-historical approach – although considered anecdotal and irregular – is integrated into the discussion, as “it is mainly vocabulary that reflects, if anything does, a language’s external history” (Lass 1994: 178). Although lexical and semantic changes are two different processes, they should nevertheless be “treated together” as they constantly influence each other and show mutual interaction (Fischer 1997a: 61, footnote 1; see also Leisi and Mair 1999: 42).

The study of meaning can indeed be characterised as a “universe” (Wierzbicka 1996: 233) as many academic disciplines can be involved (see Crystal 2003: 286). The difficulty of defining the term ‘meaning’ has been a long-standing issue in semantic research. Ullmann (1951: 33) bases his definition on Ogden and Richards (\textit{The Meaning of Meaning}, 1923) and defines it as “a reciprocal relationship between the name and the sense, which makes the one call up the other.” The term ‘meaning’ is used in the present study to refer to the semantic meaning, i.e. the content of a word (see Crystal 2003: 287). This, however, does not exclude various non-linguistic components, such as use, thought and situation, for example, which are necessary reference points within a linguistic context (cf. Crystal 2003: 286). The term ‘sense’ will be used synonymously, i.e. in terms of semantic

\textsuperscript{4} See also Williams (1976: 461, also quoted in Kleparski 1990: 9) who maintains that diachronic “semantics continues to languish in the backwaters of lexicography and comparative philology or in the shallows of histories of the English language.”

meaning, in particular relating to senses observed in collocational uses or in antonymic phrases, for example. ‘Reference’ is extralinguistic, i.e. it relates to entities in the external world, which are represented by linguistic expressions (cf. Crystal 2003: 414). The term ‘lexical item’ is used as a synonym to ‘lexeme’ and ‘word’. The exact form (token), i.e. in terms of orthographic and morphological variation, is henceforth given in double quotation marks in chapters 4 and 5, while the basic form (type), i.e. an uninflected dictionary entry, is provided in italics.

Furthermore, semantic change can be defined in manifold ways. Stern (1931: 163) defines “sense-change (change in meaning)” as “employed to express meaning which it has not previously expressed.” Stern’s definition, however, neglects the fact that senses are very often related. Ullmann (1957: 171) maintains that “a semantic change will occur whenever a new name becomes attached to a sense and/or a new sense to a name” [italics original]. He refers to both lexical and semantic change as ‘semantic change’. In the present study, lexical change is included in the analyses, but it is seen as a different process and it is distinguished from semantic change. Lexical change is an important issue with regard to the structuralist perspective of the mutual interaction and influence between the members of a semantic field (see above, Fischer 1997a: 61, footnote 1; Leisi and Mair 1999: 42). Semantic changes and the ultimate loss of words can be influenced by lexical changes. While Sweetser (1990: 1) attributes semantic change to function, semantic change or meaning change refers to lexical and semantic innovations in the following study (see also Bloomfield 1984 [1933]: 425). I presently understand semantic change as follows:

\[ \text{a lexical term a, hitherto associated with a semantic A, comes to associate with the} \]
\[ \text{new but related (polysemous) semantic configuration A', which may co-exist with,} \]
\[ \text{or replace, A.} \]

(Werth 1974: 377-378)

Various scholars have emphasised particular mechanisms as the most prominent causes such as metaphor (see e.g., Sweetser 1990: 19), as well as subjectification and conceptual metonymy, for example (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 279ff). Chapters 4 and 5 of the present study provide detailed lexico-semantic analyses and discussions of various sense developments based on a number of different possible mechanisms. Chapter 4 provides a detailed analysis of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations of various lexemes expressing the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’, while chapter 5 applies the cognitive metaphor approach and discusses pros and cons of cognitive metaphor theory in semantic variation and change. With the help of two exemplary conceptual metaphors – wealth in relation to liquid and wealth in relation to waste materials – various metaphorical expressions are analysed and discussed within a multidimensional framework demonstrating the limitations and potentials of cognitive metaphor theory. The analyses are based on large historical databases which are presented and discussed in chapter 3 on methodology and data.
1.3 “Using the past to explain the present”\footnote{Partial title of the 2001 article “Using the past to explain the present: Tense and temporal reference in Early African American English” by James A. Walker (see References for further bibliographical detail).}

“Zum Verständnis der Neuzeit braucht man das Mittelalter” [In order to understand modern times the Middle Ages are indispensable] (Maurer 2002: 15, my translation). Cathedrals or castles, as well as precious manuscripts preserved in international libraries and the original 11th-century Bayeux Tapestry, for example, are witnesses of medieval culture. Even in Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings a whiff of this period can be felt, which shows that the Middle Ages have not lost their attraction to a (post-)modern audience. Even Grendel finds its way into the 21st century in the mutated form of computer worms. But is there any relevance in studying Old and Middle English semantics for present linguistic studies and beyond?

Lass (1980: 3) maintains that the “history of language [...] is in essence culture history.” External cultural issues therefore have to be considered one essential part of lexico-semantic discussions. Lass (1980: 3) continues by stating that “cultures are not ‘law-governed’ because they are symbolic constructs, not ‘natural’ objects”. With regard to semantic change in particular, Lass’s statement can be confirmed at first sight, with regard to the rather ‘irregular’ autosemantic domain. But as the present study will show, the changes and the ultimate processes involved are not completely irregular.

The focus on the Old English and Middle periods has been chosen for several reasons. First, investigations within a restricted period of time allow more detailed analyses in terms of lexico-semantic variation and change. The resulting general tendencies can in turn be followed up and investigated in later periods as well as in cross-linguistic studies. Second, the socio-cultural fabric of the Middle Ages reveals vast differences with regard to our modern cultural understanding. This discrepancy challenges our interpretation of remote textual witnesses. Third, fundamental social upheavals took place during the Old English and Middle English periods. Christianisation as well as Scandinavian raids have left their imprint on the lexico-semantic level. Even more essential is the Norman Conquest in the 11th century which had an enormous impact on the English vocabulary. It is interesting to see which repercussions of this particular socio-cultural ‘upheaval’ are reflected in the lexico-semantic structure of the English language in post-Conquest England. As Crystal (2004: 144) has pointed out, influence from both Latin and French has led to a drastic change of the English vocabulary in the course of the ME period and the ultimate differentiation of registers is indeed one of the hallmarks of the English lexicon. This fundamental restructuring of the English vocabulary is reflected in the modern English lexicon which is so vastly different from its related cognate language German, for example. As pointed out by Kastovsky (1992: 291)

the vocabulary of a language is as much a reflection of deep-seated cultural, intellectual and emotional interests, perhaps even of the whole Weltbild of a speech community as the texts that have been produced by its members.
One problem, however, remains as far as the study of medieval texts is concerned. Old English texts are in fact highly stylised and represent the language of a learned elite (cf. Kastovsky 1992: 293). Nevertheless, the language use of this sophisticated part of the linguistic community reveals remarkable semantic and lexical changes. Furthermore, numerous words are polysemous, revealing “an extremely wide range of meanings” (Kastovsky 1992: 400) in the Old English as well as the Middle English period. This polysemous nature of both Old English and Middle English lexemes challenges historical semanticists. It is often impossible to distinguish between various senses and modern inferences very often influence the researcher’s definitions and interpretations.

Thus, pragmatic inferences of both reader and writer do play an important role in the ultimate lexical choices. But also pragma-historical aspects are an essential issue (see chapter 2). However, the historical semanticist has to restrict him-/herself to written data and draw conclusions from these written relics. Diachronic investigations of past periods are often speculative as no human witnesses survive. But despite the “bad data” problem (see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 26 and Labov 1982: 20), recent digital historical corpora encourage a more systematic investigation based on a wealth of data.

Nevertheless, a lexico-semantic analysis of the period from approximately 500 to about 1500 still faces various unsolved problems. First of all, dates of first occurrences are often problematical; in many cases, as for example in the case of Beowulf, the temporal and geographic origins are unknown and still a matter of scholarly debate. Often, dates of compositions cannot be specified, and first dates provided in the dictionaries often only serve as ‘rough guides’ (see Fischer 1989: 74 on OED dates). Historical linguistics always moves in the shades of speculation and words might well have existed in oral speech long before they were written down (cf. Fischer 1989: 74). Also, the dates indicated in the OED might well be the ones of a later written document and some earlier written source might have pre-existed, but is not the one listed in the OED (cf. Fischer 1989: 74). Thus, the various dictionaries reflect manuscript variation and reveal individual preferences.

As Lass (1994: 3) correctly points out that a “historian’s craft is a tricky one” and he is right in claiming that historical research “is in some ways harder than other kinds of disciplines”. Historical linguistic studies are relevant as language itself is a complex phenomenon. And as “[h]istorically evolved systems are not continually made afresh” (Lass 1994: 9), it is important to investigate the origin of remaining relics of older stages and to obtain a better understanding of any language (cf. Lass 1994: 9).

1.4 The concepts rich and poor

As mentioned in the very beginning, wealth and poverty can well be regarded as timeless, as they have existed ever since. Also, the concepts are of a universal nature and people of any culture and society have been concerned with these two concepts. Historical circumstances and differences in the socio-
cultural conditions, however, reveal different perceptions and attitudes towards the concepts on the lexico-semantic level. Wealth and poverty are stable entities, but the linguistic expressions vary according to external changes. These external, historical factors, however, are not the sole causes for semantic and lexical change, as sense developments necessarily need to be coupled with extralinguistic elements such as thought or attitudes of the language users.

The concepts rich and poor can be expressed in manifold ways, as mentioned previously. ‘Wealth’ can relate both to material ‘blessings’, but also to spiritual wealth, as well as emotional and psychological ‘well-being’. Furthermore, socio-political power, as well as ethical and moral ‘wealth’ are closely intertwined. Similarly, Mollat (1987: 10f) exemplified that poverty can refer to a number of ‘needs’: lack of clothes, lack of money, general misery, physical and social deprivation, as well as intellectual poverty, for example. The analyses in chapters 4 and 5 are based on this wide sense of wealth and poverty. Chapter 3 illustrates the delimitation of the ‘semantic’ field and exemplifies which lexemes were chosen for the present discussion with the help of the Thesaurus of Old English. The selection is naturally not absolute and does not claim completeness (for a discussion see also chapter 3). The words listed in the Old English thesaurus are of course no absolute or direct synonyms either, as the categories in the thesaurus represent concepts. Consequently, different kinds of wealth and poverty can be implied, as already mentioned before. The ultimate choice of lexical items within a semantic or conceptual field is therefore always subjective and governed by the personal choices and preferences of the individual researcher.

1.5 Relevance of the present study

Das Wort ist das wichtigste Element der Sprache.7

(Leisi 1975 [1952]: 9)

Traditional historical studies have focused on particular texts and text types, or even isolated lexemes, while the present study uses large historical databases to provide general and wide-ranging insights across different texts. The analyses are embedded into an integrative approach to semantic variation and change, i.e. the present discussion combines both traditional and recent approaches to lexico-semantic variation and change in order to demonstrate the complexity of such changes, as well as the relatively regular tendencies within the lexical domain chosen. Despite this rather diversified approach regular tendencies can be detected for autosemantic items, a domain which is often claimed to be subject to ‘violations’ and consequently classified as ‘irregular’ (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: xi and 3f). The choice of related words provides a more detailed and more systematic investigation in contrast to former ‘individual’ histories of single lexemes.

Which major processes can be observed semantic change? Do they reveal general or regular tendencies even in the autosemantic domain? To what extent do extralinguistic issues play a role in

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7 The word is the most important element in language. [my translation]
sense development and how do cognitive and cultural aspects interact? The present study attempts to supply a rich analysis based on a wealth of data, taking into consideration various perspectives. The plethora of different approaches to diachronic meaning developments accounts for the complexity of semantic and lexical change. There is no single, absolute explanation, but various factors are responsible for lexico-semantic changes. In addition, different approaches highlight different aspects and taken together they can reveal a more powerful means of lexico-semantic description. It can therefore be assumed that similar processes can be observed in the meaning change of related words in a semantic field.

Although semantic change has been regarded as ‘irregular’ and rather chaotic especially in autosemantic domains, the mechanisms involved are of a fairly regular nature. Consequently, the regular tendencies, which have been largely attested in grammaticalisation, may well be found in autosemantic domains and semantic fields as well. Traugott and Dasher (2002) have shown that metonymy plays an essential role in semantic change; it can be considered a regular and major process within historical semantics in general. Metaphor also is a crucial issue in meaning change. These major mechanisms, however, are principally guided by extralinguistic factors such as cultural changes which in turn lead to varying pragmatic inferences in the writer/speaker and reader/hearer. It is the dynamic dyad between writer/speaker and reader/hearer which appears to be the major mechanism in the development of new meanings. Furthermore, foreign lexical influences have to be taken into consideration. The interruption of English by the Norman Conquest had a vast impact on the lexical structure of late written Middle English. Ultimately, words were lost and many native words were replaced by Romance words. Native words, which survived, changed their meanings due to socio-cultural changes. But also doublets show meaning differentiation when both native and Romance words survived.

Diachronic lexico-semantic research unfolds the processes which caused the English lexicon to become “richly heterogeneous, luxuriant in its profuseness and quirkish in its changes of meaning” (Hughes 1988: 3). Hughes (2000: 1) furthermore characterises words as “fossils” on the one hand and as “vital organisms” on the other. Words therefore are a kind of ‘cultural storage’ as well as active players which respond to changing circumstances (see Hughes 2000: 1). The present discussion is dedicated to the exploration of “the universe of meaning” (Wierzbicka 1996: 233) from a diachronic perspective, revealing astoundingly regular tendencies in a traditionally ‘chaotic’ auto-semantic domain.
2 Literature Review

2.1 General remarks

Although diachronic semantics has been the ‘poor cousin’ in historical linguistics, a number of different theoretical approaches have been developed in the past. Recent research has specifically focussed on cognitive metaphor, metonymy, diachronic prototype semantics, as well as on the role of pragmatic inferences in historical semantics. However, traditional approaches to semantic variation and change such as the structural word field theory or philological and socio-cultural explanations should not fall into oblivion as they provide valuable methodological guidance on some points which continue to be relevant.

2.2 Previous studies on ‘rich’ and ‘poor’

The semantic field of wealth as such has not been investigated systematically with regard to semantic variation and change. A number of German dissertations have investigated individual lexemes from this particular semantic field. Winter’s dissertation (1955) provides lexicographical lists of the word-families of æht, wela, gestreon, sped and ead in Old and Middle English, including selective examples from Old and Middle English texts. Winter does not analyse the lexemes in terms of semantic change, but merely lists the various meanings of the respective periods. Furthermore, he does not provide explanations why the different senses emerge, although he briefly mentions social and psychological factors which can ultimately lead to lexical and semantic change.

Another German dissertation investigates the early history of the German word arm ‘poor’ in Latin and Old High German (Wirth 1966). A short passage is dedicated to the situation in Old Germanic dialects (see Wirth 1966: 92-101). In this short section the Old English lexemes earm and eadig in particular are very briefly discussed, mainly based on results provided in Weisweiler (1923: 304ff). Weisweiler (1923) takes into account the semantic developments of various individual lexemes; for the present study only his comments on Germanic *arma- are of major interest. Furthermore, Ris (1971) analyses the German adjective reich ‘rich’ in Old High and Middle High German, also referring to the close parallels of the word in Old High German and Old English in a number of sections.

The semantic development of rich has been of major interest to historical semanticists, which is revealed by two English studies which have already provided descriptions of the semantic change of this adjective in Old English. Mincoff (1933: 149ff) discusses OE rice within the domains of ‘might’ and ‘power’ and considers the semantic change of rice an independent development which took place

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8 Cf. Lehrer (1985: 283) who suggests that the ‘poor cousin’ semantic change has been neglected because it is difficult to formulate more general tendencies in the description of the individual meaning changes in singular words.

9 Details of Weisweiler’s and Ris’s discussions relating to the lexemes in question are provided in chapter 4.
in late Old English. Mincoff’s early study is of course restricted to a small number of Old English texts, and there is still need for a discussion of the Middle English situation.

Godden (1990) emphasises the important role of authorship, as well as the socio-cultural and the moral background in the meaning change of late OE *rice*. Based on Mincoff’s claims (1933: 149-53), Godden (1990) minutely describes the distribution of the word *rice* in a number of different text types throughout OE, paying special attention to the context in which the word is used, as well as to the Latin originals. It can be confirmed that the word is used in its old sense ‘powerful, mighty’ in poetry and early prose, although some borderline cases are provided in the OE *Judith*, for example. Later prose texts (of the second half of the tenth century) reveal the implications of the new meaning ‘wealthy’ according to Godden (1990: 53). He mainly focuses on Ælfric as the crucial author in whose texts the new meaning of OE *rice*, i.e. ‘wealthy’, can definitely be observed. However, despite Godden’s convincing argumentation and his claim that “[i]mplications of wealth are generally irrelevant [with regard to poetry and early prose, B.K.] and in many cases would be damaging to the sense” (Godden 1990: 53), an early polysemy can still be assumed as a number of examples, including early Latin sources such as Bede, show that there is not always a clear-cut boundary. While these previous findings can be confirmed, the present investigation will provide a quantitative ‘corpus-based’ analysis – based on a large amount of historical data – to supplement these previous discussions of OE *rice*. An early polysemy is assumed as the result of a metonymic shift (see chapter 4). Also, the relation of OE *rice* to its (near-)synonyms and the ultimate restructuring of the semantic field have not been addressed in these previous studies. Consequently, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of lexico-semantic variation and change of related items in the present semantic field is a desideratum. Authors merely claim that a word was ‘very frequent’ without giving a quantitative account and usually the data was culled from a small corpus of texts, supplying merely sporadic examples (cf. Mincoff 1933, Godden 1990, for example). In addition, studies were restricted to specific text genres (see Schreuder 1929, for example, on *earm* in poetical use exclusively) or they were confined to single lexemes (see Dobnigg 1950 on OE *sælig*, for example).

In a number of contributions short passages are dedicated to the lexemes of the semantic field under investigation in this study, as for example *gesælig* in Käsmann (1961: 167-169) or *eadig* in Gneuss (1955: 61-62), while Leisi (1959: 316) briefly mentions and refers to the different senses of *eadig*, *sælig* and *rice* among other lexemes. Further (minor) references and comments in previous studies regarding the individual lexemes of the semantic field are provided and discussed in chapter 4.

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10 For further detail see chapter 4.
2.3 Semantic change: Traditional and recent approaches

2.3.1 Preliminaries

General overviews from the very (classical) beginnings to early 20th-century research in semantic change are numerous and have already been given in various previous investigations (see Thomas 1894: 705-707, providing 19th century bibliographic references; Jaberg 1901; Kronasser 1952: chapter 1; Ullmann 1957: chapter 4; Waldron 1967: chapter 6, mainly on Ullmann; Gordon 1982: esp. chapters 1-9; Nerlich and Clarke 1988: 76ff; Nerlich 1992; Warren 1992: chapter 1; Blank 1997: chapter 1; Geeraerts 1997: chapter 3; Fritz 1998: chapter 4; Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 65-67; Rousseau 2000; Traugott and Dasher 2002: chapter 2 (recent work included); for a critical evaluation of recent structural, pragmatic and cognitive explanations of lexical and semantic change see Fischer 1997a; see also Blank 1999a on cognitive linguistics in semantic change).

The very beginnings of historical semantics can be traced back to the 19th century, which is usually regarded as “the golden age of theories of semantic change” (Warren 1992: 1, for a survey see Ullmann 1957: Chapter 4 and Kleparski 1986: Chapter 1; see Nerlich 1992 for a detailed overview and discussion). In particular, the philological or socio-historical approach was established in the 19th century, which mostly availed in major lexicographical works such as the OED, for example (cf. Traugott 1985: 158). It is especially towards the last decades of the 19th century that we find prolific literature on semantic change (Warren 1992: 1). Three of the most important 19th-century ‘pioneers in historical semantics’ are Reisig (1839), Paul (1880) and Bréal (1897). Reisig’s “Vorlesungen über lateinische Sprachwissenschaft”11 are regarded as the beginning of historical semantics, which was then called ‘semasiology’ (cf. Fritz 1998: 88, Waldron 1967: 115). The lectures include about 20 pages dealing with Bedeutungslehre ‘semasiology’ (cf. Blank 1997: 10, cf. Gordon 1982: 3) accounting for possible ‘mechanisms’ such as metonymy (cause and effect), metaphor, synecdoche (part-whole relationship) and transfer from spatial to temporal concepts (cf. Blank 1997: 10; see Reisig in Antal 1972: 21-40). As will become clear later on, especially metaphor and metonymy have become essential issues in recent cognitive approaches.

Paul’s Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte (1880, see esp. chapter 4 on meaning change) explicates that context mainly causes semantic change (usual and occasional meanings) (cf. Warren 1992: 23, Nerlich 1992: 89f, Blank 1997: 11f). These usual and occasional meanings, which can be correlated to de Saussure’s levels of langue and parole respectively (cf. Nerlich and Clarke 1988: 77), reveal initial steps towards a pragmatic explanation of semantic change. Paul distinguished three main types of semantic change: specialisation, metonymy as well as metaphor and the “Beschränkung auf einen Teil des Vorstellungsinhaltes” [restriction to one part of the conceptual content] (Paul 1975: 91; cf. Blank 1997: 11f; cf. also Dobnigg 1950: 20).

11 Held from 1825 onwards, and published posthumously in 1839 by his disciple Friedrich Haase.
Bréal’s *Essai de Sémantique* (1897)\(^\text{12}\) marks a new mentalistic focus (Nerlich 1992: 157).\(^\text{13}\) A major issue was the search for semantic laws based on cognitive factors in meaning change, but external history was also considered an important aspect within semantic developments (cf. Nerlich 1992: 158-159, Delesalle 1987: 288).

19\(^\text{th}\)-century diachronic semantic studies mainly provided different classifications or taxonomies of semantic changes. Recent diachronic semantic research eagerly takes up this “ancient quest” (Hoenigswald 1992: 103) for regularities and the formulation of common tendencies in semantic change. The essential basis for modern ‘semasiological’ work has been developed in these initial stages of the late 19\(^\text{th}\) and early 20\(^\text{th}\) century.

### 2.3.2 Structural approaches: Field theory and componential analysis

The (semantic) field theory can be traced back to Herder, Humboldt and Weisgerber according to Ullmann (\(^2\)1957: 154f) (cf. also Lehrer 1974: 15; Lyons 1977: 250). The most influential ideas of the word field theory were elaborated by the German linguist Jost Trier (\(^2\)1973 [1931]) and he assigned the following attributes to the semantic field: semantically-related lexical items form an organised and mosaic-like whole. The meaning of any single lexeme depends on its neighbours within such a structured field which Trier mainly called 'linguistic, conceptual, lexical field' (cf. Ullmann \(^2\)1957: 157; see also Mincoff 1933: 1). Other definitions of the ‘semantic field’ as developed for example by Ipsen and Porzig have been considered of limited scope (cf. Ullmann \(^2\)1957: 157).\(^\text{14}\) Based on Trier, the following commonly accepted definitions and criteria of a ‘word field’ have been widely accepted. Lehrer (1985: 283) defines the semantic field as “a set of lexemes which cover a certain conceptual domain and which bear certain specifiable relations to one another”. The lexemes in the field are related syntagmatically and paradigmatically (cf. Lyons 1977: 268; Scheinin 1998: 157) and the words within such a “set” (Lehrer 1985: 283) thus show semantic relationships such as synonymy or antonymy, for example (cf. Lehrer 1969: 40; see Lyons 1977, chapter 9 on sense relations). Networks of sense-relations (cf. Lyons 1995: 102) imply the rejection of sporadic and individual ‘word histories’. If a lexeme changes its meaning, it will ultimately have an impact on its neighbouring lexemes in the field (cf. Stern 1931 on parallel changes of related words; Berndt 1982: 80). Syntagmatically speaking, differences in collocational uses are coupled with semantic developments in the course of time (cf. Ullmann 1962: 198). In his recent study Bouwer (2004) discusses the structural method of the semantic field by providing a description of OE *eald*, *niwe* and related words. Although he does not analyse the lexemes in terms of semantic change, Bouwer shows the importance of crucial issues such as the syntagmatic context and text-specific use with regard to meaning. Structural relations between lexemes are an important issue in the study of semantic variation and change.

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\(^{12}\) See English translation (1964).

\(^{13}\) See Aarsleff (1982), Delesalle and Chevalier (1986), Nerlich (1990) on the biography and work of Bréal.

\(^{14}\) A theoretical discussion of various conceptions of word field research is supplied in Bouwer (2004: 25-49). See also Vassilyev (1974) for a general survey on the theory of semantic fields.
Therefore, paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations are best studied within the semantic field approach. But also the obsolescence of lexemes has to be addressed within a discussion of semantic variation and change. While scholars have often explained obsolescence as the result of structural factors, this phenomenon has to be taken beyond such language-internal explanations.

From a diachronic perspective, semantic fields reveal differences in their organisation (Trier 1973: 7). The historically diverging structures of semantic fields do not only emerge because of structural, i.e. language-internal change; contact situations and ultimate borrowings lead to restructurings. Furthermore, the language users themselves also play an important role in this restructuring process. It is the choice of the language users, among other factors, which determines why particular words are part of a semantic field at one stage, but no longer at an other stage in the history of a language. Consequently, pragmatic as well as external factors (cognitive and historical) have to be taken into account.

While early lexico-semantic investigations tended to focus on single word investigations, the structural perspective offers a more diversified view on the interaction and influence of words within the same semantic field (cf. Stern 1931, Lehrer 1985). Also with regard to lexical restructurings within a semantic field due to borrowing, for example, the whole field will be affected, both in lexical and semantic variation (cf. Fischer 1997a, footnote 1).

An early example of a ‘systematic’ diachronic semasiological study is Stern’s Meaning and Change of Meaning with special reference to the English language (1931). The author aimed at “establish[ing] a theoretically tenable and practically workable system of classification comprising all known types of sense-change” (Stern 1931: 4) based “on genetic, psychological principles” (Stern 1931: 8). The ultimate goal of structural semanticists was to classify semantic changes in terms of traditional taxonomies, such as narrowing, widening and pejoration for example, to name only a few (cf. Bréal 1897, Stern 1931, Ullmann 1957, 1962, Waldron 1967: 125). As Hughes (1992: 110) has pointed out correctly, such traditional typologies have focused on categories of semantic change “which represent the end-result” or the effect of a change, rather than the causes or mechanisms involved. Apart from the structural method, Stern accounts for psychological causes as possible factors in semantic change, stating that meaning change “may be effected” by external, i.e. non-linguistic factors (Stern 1931: 12). This vague formulation refers to issues which have always existed – and will always exist – in diachronic semantic research: the question of predictability and regularity. It seems to be an insoluble problem to predict lexico-semantic changes in particular when caused by language external factors.

If there are universal, quasi-regular tendencies in semantic change in general, as postulated mainly by researchers in the area of grammaticalisation, is it possible to attest these in a completely

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different domain, the autosemantic rather than synsemantic lexical domain as well? So far, regularities have been attested within restricted domains, specifically in grammaticalisation (see e.g. Traugott 1982, more recently Traugott and Dasher 2002 and Eckardt 2006). But Sweetser (1990) and Williams (1976) have shown regularities in the lexical domain. However, as Weigand (2003: 20) states, “[t]here is no reliable empirical evidence in the corpora for justifying regular semantic change in a strict sense.” Despite the large corpus material available today we still cannot speak of absolute regularity in lexico-semantic studies, but only in terms of tendencies, even in grammaticalisation. Historical semanticists as well as grammaticalisation researchers have to accept that there are tendencies which are useful guide posts for orientation, even if they can be violated by the occasional exceptional development of external factors. I also believe that one can only speak of ‘tendencies’. Despite the self-awareness that there is still no absoluteness, a certain obstinacy is revealed in the quest for regularity. As Ullmann (1963: 174) has pointed out “semantic phenomena […] are often fluid, imprecise and subjective“ and it appears that the regularity crusaders attempt to press language into their mould. Nevertheless, Stern (1931: 11) shows that “the laborious task of tracing in detail the sense-development of as many words as possible” reveals general ‘regular’ tendencies. Stern attests parallel developments of related words within the semantic field of ‘rapid, immediate’ in English (cf. Stern 1931: 12/13; Lehrer 1985: 285f). Generally, ‘quasi-regular’ tendencies can be observed in “relatively compact areas of vocabulary, where contrasts emerge more clearly than in an entire lexicon taken as a whole” (Sweetser 1990: 15) and they provide evidence for the mechanisms at work in specific semantic fields. However, some caution is necessary with regard to such ‘regularities’, which cannot be claimed absolute. Research in semantic fields contributed basic work to studies on conceptual domains and it provided ways of organising and structuring the lexicon (see Traugott and Dasher 2002: 75).

Generally, the semantic field approach is a useful means to delimit lexico-semantic research in order to provide more systematic analyses for several reasons. First, an investigation of the whole lexicon is a utopian project and it tends to describe only ‘sporadic’, ‘individual’ meaning changes (cf. Lehrer 1974: 15). As stated in Scheinin (1998: 165), the semantic field is a good starting point for the study of diachronic semantic developments, also with regard to similar and therefore ‘more regular’ shifts. Second, in order to gain insights into more systematic principles of semantic change it is necessary to restrict the discussion to one particular semantic field (cf. Lehrer 1985: 283) or – in cognitive terms – to one conceptual domain.

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16 For the technical term ‘autosemantic’ see also Blank (1997: 53, “Vollwörter” or “Autosemantika”).
18 See Fischer (1997a: 63) on “the weaker version of a semantic law.”
19 The impact of word field theory within cognitive linguistics also becomes evident with respect to terminology: the terms ‘category’ and ‘conceptual domain’ can be seen as equivalents to ‘word field’ according to Müller (1993: 218).
However, a number of problems and critical aspects can be detected. Trier’s original ideas were subject to strong criticism (cf. Ullmann 1957: 158ff; Scheinin 1998: 159). Particularly, Trier’s mosaic-like structure, which implies that words have exact boundaries and that there are no gaps between the single members of the field, has to face severe objections. Although semantic fields attempt to supply “clearly delineated areas of meaning” (Sweetser 1990: 15), certain overlaps of meaning are apparent, which show the difficulty of defining clear-cut boundaries in terms of meaning (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 66). With regard to the vague boundaries between meanings – one of the tenets of prototype theory (cf. Lehrer 1990: 369, see Geeraerts 1997) – a further problem becomes evident: the delineation and determination of the semantic field itself (cf. Lehrer 1990: 374). Which lexemes constitute a specific semantic field and which criteria are taken into account for the ultimate choice (cf. Scheinin 1998: 160)? Consequently, it is necessary to determine why particular lexemes are included and why others are omitted. Lehrer (1974: 17) points to the issue of size, which plays an important role in facilitating the delineation: the smaller and the more specific the field, the easier the delimitation (see also Scheinin 1998: 160). But how is ‘small’ defined? How is the optimal size of a semantic field to be determined? While the determination might be more easily based on such a criterion, a clear definition of the terms ‘size’ and ‘small’ seems to be impossible. Also, the results of a ‘small’ field might be too specific in order to detect general tendencies. Furthermore, the ultimate choice is subject to the individual researcher and his or her subjective decisions and selections. Thus, the drawing of boundaries remains one of the permanent weaknesses of the field approach. Consequently, various critical views have emerged (see Wyler 1990, Gipper 1995). Wyler (1990) discusses the question whether the field theory is still an appropriate approach by evaluating problems with regard to delimitation of the field and ‘newer’ approaches such as prototypes. Grandy (1987) also argues in favour of semantic fields claiming their usefulness with regard to prototypes and similarity (cf. Grandy 1987: 260), whereas Grandy (1992) even suggests a combination of prototype and semantic field on a theoretical level. A possible solution to the problem of delimitation can indeed be provided by prototype theory as the concentration on the prototypical meaning of a lexeme can also help define a field more easily (cf. Scheinin 1998: 161). But which criteria define what the prototypical meaning is? Historical analyses are deprived of informants; we cannot interview an Anglo-Saxon speaker on what he or she considers the prototypical meaning of a word. So we are obliged to draw conclusions from the written data which have survived. Furthermore, it seems that prototypicality can also be influenced by subjective inferences with regard to abstract concepts such as ‘love’ or ‘wealth’, for example, and the surviving historical texts often strongly reflect ideological beliefs of a restricted part of the speech community.

A further problem is revealed with regard to metaphorical meanings and how such figurative uses can be accounted for in the field approach. Considering cognitive metaphor theory, the semantic

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field approach “does not immediately apply to the explanation of semantic relationships between fields” (Sweetser 1990: 15). Metaphorical expressions as based on conceptual metaphors cannot be explained structurally. A language-internal perspective is deficient as far as such cognitive mechanisms are concerned and the abstractions involved in cognitive metaphorical processes do not immediately figure on the level of the semantic field. Consequently, the word field has to be seen as a kind of lexical ‘measurement’ and a starting point in lexico-semantic studies, providing a fair number of related lexical items in a systematic way.

Apart from the word field approach another method within structural semantics has been applied within historical semantics. The so-called semantic feature analysis (for a critical discussion see Fischer 1997a) can be seen as a kind of counterpoint to prototype theory. In analogy to Trubetzkoy’s distinctive features in phonology semantic features were introduced by Hjelmsjø and Jakobson in the analysis of word meaning (cf. Verschueren: 1981: 321). The so-called componential analysis is exemplified from a diachronic perspective in two studies by Kleparski (1986, 1990). Such an analysis reveals insights as to the semantic components which ‘make up’ the meaning of a lexeme in question. But often the ‘feature catalogue’ is characterised by markedness (cf. Verschueren 1981: 321) and the degree of decomposition into semantic components also can pose problems (cf. Verschueren 1981: 322). Furthermore, another question arises as to how detailed such a feature analysis should be (cf. Verschueren 1981: 322). The componential analysis can be useful with regard to concrete objects, but at the same time it bears a lot of difficulties when it comes to abstract concepts such as ‘love’, for example. Furthermore, clear-cut boundaries of meaning are not possible if polysemy and metaphorical senses are taken into account. This so-called fuzziness of meaning is not solved by the feature analysis (cf. Fischer 1997a: 62) and what is more important, the componential method only describes meaning change, i.e. the additions and reductions of semantic components. But it does not provide explanations why certain additions and/or reductions occur (cf. Fischer 1997a: 62).

In general, structuralism does not take into account external, i.e. extra-linguistic factors; cognition, social reality and contextual (pragmatic) aspects are largely suppressed in traditional word field theory (cf. Verschueren 1981: 330). Despite the various critical views the semantic field is an appropriate means of restricting a specific field or domain in lexico-semantic studies, which contributes to avoiding sporadic and isolated word histories. But the field approach has to be accomplished and extended by a number of other different theoretical issues which are indispensable in a more comprehensive description of semantic variation and change. The potential of feature semantics is restricted to a limited descriptive function in semantic change. Its alternative model, prototype theory, is not absolutely satisfactory either; but the two approaches can be considered complementary and share “a division of labour” (Lipka 1987: 297).

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21 On feature semantics see Nida (1975), Leech (1974, chapter 6) for example. See also Sprengel (1980) for a critical survey of the problems involved in feature semantics (cf. also Lipka 1987: 294f).

22 Cf. Lehrer (1974, chapter 3 ‘Componential Analysis’). See also Lipka (1985) arguing for the successful application of componential analysis in diachronic semantics with the help of ‘inferential features’.
2.3.3 Metaphor, metonymy, subjectification and prototypes: cognitive mechanisms in semantic change

2.3.3.1 Metaphor

In classical antiquity semantic change was seen as “a deviation from […] the true meaning” (Cohen 1962: 5-7, also quoted in Waldron 1967: 113). In particular, rhetorical figures or tropes such as metaphor and metonymy, for example, played an important role in this “deviation” as they belonged to the so-called ornatus in antique rhetoric (Blank 1997: 9). Classical scholars also mention polysemy, which – according to them – is derived by various mechanisms (e.g., metaphor among others) from the etymology (‘true meaning’) of a word (cf. Warren 1992: 1, Waldron 1967: 113f). These antique comments on semantic change and the involved ‘mechanisms’, which ultimately lead to polysemy and therefore semantic change, were more or less philosophical, rather than linguistic reflections. Recent linguistic approaches in diachronic semantics show that metaphor is still en vogue. It is considered an essential mechanism in semantic extension, and Traugott (1988: 407, as quoted and referred to in Haser 2000: 174) even regards it as “the major” factor in diachronic semantics.

Traditionally, the basis of metaphor is similarity, analogy or the so-called tertium comparationis or ground between two domains (cf. Haser 2000: 173). Unlike metaphor as a ‘literary device’ (cf. Johnson 1987: 67) in classical rhetoric and literary studies, metaphor is considered a cognitive mechanism in most recent cognitive linguistic theory. The theoretical discussion of cognitive metaphor was initiated in American linguistics in the 1970s (e.g., Nagy 1974, Reddy 1993 \[1979\] as listed in Liebert 1992: 12). Before the advent of cognitive linguistics metaphor was simply seen as a “deviation from […] proper literal meaning” and as a mere “mode of expression without its own unique cognitive content” (Johnson 1987: 67). A definition by Goossens (2000: 149) characterises metaphor as “an extension process which involves a mapping across domains”. Normally, a concrete domain (also called source domain or vehicle) is mapped or transferred to an abstract domain (target domain or tenor) (cf. Lakoff 1987: 276; Traugott 1988: 407; Jäkel 1999: 367; Niemeier 2000: 196; see also Kronasser 1952 for the transfer from concrete to abstract). Therefore, metaphor is not considered a purely linguistic phenomenon but a fundamental cognitive mechanism based on human embodied experience. A critical overview and a thorough evaluation of metaphor and metonymy in cognitive linguistics are provided in Haser (2005, chapter 2). Generally, cognitive or conceptual metaphor is mainly the result of synchronic studies as discussed in Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987), Jackendoff (1983) and Lakoff (1993 \[1979\]), for example.\(^\text{23}\)

Conceptual metaphors have mainly been developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987). In particular, prototype-based categorisation (cf. Lakoff 1987: 9), which is mainly grounded in human (bodily) experience, is seen as the basic governing principle of cognitive metaphor. Common properties (cf. Wittgenstein’s family resemblance), as well as encyclopaedic knowledge are further

\(^{23}\) Only a very small selection is given here as the focus is mainly on the historical perspective of semantic change, discussing the potential of a cognitive approach in explaining diachronic semantic developments.
crucial issues in this prototype-based theory with regard to the transfer of categories to schematic structures (image schema, embodied schema). Conceptual metaphors are abstractions of cognitive or mental metaphorical mappings, which are linguistically realised in a number of different metaphorical expressions (cf. Kövecses 2002: 4).

Although cognitive metaphor has mainly been studied synchronically, there are a few diachronic studies (e.g., Williams 1976; Sweetser 1990; Blank 1997; Haser 2000; Gevaert 2005). In the following the focus is mainly laid on Sweetser (1990) and Gevaert (2005). As the title of her work illustrates, Sweetser (1990) initially analyses Indo-European etymologies and applies the concept of (cognitive) metaphor, the “major structuring force in semantic change” (Sweetser 1990: 19). The “intervening stage of polysemy” (Sweetser 1990: 9) is regarded as an indispensable intermediate stage in any study of semantic change because transitional stages, in which new and old meanings co-occur, show that meaning shifts do not emerge in abrupt and sudden leaps. Sweetser also claims (uni-)directionality, such as shifts from concrete to abstract meaning, which occur more frequently than vice versa. An example of such shifts from concrete (socio-physical) meaning to abstract (emotional, psychological) meaning is provided by perception verbs. Her prominent metaphor is the Mind-as-Body metaphor (Sweetser 1990: 28). Thus PHYSICAL PERCEPTION, VISION is ‘internalised’ to INTELLECTION, KNOWLEDGE via metaphorical mapping. *I see* both implies ‘physical perception (vision)’ and ‘mental knowledge (i.e. intellection)’ (Sweetser 1990: 32-33).

The regularities observed by the author are claimed to be “natural and readily motivated” (Sweetser 1990: 1). But the domains analysed by Sweetser are traditionally associated with grammaticalisation processes; a restricted set comprising perception verbs, modality, conjunctions, speech act verbs and conditionals is analysed and embedded into a pragmatic and cognitive framework (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 99, see section 2.3.4).

Cognitive semantics and in particular cognitive metaphor theory in general has been the target of harsh criticism (see Vervaeke and Green 1997, Haser 2005). Haser (2005: 9) in particular criticises the vagueness of central terms used by cognitive linguists such as Lakoff, for example (cf. Leezenberg 2001: 138, as quoted in Haser 2005: 9). Several formulations and claims in Sweetser (1990) also have to be taken with a pinch of salt. The aforementioned vagueness is also reflected in Sweester (1990: 11f and 1990: 35). Although regularities are claimed such vague formulations weaken the claim of regularity and the so-called unidirectionality hypothesis. Sweetser’s (1990: 11f and 35) uses of “certain” and “may” respectively reflect the difficulty of formulating ‘semantic laws’ and quasi-regular tendencies (see also Sweetser 1990: 47). Variation due to cultural differences functioning as a kind of disturbing factor have to be taken into account, but this is done only very vaguely. The vagueness of formulations and terms is one deficient aspect of cognitive linguistics in general as this branch of linguistics appears to be very theoretical and often neglects empirical evidence. Furthermore, it is even more problematic to apply cognitive approaches to historical linguistics, partly due to its experimental and psychological origin, but also because conclusions have to be restricted to
a small section of the ‘speech’ community represented by written registers exclusively. The paths of changes are correlated to the preferences of the language users (cf. Jäkel 1999; see especially Jäkel 1999: 385 on metaphor). In addition, the Unidirectionality Hypothesis has been tested empirically by Jäkel (1999: 385), concluding that unidirectionality is nothing more and nothing less than a tendency or preference: an efficient rule with great explanatory power, though not without exceptions.

Indeed, as Hopper and Traugott (2003: 130-132) admit unidirectionality is not “deterministic” or “an absolute principle.” The same applies to any claim of regularity. While de Saussure described diachronic developments as “accidentel et particulier” (de Saussure 1972 [1915]: 131, also quoted in Ullmann 1957: 154), general quasi-regular tendencies can nevertheless be observed. The term ‘tendency’ is preferred here, as ‘regularity’ is regarded as a problematic notion in semantic change. Traugott and Dasher (2002: xi, 1) explicitly make clear that the ‘regularities’ they observe are prototypical and probable tendencies. However, irregular developments also provide interesting insights and should not be underestimated just because of the obsessive quest for ‘semantic laws’. Furthermore, the formulation of conceptual metaphors as presented in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987), for example, also reveals difficulties as metaphorical uses also reflect preferences of the language users and it seems that there is a host of alternative interpretations of conceptual metaphors (on open or multiple interpretation of metaphors see Vervaeke and Kennedy 1996; Ritchie 2003).

Although conceptual metaphors can be attested in historical data, they do not provide explanations regarding meaning change. They are merely helpful ‘tools’ in the description of semantic variation and change. Also, the investigation of culture-specific aspects of metaphors should be given more attention. In general, cognitive linguistics theoretically states that there is a link between cognition and culture. This theoretical claim, however, has not been given explicit emphasis nor has it been proven empirically. Although Gibbs (1999), Boers (2003), Deignan (2003) and Zinken (2003) theoretically emphasise the role of culture within metaphor theory, empirical and systematic analyses are practically absent. In contrast, Su (2002) investigates the impacts of cultural differences in the use of metaphors in Chinese, pointing out differences in understanding a metaphor in different cultures. Most recently, Gevaert (2005) has shown that a corpus-based study can reveal important repercussions due to cultural factors within a diachronic cognitive metaphor approach (see chapter 5 of this study). Various contributions in Stefanowitsch and Gries (2006) furthermore emphasise the need of corpus-based approaches in investigations of metaphor and metonymy in current research.

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24 Of course, texts used to be read aloud and Anglo-Saxon poetry, for example, reflects oral literary traditions. Still, these texts belong to the so-called ‘high’ register: they are extremely stylised and do not represent actual, spontaneous language.

25 See also Lass (2000: 212) on the unidirectionality hypothesis.
The difficulty of explaining semantic change based on cognitive mechanisms remains within historical linguistics. As such an approach does not seem to be sufficient based on the given research conditions, other perspectives consequently have to assist in closing explanatory gaps.

2.3.3.2 Metonymy, implication or “invited inference”

Metonymy has not been given the same attention as metaphor despite the fact that some scholars regard it as even more fundamental (cf. Barcelona 2002: 215) or more common (Bredin 1984: 45, as quoted in Blank 1999c: 169) than metaphor. Blank (1997: 230) even figuratively speaks of metonymy as a ‘wallflower’ (“Mauerblümchendasein”). In contrast to metaphor, metonymy is understood as

a semantic link between two senses of a lexical item that is based on a relationship of contiguity between the referents of the expression in each of those senses.

[emphasis added, B.K.]

(Geeraerts 1994a: 2477)

Contiguity is seen as the basic relation (cf. Ullmann 1962: 218ff) but also as the conceptual basis of metonymy grounded in extra-linguistic experience which is culturally dependent (Niemeier 2000: 197). Traditional, metonymy is based on various contiguity relations such as part-whole, cause-effect, content-container, for example, mainly in the nominal domain (nouns) (see e.g., Nerlich and Clarke 2001). According to Nerlich and Clarke (2001) the semantic change of cash illustrates the relation between objects that contain other objects and the activities associated with them (cf. Nerlich and Clarke 2001: 265). It is interesting to note that only in English did the word develop the meaning of ‘money’. This example shows that culture-specific factors have to be assumed for this metonymic shift. However, a thorough corpus-based search would be needed to provide more elaborate insights into the semantic development of cash. Blank (1999c: 169; 180) has argued in terms of a metonymic shift concerning OE sælig (ME seli, MoE silly). The contiguity relation assumed by Blank (1999c: 180) is specified as “Actor – Typical Aspect” showing a type of “[c]o-present relations” (Blank 1999c: 179; for further discussion see chapter 4 of this study). Apart from these various contiguity relations

the essence of metonymy resides in the possibility of establishing connections between entities which co-occur within a given conceptual structure. [emphasis added, B.K.]

(Taylor 1995: 123-124, emphasis added)

Metonymy was defined as a ‘figure of speech’, i.e. a name used in place of another associated with it (see definition in *Webster’s New World Dictionary* as quoted in Kövecses and Radden 1998: 37, cf. Radden and Kövecses 1999: 19). Viewed from a linguistic perspective, it can be described as a transfer of meaning or a ‘stand-for’ relationship based on contiguity (cf. Kövecses and Radden 1998: 38). In contrast to this traditional view, the cognitive perspective takes into account a relationship between concepts. Kövecses and Radden (1998: 39) therefore define metonymy as a *cognitive process* in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or ICM [idealised cognitive model, B.K.; emphases added].

It is not entirely clear to me what the ‘conceptual entity’ is and it can generally be objected that the definitions for metonymy are not clear-cut (see Haser 2005: 8f, for example, on deficient definitions of “cardinal notions” in Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Strictly speaking, it seems to me that the cognitive definition is based on traditional assumptions and simply transferred to the cognitive level. Also, the definitions of metonymy provided by cognitivists very much resemble those of metaphor. With regard to the directionality of metonymic transfers Barcelona (2003a: 221) thinks that metonymy is unidirectional, while Kövecses and Radden (1998: 46ff) have pointed out that metonymies are reversible in contrast to metaphor (cf. Barcelona 2003a: 221). Still, it seems that metonymy is no more and no less unidirectional than metaphor. According to Warren (1998: 306), however, metonymic mappings appear to be even more systematic than metaphorical ones. But empirical evidence is needed to prove such general and theoretical claims.

Regarding the properties assigned to metonymy from a cognitive point of view, Barcelona (2003a: 224-227) provides a list which shows that there are similarities between metonymy and cognitive metaphor (cf. Barcelona 2003a: 227). Metonymy, for example, is also regarded as an experiential motivation and as a type of systematic mapping. But despite the similarities there are a number of fundamental differences which have to be considered. Conventional distinctions, such as the following, have been made: metaphor works between domains, while metonymy stays within one domain; furthermore, metonymy is a ‘stand-for’ relationship, while metaphorical use means that one notion is understood in terms of another (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36). Besides, another difference has been seen in the referential nature of metonymy and its explicit pragmatic purpose. In line with these differences, Barcelona’s (2003a: 228) standard definition conceives metonymy as “a mapping with a primarily referential purpose, in which the source and the target are entities in the same domain” (for a similar definition see Goossens 2000: 149). But the distinctions remain controversial. Hopper and Traugott (2003) regard metonymy as pragmatic, but Haser (2005: 17) objects that referential shifts are also involved in metaphor. The distinction between the two ‘mechanisms’ has even been rejected by Goossens (1995) who argues for a so-called “metaphftonymy” as a kind of continuum. This reveals the highly controversial and yet unsolved problem of distinguishing metaphor and metonymy. Especially cognitive linguistic criteria do not “[allow] us to
make a clear distinction between metonymy and metaphor” (Haser 2005: 18). Furthermore, Haser (2005: 15) is of the opinion that none of the criteria suggested by cognitive linguists offer a fully satisfactory means for teasing apart typical metaphors from typical metonymies.

I see the crucial difference, however, in the (traditional) basis of transfer: similarity (metaphor) and contiguity (metonymy) (cf. Haser 2005: 14) following Warren (1998: 303) who considers contiguity or concomitance as the optimal components for a definition of metonymy (cf. Warren 1998: 309).

A more pragmatic view of metonymy is provided by Warren (1998: 307) who points to a special type of metonymic process which she calls implication. According to her “only in cases of implication […] a novel contextual sense may coexist with a conventional” one (Warren 1998: 307). In contrast to the gradual changes caused by implication, Warren (1998: 307) considers proper metonymic or metaphorical shifts “contextually abrupt changes of meaning”. Although both mechanisms bring about meaning shift on the basis of concomitance (cf. Warren 1998: 308), there is a crucial difference between metonymy and implication according to Warren (1998). With regard to metonymy there are co-occurrence relations between the so-called entities, while implication reveals relations between propositions (Warren 1998: 308). With respect to implication so called ‘if-then relations’ are present rather than possessive or locative links (cf. Warren 1998: 308). Such implicational senses can be found in nouns, verbs and adjectives, while “[m]etonymic senses are practically restricted to nouns” (Warren 1998: 308). Thus, if something is X, it will also be Y (cf. Warren 1998: 308). This ‘if-then relation’ is also plausible in the case of OE rice (see chapter 4 for a discussion).

The principle of implication shows close parallels to Traugott and Dasher’s (2002) theory of invited inferences. The authors claim that metonymisation within a pragmatic-cognitive framework is the major mechanism leading to semantic change (for further discussion see section 2.3.4). Speakers or writers negotiate meanings with their addressees, implications or inferences are put forth or “invited” and according to the spread and adoption in the speech community new senses develop (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002). Barcelona (2003b) considers metonymy the basis for pragmatic inferences in jokes and humorous anecdotes. He furthermore quotes Fauconnier (1997: 11) who refers to metonymy as a “pragmatic function mapping” (Barcelona 2003b: 84). As the analyses in chapter 4 will show, metonymy and pragmatic inferences are the most frequent intertwined mechanisms observed in meaning change.

Although distinctions between metonymy and metaphor are difficult to maintain, as both can be used for pragmatic purposes for example, I hypothesise that metaphor has a conceptual (cf. Lakoff

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31 She also refers to permutation (see Stern 1931) and to Bybee et al. (1994) calling this type of metonymy ‘inference’ (see Traugott and Dasher’s ‘invited inference’, 2002). See also König and Traugott (1988) on conventionalisation of conversational implicatures in semantic change. As specified by the authors, the term ‘conversational implicature’ goes back to Grice (König and Traugott 1988: 111).

32 For further contributions on metonymy and pragmatic inferences see Panther and Thornburg (2003). See also Horn (1984: 31ff) on pragmatic inference in language change.
and Johnson 1980), while metonymy mostly has pragmatic function (see Warren 1998). I furthermore think that the crucial ‘prototypical’ difference is grounded in the basis of the transfer – similarity in the case of metaphor and contiguity or concomitance in the case of metonymy.

### 2.3.3.3 Subjectification

Bréal (1964: 229f, chapter 25) already refers to the “subjective element” or “side” of language and relates subjectivity to the expression of a speaker’s feelings (cf. Bréal 1964: 230). Subjectification is described by Langacker (1990: 5) as “a recurrent and highly important type of semantic extension.” Although this type of meaning shift is “typical of semantic change in general” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 89), it has mostly been applied to processes associated with grammaticalisation (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 89; see also Traugott 1999b on subjectification). Consequently, Langacker as well as Traugott and Dasher (2002) use subjectification in “a special, technical sense” (Langacker 1990: 6). This means that the term ‘subjective’ is not understood as equivalent to judgements or feelings which are subjective in the sense of emotional or valuing. In the present study the terms ‘subjectification’ and ‘subjective’ are not understood in Langacker’s technical sense, but in the wider, more general sense which relates to personal judgements (see Stern 1931: 45). In order to distinguish between the technical and the more general sense of subjectivity terms such as ‘emotional language’, ‘valuing’, ‘expressive’, ‘emotive’, and with regard to Wycliffite writings, ‘invective’ are mainly used to avoid confusion. The wider, more general definition allows a generous employment of emotional language also within the lexical autosemantic domain. Langacker’s technical use is restricted to the very special case of grammaticalisation, i.e. the development of grammatical meaning from originally lexical meanings (e.g., perfect *have* < verbs of possession, cf. Langacker 1990). The technical term ‘subjectivity’ is used in Finegan’s sense, involving “expression of self and the representation of a point of view in discourse”, which Finegan (1995: 1) calls “speaker’s imprint” (also quoted in Traugott and Dasher 2002: 20). Stubbs (1986: 1, as referred to in Traugott and Dasher 2002: 20) also states that the speaker’s perspective is always involved in any speech event. Traugott and Dasher regard the ‘technical’ subjectification as a development from context-free semantic sense to a pragmatic, context-dependent sense (cf. Finegan 1995). Traugott and Dasher (2002: 30) therefore define subjectification as a semasiological process whereby Sp/Ws [speakers/writers, B.K.] come over time to develop meanings […] that […] externalise their perspectives and attitudes as constrained by the communicative world of the speech event.

Traugott and Dasher (2002) take a different approach to subjectivity compared to Langacker (for a discussion see Traugott and Dasher 2002: 97ff). However, the central point of agreement is the issue of linguistic perspective involved (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 21). But, as the authors correctly state, Langacker’s focus is mainly on event structure and the examples provided in his 1990 article are “constructed out of context” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 97). I also agree that the utterance in its totality and the context “determine the degree of subjectivity” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 98). In their
study, however, subjectivity is discussed with regard to deixis, modality and discourse markers. Therefore, the present study attempts to employ subjectivity within the ‘lexical, autosemantic’ domain in order to explain meaning extension, as subjectification “is not limited to grammaticalization” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 90). They go on by claiming correctly that subjectivity will manifest itself “in different parts of the linguistic system and may be shown to function differently in strategic discourse than in decontextualized conceptual structure” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 98). As already hypothesised in Traugott (1989: 34-35) the so-called Tendency III, in which meanings are strongly based on the speaker’s subjective attitudes towards what he or she is saying (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 95), is predominantly observed in meaning change (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 96). Expressivity as well as efficiency are considered general motivations for language change (cf. Geeraerts 1983, 1997) and imply pragmatic views of successful communication and communication strategies (cf. Blank 1999b: 63).

As early as the 1980s, Traugott (1982: 257) formulated the general path of semantic change involving subjectification as the change from propositional via (textual) to expressive meanings (cf. also in Traugott 1989; Traugott and Dasher 2002: 94). Her hypothesis is mainly based on Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) following functional domains in language: ideational, textual and interpersonal (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 94 for a discussion) and the term ‘expressive’ roughly equals “affective, attitudinal, emotive” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 94), showing relevance in both semantic and pragmatic meaning (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 94 referring to Lyons 1995: 44).

The expression of ‘subjectivity’ in a technical sense and the ultimate choices of speakers and writers are correlated with register and the degree of attention to the audience, for example (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 20/21). Indeed, with regard to non-technical ‘subjectivity’ there seems to be a close correlation with text type, as for example in Wycliffite or Lollard pamphlets or tracts which show a high degree of invective. In general, religious and didactic medieval writings (e.g., homilies, treatises on salvation or monastic rules) reveal a strong tendency towards valuing and emotional language.

Attitudes and emotional colouring in meaning are important aspects which can be particularly observed in metaphorical extension as well. On the background of political and moral debates, for example, emotional and expressive language is revealed (see especially Wycliffite and Lollard writings). Also, classifications of semantic change such as pejoration, euphemism or taboo are further examples of the important role of subjectivity in language. The expression of criticism and personal opinions as well as ideological confrontations reveals the linguistic strategies of the speaker or writer. As exemplified by Koziol (1967: 88) one type of pejoration often develops on the basis of disdain. This can be particularly observed in the semantic change of *wretch* or *silly* for example (see chapter 4 of this study). Koziol (1967: 90, §191) refers to the treatment of political opponents. Pejorative uses can also be observed in other domains as well, such as economy and religion, for example, where

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33 On pejoration in English see Kollberg (1904); Schreuder (1929); Koziol (1967: 88ff).
hostile and ideological feelings can be expressed in general (cf. Koziol 1967: 91, referring to war rhetoric specifically).

However, the effects of this kind of subjectivity are often discussed from a rather polemic perspective (see Hughes 1988). Hughes (1988: 224) talks of “verbicide” (see also Hughes 1974 “verbicidal weasel”) and “semantic engineering” (Hughes 1992: 122), particularly with regard to the lexico-semantic effects in political, economic, advertising and journalistic discourse. Qualifications such as the ‘manipulation’ of “verbal ‘currency’” by mass media (Hughes 1988: 225), “semantic damage” (Hughes 1988: 227) or “downgrading of language” (Hughes 1988: 228) are very polemic statements and recall linguistic prescriptivism. From a descriptive perspective, the different modern discourses reveal a high degree of subjectivity. It is true that even linguistic descriptions are not completely ‘objective’, but Hughes is far too ‘prescriptive’ when even claiming language decay (cf. Aitchison’s 2001 title) with regard to innovative and creative use.

2.3.3.4 Prototype theory in diachronic semantics

Prototype theory was originally developed in the field of psycholinguistics by Eleanor Rosch and her research team (see e.g., Rosch 1975, 1977, 1978; Rosch and Mervis 1975; Mervis and Rosch 1981; on characteristics of prototypicality see Geeraerts 1997: 10ff; see also Lipka 1987: 282). Within synchronic linguistics a number of studies have claimed that prototypes and categorisation represent “an adequate description of natural language” (Geeraerts 1985a: 127). Prototypes and underlying prototypical effects, for example, have been discussed in Coleman and Kay (1981), Lakoff (1987), Taylor (21995), Langacker (1987) and Geeraerts (1997) among others (for an overview and a discussion see Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 25-42).

Basic issues involved in the theory are human categorisation and conceptual structures. The term prototype actually defines a typical or ideal member of a category. Robin, for example, is a prototypical member of the category ‘bird’ in contrast to penguin (cf. Rosch 1978: 36; Verschueren 1981: 332; Lipka 1987: 282; Crystal 2003: 379). Prototype semantics attempts to set up criteria how prototypical meaning can be defined, also taking into account the interrelation of overlapping meanings and the investigation of membership within a category, as well as the boundaries (cf. Crystal 2003: 379). The prototype approach maintains that lexicalisation is not absolutely arbitrary and that sharp boundaries between conceptual areas do not exist (cf. Verschueren 1981: 333). Prototypical features are an alternative to the so-called ‘checklist view’ within feature semantics (cf. Fillmore 1975; on pros and cons of field theory and prototype theory see Lipka 1987: 295; Lehrer and Kittay 1992: 1-18, Grandy 1992: 110ff, also discussed in Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 56-58). While traditional structural semantics is restricted to the level of sense, prototype semantics makes no strict distinction between this so-called intensional (i.e. sense) and extensional (i.e. referential) level (cf. Geeraerts 1997: 21ff). Furthermore, prototype semantics does not uphold the distinction between semantic and encyclopaedic knowledge (cf. Geeraerts 1997: 19; Fritz 1998: 99) and is opposed to ‘traditional’ Aristotelian
approaches (cf. Cruse 1990: 383) which consider categories as “clearly bounded entities, whose membership is defined by an item’s possession of simple set of criterial features” (Rosch 1975: 193, cf. also quoted in Geeraerts 1983: 1). Therefore, ‘non-Aristotelian’ theories raised the following claims: boundaries between categories are vague, there are different attributes and degrees as to category membership and resemblance (cf. Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblance’, 1953), and clusters of senses (cf. Geeraerts 1983: 2). These so-called radial clusters show a common, basic core meaning (prototypical centre) and related peripheral meanings. The theory accounts for fluent boundaries and overlaps of word meanings and rejects sharp boundaries between word meanings (Lehrer 1990: 369). Koivisto-Alanko (2000a: 42) has pointed out that diachronic studies focus on the changes in prototypical structures, while synchronic studies rather concentrate on the fuzziness of category boundaries. Fischer (1997a: 66) also considers prototype theory a “more powerful tool than componential analysis”, as fuzziness of meaning is suppressed in componential analysis. However, Wierzbicka (1990: 351f) has raised objections concerning an unconstrained application of the concept ‘prototype’, pointing out that discrete semantic components can be valid notions as well. She criticises the so-called “prototypes save attitude” (Wierzbicka 1990: 347) which means that whenever meanings of words are fuzzy and difficult to define prototype is used as a kind of ‘panacea’.

Cognitive structure has mostly been studied descriptively (cf. Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 79) and Koivisto-Alanko (2000a: 80) points out that diachronic studies on prototype semantics “are not very numerous.” Major contributions have been provided by Geeraerts (1997), Dekeyser (1998), Koivisto-Alanko (2000a, 2000b) and most recently by Tissari (2003). This rather minor interest results from the limited usefulness of the approach within historical linguistics. Some critical points have already been mentioned in section 2.3.2 in relation to structural semantics. As Koivisto-Alanko (2000a) has shown in her analysis of the abstract noun wit, prototype is merely a descriptive tool, as the “motivations and implications of change” are not provided by prototypes themselves (Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 189). The most recent study by Tissari (2003) has also shown the limitations of prototype theory. Tissari (2003: 31) emphasises that prototype theory is merely used as a descriptive tool of the “mental representations of concepts.” Prototype theory represents nothing more than an optional or compensational tool of describing meaning. But a number of objections have to be raised also with regard to its potential within diachronic semantics.

As early as the 1980s, Geeraerts (1983: 2) investigates “the relationship between prototype theory and diachronic semantics”. He believes that semantic change shows features “that correspond to the predictions derivable from prototype theory” (Geeraerts 1983: 2). Geeraerts has applied psycholinguistic and prototype theory to historical semantics in various studies (1983, 1985a, 1985b, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994b, 1997, 1999). His initial findings (Geeraerts 1983), however, were

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34 See Weigand (2003: 13) referring to meaning as a flexible and variable entity. The negotiation of meaning is possible as “meaning is an open changeable concept.”
36 Koivisto-Alanko (2000b) is the exact equivalent to chapter 12 in Koivisto-Alanko (2000a).
restricted to one single Dutch lexeme. His “empirical material” (Geeraerts 1983: 2) was taken from the historical dictionary of Dutch *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*. The data is restricted to the quotations and definitions of the corresponding lexicographic entries, but no quantitative distribution of the material is provided. Although Geeraerts admits that single word studies are not sufficient, the case study in Geeraerts (1985a) is again restricted to an individual lexeme, the ‘empirical data’ is taken from the same source and the argumentation is practically the same (cf. also Geeraerts 1985b). Although Koivisto-Alanko (2000a and 2000b) also restricted her study to the discussion of only one lexeme, she correctly admits that the study of just one “showcase word” is not reliable as the attested regularity can be devastated by external factors; she maintains that the study of a whole semantic field can lead to more generalising results (cf. Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 220). In general, Geeraerts’ contributions are rather deficient in examples and very repetitive concerning the adequacy of prototype theory in historical semantics. In addition, no new information is provided. As already attested for cognitive semantics, many terms and definitions are very theoretical and vague.

In his major contribution Geeraerts (1997) describes the nature of prototypicality resulting in different kinds of semasiological change (cf. Fischer 2000: 2; Geeraerts 1997, chapters 1.3 and 2). Geeraerts restricts his analysis to the concrete concept of *leggings* in modern Dutch and further previous study examples are recycled in this study (see Geeraerts 1983 and 1985a). The time ranges analysed are restricted to the (early) modern period (1500-1900, e.g. *vergrijpen*) and recent developments (*leggings* 1980s onwards), while pre-1500 stages have been neglected so far. His discussion appears very abstract and theoretical, as he admits himself (cf. Geeraerts 1997: 23); the “actual examples corroborating [his] hypotheses” (Geeraerts 1997: 23) are provided separately in a different chapter and the gulf between abstract theory and the “actual examples” is not bridged satisfactorily, as the analyses are not very transparent (see e.g., the figure in Geeraerts 1997: 58). Of course, semantic change is a complex phenomenon and the blurring of meanings in the course of diachronic semantic developments seems to be adequately represented in the aforementioned figure in Geeraerts (1997: 58). But it appears that only very general and vague conclusions can be drawn from this approach, such as the fact that meanings can be “blurred” in meaning change or new senses develop out of old meanings and new senses can have “multiple origins” (Geeraerts 1997: 60). The author points out that his approach does not present any novel aspects of prototype theory but he claims to incorporate elements “into a global model of lexical-semantic structure” (Geeraerts 1997: 26). I do not see prototype theory as such as a global model in itself. As already pointed out by Fischer (1997a: 66), prototypicality effects do not supply any further explanations with regard to historical semantics when compared to componential analysis. On the contrary, I think that prototype theory is far too restrictive and circular in argumentation. Generally, examples and case studies are practically absent, while the emphasis is clearly laid on the theoretical framework which does not supply any new contributions (for a discussion of the framework in Geeraerts 1997 see Tissari 2003: 70-75). As
Koivisto-Alanko (2000a) and Tissari (2003) have shown, further modes of explanation are necessary as prototype is not sufficient as a stand-alone approach.

A couple of further critical and more general views have been expressed regarding prototype theory in general. Osherson and Smith (1981: 38) state that prototype theory is best applied to “‘kind’ notions and artefacts. But concepts such as belief or desire and meanings of prepositions, as well as a number of other “ideas”, “[remain] outside the theory’s purview” (Osherson and Smith 1981: 38). Wealth is investigated as a disjunctive concept in Osherson and Smith (1981: 46ff) and the authors “conclude that fuzzy-set theory renders prototype theory incompatible with strong intuitions about disjunctive conceptual combination” (Osherson and Smith 1981: 48). Furthermore, categorisations are culturally determined (cf. Lipka 1987: 289). This shows that prototype theory has to be accomplished by socio-cultural aspects (cf. Tissari 2003: 403), for example.

Wierzbicka (1990: 365) concludes that

the notion of prototype as a helpful tool has to prove its usefulness through semantic description, not through semantic theorizing

and she warns against the liberal abuse of prototypes (cf. also Tissari 2003: 19). An additional essential aspect to be considered is the scope of application (Lehrer 1990: 373). Based on experimental psychology, some problems emerge when using the approach within historical linguistics. First, prototypes are usually attested in terms of frequency (cf. Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 47). The historical linguist, however, is confined to the surviving written data. If a lexeme occurs more frequently as compared to another in our so-called “bad data” (Labov 1982: 20, see also Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 26; cf. section 2.3.5), can it be classified as the ‘prototypical’ expression used for a particular concept? Can frequency be accounted for as the basic criterion of prototypicality? Geeraerts (1988: 221-222) has pointed out that frequency in corpus-based studies is to be understood as “linguistic” frequency and “not referential” and that frequency refers to the occurrence of words in the data, “not [to] the things they refer to.” In turn, these ‘linguistic’ frequencies can be used in order to conclude the prototypical instances of a particular concept. As already pointed out by Geeraerts (1988: 222), frequency in occurrence does not automatically mean that we deal with prototypical usage (cf. Winters 1990: 289). Therefore, historical studies are forced to rely on frequency as an indicator of prototypicality (cf. Koivisto-Alanko 2000a: 48), even though the above mentioned objections have to be taken into account. As Koivisto-Alanko (2000a: 79) correctly states “[u]nfiltered intuitive data” is not at disposition for the historical linguist. Furthermore, abstract notions in historical data are largely subject to the inferences of the modern researcher.

Concerning the directionality of change, Geeraerts (1997: 24) has claimed that the core meanings survive rather than the peripheral meanings in the course of time. A counter-example, however, is provided by OE spedig. Based on the surviving data, the peripheral meaning – in terms of frequency of occurrences attested in the corpora – develops as the core sense in the course of time (see chapter 4 of this study for further detail). As far as the Old English data reveals, the modern meaning of spedig is peripheral in OE, while this peripheral meaning is generalised in Middle English and later
becomes the core sense of the adjective. Changes can therefore also be observed from periphery to
core, which questions the unidirectionality claim. Dekeyser (1998: 68) for example claims that it is the
core meaning that is generally “lost” and peripheral meanings that persist (cf. 1998: 68). However, the
term ‘loss’ is inappropriate, at least for his example sellan. Dekeyser (1998: 66) discusses the semantic
development of sell and attests ‘give’ as the (oldest) prototypical meaning. I would claim, however,
that the core, and therefore prototypical meaning of MoE sell is not lost, but specialised. Thus, ‘give’
is still one of the central or core semantic components of sell, but the act of ‘giving’ is specialised in
capitalistic terms, i.e. the exchange of money and goods. Consequently, the core meaning is not lost,
but specified because of changing socio-historical and economic circumstances. Furthermore, large
corpus-based data also seem to reveal a further (structural) motivation for the change: sell often occurs
in the relational antonymic phrase ‘buy and sell’ which might also have influenced the development of
the money-based meaning. Nevertheless, the prototypical frame which is evoked by sell reflects how
social reality is handled (cf. Verschueren 1981: 336). However, a thorough corpus-based analysis
would be required to strengthen this claim. Dekeyser (1998) does not present evidence from text
corpora but simply works with the entries in Bosworth and Toller’s Anglo-Saxon dictionary, the
*Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Middle English Dictionary*. And as the case of spedig reveals, first
meanings listed in the dictionaries do not necessarily represent the prototypical, core meaning as
represented in the text databases. Shifting prototypes can lead to the emergence of new meanings (cf.
(2000a: 79) also maintains that semantic change, in cognitive terms, is change in prototypical
structure. But what causes the prototypes to shift? In addition, a shift in prototype structure is not
necessarily involved all the time. Furthermore, the question has been raised whether a category has
only one prototype or several prototypes (Lutzeier 1993: 208). If several prototypes are assumed, these
can be seen as ‘relational points’ (“kognitive Orientierungspunkte”) within a category (Lutzeier 1993:
208).

Prototype theory as applied to diachronic semantics seems to be appropriate when describing
but not when attempting to explain semantic change (cf. Geeraerts 1992: 91). Prototypes may provide
insights into the processes of change, but they do not provide any answer as to *why* these changes
occur. Diachronic prototype semantics seems to give merely additional information about the sense
shift of the word and consequently shifts in the underlying semantic prototype(s). As Müller (1993:
223) has stated the linguistic function of prototype theory is still unclear, although psychological
aspects of categorisation are of interest to linguists (Müller 1993: 224). To conclude, Geeraerts (1997:
28) correctly admits that

prototype theory […] can never be a comprehensive theory of diachronic lexicology

[...] Prototype theory, in short, may well be a useful addition to diachronic
lexicology, but it certainly does not replace the older endeavours.

Although prototype theory is a helpful tool in the description of lexico-semantic changes in particular
taking into account the ‘fuzziness’ of meaning, the need for more thorough explanations arises. This
can only be achieved by integrating further aspects which shed a different light on the diachronic semantic developments.

2.3.4 Pragmatics and its role in meaning change

It has been shown before that cognitive linguistics does not distinguish between linguistic (semantic) knowledge and encyclopaedic knowledge and that the study of linguistic semantics is based on human experience (cf. Croft 1993: 337). Consequently, this ‘world knowledge’ and particularly contextual knowledge involves pragmatic aspects which figure in semantics (cf. Croft 1993: 337). The importance of pragmatic aspects has already been referred to in the previous sections. However, Hopper and Traugott (2003: 76) have pointed out that there is “yet little consensus on exactly where the boundaries between the two areas [semantics and pragmatics, B.K.] lie.” Further complications arise when applying pragmatics to the historical dimension.

The term historical pragmatics covers a wide range of different “linguistic research efforts” (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 10). The authors point out that there is a dearth of studies which focus on pragmatics from a historical perspective (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 3). The term ‘historical pragmatics’ comprises the following two different approaches exemplified by Jacobs and Jucker (1995): pragmaphilology and diachronic pragmatics. An overview of previous studies in historical pragmatics is given in Jacobs and Jucker (1995). However, former studies have only made some remarks on diachronic pragmatics and have been quite general; the need arises for more detailed investigations (cf. Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 4). The authors use “historical pragmatics” with regard to language use, while “pragma-historical linguistics” focuses on language change (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 5f). According to the authors the more general pragmaphilological approach describes the contextual aspects of historical texts, including the addressers and the addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text repetition and the goal(s) of the text. (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 11)

Further aspects, which seem indispensable in a pragmatic analysis of historical data, are the socio-cultural context in general, as well as communicative intentions of the writers and the audience which is addressed (cf. Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 12). A contribution within this sub-branch of diachronic pragmatics is given by Bergner (1995) who discusses the ‘openness’ of medieval texts. This means that the texts are open to various interpretations because of a missing linguistic standard, because of the nature of textual communication and the socio-cultural framework of the texts (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 11). Socio-cultural aspects are indispensable as it is difficult “finding the exact meaning of Old English words” (Bergner 1995: 44); modern dictionaries only provide approximations. Consequently, the focus from a pragmaphilological perspective is laid on the “contextual aspects” (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 11) of the actual text, which helps determine the various senses. Often ideological connotations

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can be observed. Regarding the “[s]emantic opacity” (Bergner 1995: 43), Bergner (1995: 44) refers to the “special character of OE poetry” and the use of “variation.” This stylistic device is characterised by repetition, allusions and associations. In addition, Old English poetry reveals the use of a fair number of hapax legomena. The reason for the use of hapaxes can never be fully explained, “yet they may have been caused by faulty or deficient tradition or often by a conscious procedure aiming at the use of archaic and opaque sounding words” (Bergner 1995: 44f).

Diachronic pragmatics as understood by Jacobs and Jucker (1995) is mainly a so-called “form-to-function-mapping” and vice versa and it mainly includes work by Traugott among others, who particularly defines subjectification as a “pragmatic-semantic process” (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 14; cf. Traugott 1989: 35; see Traugott and Dasher 2002: 19-24 on subjectivity). Subjectification has been discussed under the heading of cognitive approaches; but as most of the pragmatic approaches actually mark an interface between cognitive and pragmatic theoretical issues it is difficult to draw an exact borderline as speaker strategies and speech acts are embedded into a cognitive framework. Creative and innovative uses are effected by cognitive mechanisms, such as metaphor and metonymy, which can definitely be embedded into a historical pragmatic dimension (cf. Sweetser 1990 contextualising her discussion of cognitive metaphor within a pragmatic framework, cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 99).

Whitney (1973 [1867]) already considered the speaker a crucial factor in semantic change, i.e. words are used in “different contexts according to various communicative needs” (Nerlich and Clarke 1988: 76). Stöcklein (1898) was already critical of traditional German semasiology and he believed that the “context of the sentence” (Nerlich 1992: 96) provides possible insights into the way words change their meaning (cf. Nerlich 1992: 96) and he also stressed the importance of syntagmatic relations between words (cf. Nerlich 1992: 102). The speaker or writer as well as the hearer or reader play a central role in the ‘negotiation of meaning’ (see Traugott and Dasher 2002: 7) and semantic change is therefore strongly based on communicative needs such as expressivity and efficiency, for example (cf. Geeraerts 1983, 1997: 102-108).

In his investigation of marry developing discourse marker function Fischer (1998) also takes into account socio-cultural aspects, such as secularisation as one possible factor in the development from religious oath to a weakened discourse marker (cf. Fischer 1998: 36). As Hughes (1991) has already shown, swearing and oaths are very creative and expressive means. Traugott (1999a: 99) states that “[p]ragmatics plays a crucial bridging role” and stresses the “central innovative role” of the speaker or writer within such a pragmatic perspective (cf. Traugott 1999a: 99).

It has already been pointed out that implications or inferences can be considered triggers in meaning change. This also implies the subjective interpretation of the audience as well as the individual choice of the speaker/ writer which either lead to ultimate figurative enrichment in meaning.

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38 See also Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1985: 300), also quoted in Traugott and Dasher (2002: 25).

39 The two communicative needs are considered basic principles by Györi (2002: 124).

40 See Burkhardt (1991) on advantages of pragmatics in semantic change.
or to reductions. Traugott and Dasher’s *Invited inferencing theory of semantic change* regards metonymy as the key motivation in semantic change. Their framework represents a combination of cognitive linguistics and historical pragmatics. The 2002 book, however, does not provide new insights. The hypotheses and the theories presented have been published before in a number of previous studies (e.g., Traugott 1982, Traugott 1985); thus most of the contributions are repetitive as to the arguments and theoretical descriptions.

Traugott and Dasher’s recent (2002) claim that pragmatic aspects are relevant to semantic change bears a central problem: details on historical semantic developments are still not clear-cut in the autosemantic domain. The proposed regularities are restricted to specific domains such as discourse markers and deixis, for example, and these are closely tied up with grammaticalisation processes. In my view, regularity is not a completely appropriate term to use in historical semantics; all that we observe are mere tendencies, and exceptions are detected in any of the domains. Therefore, I would refute the imminent quest for semantic laws and regularities as socio-cultural factors are unpredictable or at least only very vaguely predictable in any domain.

Diachronic pragmatics is at the interface of linguistic structure and use. Texts such as Wycliffite tracts, for example, also reveal close parallels to the spoken register, as vulgar and provocative language is used in these controversial writings. The pragmaphilological context takes into account information on the writer and his/ her audience, socio-historical and cultural aspects as well as the discourse purpose provide interesting insights into diachronic lexical semantics. Such a perspective can reveal lexical preferences of the writers, their purposes and communicative needs, which are ultimately reflected in semantic shifts.

### 2.3.5 Historical socio-linguistics and socio-cultural approaches to semantic change

As already mentioned in the Introduction of this study (see chapter 1), it is indeed the lexicon above all which reflects external, i.e. historical and socio-cultural changes (cf. Lass 1994: 178). The importance of cultural aspects within the discussion of cognitive metaphor has also been pointed out in section 2.3.3.1 above. The basis of socio-linguistic and traditional philological (socio-cultural) approaches to language is the interrelatedness between linguistic and social factors in language change (cf. Bergs 2005: 4). Traditional studies at the beginning of the 20th century already claimed that social factors were essential in meaning change. Meillet (1921)\(^{42}\) claimed that meaning change predominantly reflects the influence of social factors. Meillet attempted to explain “linguistic variation through social variation” (Nerlich and Clarke 1988: 76) in his famous article “Comment les mots changent de sens” [*How words change their meaning*]. This “socio-semantics” (Nerlich 1992: 174-184) aimed at explaining semantic change from a sociological perspective (cf. Nerlich 1992: 176, 184).

\(^{41}\) Unfortunately, the authors of medieval texts are very often unknown; consequently several constraints have to be faced.

\(^{42}\) The original article was published in *L’année Sociologique* (1905/06).


Synchronic sociolinguistics focuses on actual language used in a speech community and analyses the data with regard to sociolinguistic variables such as real time, apparent time, age, gender, class and geographic provenance. The variation across social groups is the central tenet of this discipline. But despite the fruitful insights from a sociological-linguistic perspective, the problems which are imposed by this approach are manifold. First, historical linguistics in general is confronted with what Labov (1982: 20) has called “bad data” (cf. previous sections of this study). The historical linguist cannot consult any informants and the surviving texts from past periods are exclusively written records, and are a more or less ‘accidental preservation’ according to Milroy (1992: 45). These written data are mainly “message-oriented” and “deprived of the social and situational contexts” (Milroy 1992: 45). Furthermore, the study of age, gender and class, for instance, is a difficult enterprise, in particular in medieval studies. Many of the texts are anonymous and in those cases where the author is known only little information is sometimes available. Also, the sociological category ‘class’ does not adequately apply to early medieval society either. In addition, scribes and authors were mainly from a monastic background, as monasteries were the cultural and educational centres in the Middle Ages. At first, literacy was mainly restricted to a small educated elite.


More recent socio-historical studies of the English lexicon have been provided by Hughes (1988, 2000). He claims that there is a highly systematic and surprisingly regular correlation between changes in society, culture and ultimate semantic developments.⁴³ But such correlations are not of an

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⁴³A similar approach, i.e. the correlation of cultural changes with semantic changes, is provided in Williams (1983).
immediate nature, contrary to Hughes’ claims (1988). As shown in a pilot study (Kossmann 2004),
there is a considerable time lag between social changes and semantic changes, in other words
the linguistic system always lags behind the evolving natural and cultural
environment to which it is meant to relate […] fundamental changes in any basic
social institution should be reflected within a generation of two by correspondingly
fundamental changes in the semantic system.
(Friedrich 1966: 160)

This relates not only to semantic changes but also and foremost to lexical changes due to borrowings,
for example, which in turn have an impact on the ultimate shifts in meaning.

Hughes (1978, 1988, 199244, 2000) has shown that lexical restructuring is the ultimate result
of the hypothesis that social and linguistic changes are correlated. He argues that both Christianisation
and secularisation as well as the “growth of capitalism” (Hughes 1988: 67), for example, have led to
semantic shifts, as exemplified in the word *purchase*, for instance (cf. Hughes 1988: 68). Hughes is
right in saying that fundamental social changes such as secularisation have had serious repercussions
which result in a “reflective shift in key-value terms” (Hughes 1988: 32). However, he tends to
oversimplify in various places. It is true that the Middle Ages were greatly embedded into a religious
framework (cf. Hughes 1988: 32). But this is just one side of the coin, as there were also considerable
secular aspects which profoundly influenced everyday life. The surviving texts basically convey the
feeling of a largely religious period, but this textual evidence presents only a small section of medieval
life and thought. In this respect, his comparison of the Middle Ages as an “Age of Faith” with modern
times as “an age of doubt, scepticism, […] cynicism” (Hughes 1988: 32) is to some extent overdone,
polemical and oversimplified. Another example of such a general formulation, concerning the
discussion of the former deadly sins gluttony and lust, is given in the sentence “The sex manual has
replaced the spiritual manual” (Hughes 1988: 33). Sentences like these are highly over-generalised and
seem to be intended for a popular audience; further evidence for this is given in the fact that Hughes
(1988) randomly discusses a large number of isolated words with the help of *OED* definitions or he
restricts his analysis of isolated words to one specific text (cf. Hughes 1978). Hughes (1988) chooses a
host of semantic fields and lexemes, but unfortunately, no empirically relevant data is provided as to
show general tendencies in a systematic and detailed way.

The lexical and semantic restructuring, however, does not only occur because of external
social factors. Multiple causes contribute to semantic variation and ultimate semantic shifts. External
(social) factors can be considered mere ‘pre-triggers’ which function as catalysts for further
psychological (cognitive) and pragmatic mechanisms.

Blank (1999b: 72) lists socio-cultural change as one possible motivation of lexical-semantic
change. He states that

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44 In this contribution Hughes accounts for social factors within a typology of semantic change. The result is a
three-fold typology comprising so-called “symbiotic”, “mediated” and “‘Orwellian’” changes (Hughes 1992:
113-122).
Changes in our conception of the world can also lead to the transformation of an already existing complex conceptual system by the loss of one or more concepts, by shifting concepts or by introducing new ones.

Blank (1999b: 73) goes on by referring to French denominations of different meals of the day for example which show “the multiple reorganisation of a lexical structure due to sociocultural change”. A similar case is to be observed in what Hughes (2000: 117) calls “sociology of food” in English (cf. also Hughes 1974: 1 and Hughes 1992: 108 on the separation of registers due to French influence). The investigation of the concepts rich and poor in medieval English also yields fascinating examples of such a “multiple” restructuring motivated by socio-cultural factors among others.

The fact that English has a largely mixed lexicon is the result of a number of important contact situations. In contrast to German, borrowings from Scandinavian and French in particular are responsible for the considerable overall change of the English lexicon in the medieval period. The repercussions of the Norman Conquest are reflected in the separation of registers due to a formal Romance lexical inventory which superimposed on the Anglo-Saxon word stock. Hughes (1974: 2) claims that “[s]emantic change has been far greater in English” compared to other related European languages and that this can be regarded “as a result of great social upheavals” (Hughes 1974: 2). This claim is insolent to a certain degree, as other countries have also seen crucial social changes which possibly have led to semantic changes. I therefore assume that Hughes seems to refer to words of common origin in different (related) languages. At first sight, it is true that words such as silly and starve, for example, have developed novel meanings in English, while German still uses the ‘old’ senses. But these are only sporadic examples and although this might speak for socio-cultural differences other factors have to betaken into account. Hughes (1974: 3) mentions psychological aspects but he does not follow up these criteria. He thinks that meaning change is inevitably reflects change in the social structure in such an early “pre-literate” period as are the Middle Ages (cf. Hughes 1974: 13). But the written word reflects the manipulation of meaning by various interest groups such as the Church, the State or a capitalist enterprise (cf. Hughes 1974: 13-14; generally taken up in Hughes 1988). A similar statement is given by Toon (1992a: 30) claiming that “[w]ritten language masks individuality” and that it represents a ‘means’ of authority (cf. Toon 1992a: 30). Toon (1992a), however, understands this “instrument” (Toon 1992a: 30) in terms of literacy restricted to powerful groups (e.g. clergy and King Alfred) rather than in terms of Hughes’ definition of ‘manipulation’.

The socio-historical approach, however has faced further criticism with regard to ‘regularity’ (Traugott 1985: 159). Changes based on socio-cultural factors are highly unpredictable and mostly no ‘regular’ or unidirectional patterns are observed in cases where social circumstances violate any regular tendency (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: xi). Irregular tendencies could also be the result of “expressive factors” (cf. Geeraerts 1997: 108; Blank 1999b: 77). However, the supposed irregularity should not be refuted in general. We still have to face the problem of how to define regularity in

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45 Even modern pop culture echoes this important change. For a humoristic allusion see Nick Hornby’s recent novel A long way down (Penguin, 2006, p.104).
diachronic semantics and the “genuine verification” of such presumed ‘laws’ (Weigand 2003: 1). When does a set of examples establish semantic regularity (cf. Weigand 2003: 2)? Where do regularities begin and where do they end (cf. Weigand 2003: 2)?

There is no denying that changes in the socio-historical and cultural context influence the use and meaning of words. *Line* for example is a concrete concept; *on-line* reflects changes in the external world via technological innovations, but also mappings between different domains, that is, cognitive processes, are involved in the change. Fairclough (1988: 112) also sees “a connection between linguistic theory and social theory” and he refers to Halliday’s suggestion (1978) that there is “an intimate relationship between social change and change in ‘semantic style’” (Fairclough 1988: 116).

Language use and the corresponding linguistic system depend on the culture of a speech community (cf. Wyler 1990: 17). Lenker (1999), for example, discusses the semantic change of *girl* from Early Modern English onwards, arguing that changing perspectives on childhood and adolescence as a social convention provide further explanations of the semantic shift of *girl* (Lenker 1999: 11-12).

The importance of cultural aspects within the cognitive metaphor approach has been pointed out in a recent corpus-based study by Gevaert (2005) (see also chapter 5 of this study). Cultural aspects are essential within diachronic semantic studies and are closely linked to the pragmaphilological perspective. Consequently, an interdisciplinary need arises: diachronic studies deal with historical data and consequently, historical and socio-cultural aspects are an essential part in historical linguistic studies.

### 2.3.6 Corpus-based research in semantic change

Empirical studies are indispensable in diachronic linguistics, despite the “bad data” problem (Labov 1982: 20; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 26; see previous section). The whole fascination of historical studies particularly lies in these data. An empirical approach reduces the risk “of omitting types [of semantic change, B.K.] that are less striking than others” (Blank 1999b: 70). Meanwhile, researchers can have recourse to large historical text compilations. Computer-aided, electronic facilities have contributed a lot to historical semantics in this perspective. Historical text materials have presently been compiled in a variety of different corpus projects (*Helsinki Corpus, Dictionary of Old English Corpus, Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, for example).

More recent studies have used these various databases. The empirical data, however, is often not used adequately to provide systematic evidence. Hughes (1988) used the *OED* as a ‘historical corpus’, but concentrated exclusively on handpicked quotations in the *OED* entries of the words he happened to be discussing. Using the complete resource of quotations given in dictionaries such as the *OED* and the *MED* online, more general and detailed developments can be observed. Furthermore, such historical ‘corpora’ provide a wealth of data from which quantitative and distributional insights can be drawn (cf. chapter 3 on the databases).
Despite these vast textual resources, a number of previous studies, however, have not used the corpus-material for such a quantitative distribution. Neither Traugott and Dasher (2002), Sweetser (1990) nor Hughes (1988) provide any quantitative or statistical results as to frequency and general development based on large corpus material. Sweetser (1990) as well as Traugott and Dasher (2002) merely provide ‘sporadic’ examples which illustrate and match their proposed claims.

While corpus-based analyses represent an innovative potential in diachronic semantics in particular, there is still need to incorporate important background information on the provenance of the manuscripts, the relation between original and translation, as well as the problem of dating in the various dictionaries. Figures alone will not suffice to interpret the empirical data. Therefore, the task is still time-consuming and laborious in spite of all technological advances.

2.4 Summary

19th-century semantic theories have paved the way for modern approaches to semantic variation and change. Meillet – among others – already pointed out at the beginning of the 20th century that semantics is a complex phenomenon. Quite a number of theoretical approaches, mostly used in synchronic studies, have been developed and applied to historical semantics. However, each theory taken on its own does not supply satisfactory explanations – if at all – as merely a restricted set of specific aspects are highlighted.

Despite a number of critical aspects, the field approach is a good means to describe changes for a fair number of lexemes in order to avoid sporadic isolated word histories. However, the structural perspective neglects extra-linguistic factors, such as psychological and socio-cultural motivations of change, for example. The approach is also problematic regarding fuzzy boundaries between meanings. The use of prototypical features seems to do justice to this ‘fuzziness’ of meaning, in contrast to the structuralist feature catalogue. As prototype theory has its origin in experimental psycholinguistics, its application to diachronic studies seems to be more problematic. Prototype theory merely has a descriptive function regarding the historical dimension and it does not supply any explanations as to why new meanings arise. In addition, the prototypical senses observed with the help of the historical corpora are determined on the basis of their frequency in the ‘linguistic’ data exclusively. This in turn does not necessarily have to represent the prototypical usage in general.

With regard to conceptual or cognitive metaphor and metonymy, no sufficiently clear-cut distinctions and definitions have been supplied according to Haser (2005). However, the application of cognitive metaphors within a diachronic semantic approach represents a good starting point in the description of metaphorical usages. But cognitive metaphor is merely a descriptive tool, as it does not serve as an explanation of ultimate semantic variation and change. Metonymy and metaphor are considered two separate mechanisms, although there are complex cases where a distinction is not
straightforward. In the present study, metaphor is used in a cognitive-linguistic sense, whereas metonymy is considered a more pragmatic process.

While cognitive theories have developed important insights into the relationship between cognition and language, they have by and large suppressed socio-cultural aspects. Even though scholars admit that cognition and socio-historical perspectives are “not contradictory but can complement each other” (Traugott 1985: 156), the symbiosis has yet not become visible and fruitful in concrete research.

In turn, it is difficult to correlate socio-historical changes and ultimately semantic shifts. Socio-historical and cultural changes are reflected especially in lexical change, i.e. in the restructuring of the lexical inventory by borrowings, for example. Although the external socio-historical context is an essential component which has to be taken into account in diachronic semantics, these factors have to be regarded as a mere ‘pre-triggers’, ultimately leading to changes in the ‘external’ framework, which in turn influences the lexical level. With regard to this lexico-semantic level in particular, a host of cognitive, psychological and pragmatic mechanisms ultimately resulting in semantic change can be detected. On the one hand, the so-called pragmaphilological approach – one approach within historical pragmatics – investigates the historical texts with regard to various contextual aspects. On the other hand, pragmatic inferences and subjectification are considered essential issues in diachronic semantic developments.

Despite the limitations of the different approaches presented here, each model provides potentials which in turn can be combined within a more comprehensive description of semantic variation and change.
3 Data and Methodology

3.1 Preliminary remarks
The hypothesis of the present study is that the observed multi-causal diachronic semantic developments within the semantic field of wealth call for an integrative approach which allows us to describe co-ordinate semantic shifts. Previous studies (see chapter 2) on semantic change have based their investigations on specific, restricted fields or domains of analysis ultimately providing tendencies or even so-called ‘regularities’ in semantic change, mainly in grammaticalisation. Although the term ‘regularity’ should be used with caution, quasi-regular tendencies can also be observed for the autosemantic domain under investigation (see chapter 4). One of the prominent weaknesses of recent approaches to semantic change is the lack of systematically assembled evidence from large databases. A vast amount of computer-readable historical text corpora is presently available and these digital databases are employed in this study on semantic variation and change.

3.2 The semantic field of wealth
The senses of wealth provided in the OED point to the heterogeneity of senses covered by wealth from a diachronic perspective (see OED, wealth, n. senses 1, 2, 4 and 5 specifically). If a person is ‘rich’ or ‘poor’, he or she may be rich or poor in various respects: in terms of knowledge, intellect, emotions, possessions or money; even in relation with colours the two adjectives can be used. Different nouns and adjectives expressing ‘wealth’ therefore may denote spiritual, intellectual or material wealth. ‘Wealth’, on the one hand, can imply different concepts which can be inferred such as luck, success or power; while poverty, on the other hand, can imply helplessness, failure and weakness, for example. The diachronic semantic developments of the selected lexemes give sufficient evidence for changes with regard to these multifaceted senses.

Furthermore, the unmarked term wealth was used to refer to “riches or poverty” (OED, wealth, n., sense 3.g.). Although this sense is obsolete, ‘wealth’ can be represented on a continuum including both riches and poverty. With regard to the use of the lexemes denoting ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ in the actual text data, the two antonymic senses commonly collocate. In Old and Middle English, the phrase rich and poor is frequently used meaning ‘all, all the people without exception’. But poor is included under the hyperonym wealth for another reason. If someone is poor, it does not mean that the person does not possess anything at all, but it also means that someone may be less wealthy compared to another person. Wealth is the unmarked member of this oppositional pair, while poverty is the restricted item and therefore marked. This is the reason why the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ have been summarised under the concept ‘wealth’.  

46 Here the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ are referred to. In Old English, corresponding phrases are for example rice and earm, eadig and earm, rice and hean (and vice versa, see also early Middle English; see chapter 4 for a detailed discussion).
The following investigation discusses the lexical expressions of the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ in Old and Middle English. Mainly adjectives are examined, while nouns are included only occasionally. The Thesaurus of Old English (henceforth TOE) provides paradigmatic lists of the lexemes in question: 10. Possession, 10.02 Want, lack; 06.02.04.01.01 Necessity; 15. Property, 15.01.05 Possession of wealth and 15.01.06 Poverty, indigence. The adjectives denoting the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ listed under 15.01.05. and 15.01.06 are the central lexical items which will be discussed in the subsequent analyses.

The problems involved in the restriction of the field are manifold (see chapter 2 for a general discussion). The following lexical items closely linked to the concept of wealth have been excluded from this investigation. First, specific types of material wealth or possessions such as æht and feoh are excluded as well as, secondly, lexical items expressing moderation, avarice, generosity or greed. These concepts are only important from a contextual perspective in the qualitative analysis of the core lexical items.

Almost half of the 23 items listed under section 15.01.03. Treasure, riches, wealth are very infrequent and restricted to poetry or glosses according to the TOE. The lexemes, which are of interest, are the more frequent items such as wela and the corresponding adjective welig in particular. However, as the majority of the lexemes for ‘treasure, riches, wealth’ occur in specialised and restricted use, they are only of minor interest in this study. Special types of wealth, such as ‘princely treasure’ or ‘treasure of a city’ will only be included into the discussion if the need arises in terms of context and co-occurrence. Lexemes listed under the concept ‘Insufficiency’ are only included if the lexemes occur in the same context or if general cross-references – with regard to the wider definition of wealth in terms of ‘abundance’ – are necessary. In the case of words expressing ‘want, lack’ (section 10.02.) only lexical items which are polysemous such as earm for ‘destitute of, without’ and ‘poor, needy, indigent’ are included into the discussion; the remaining items are referred to in the appropriate sections for further illustration.

3.3 Sources

3.3.1 Dictionaries and Thesauri

Semasiological and onomasiological methods are approaches which differ only in the point of view or better in the direction taken within semantic research. From a semasiological perspective a lexeme or word form is investigated in terms of its meaning(s), either synchronic or diachronic. Onomatology, on the other hand, takes its starting point in a concept and examines the different linguistic expressions (cf. Leisi and Mair 1999: 102; Bouwer 2004: 51-53, for criticism of the onomasiological approach see Schlaefer 1987 and Becker 1991, also in Bouwer 2004). Both semasiological and onomasiological approaches are combined in the present investigation on semantic variation and change. Dictionaries
and thesauri are therefore an indispensable means of supplying evidence. The lexicographical tools used in this study are described in the following sections.

3.3.1.1 Thesauri
Thesauri are very useful tools for any semantic analysis. The Historical Thesaurus of English (HTE), for example, will certainly be a valuable source for future studies, as it will represent the various historical stages of the English language. The present study will focus on the following thesauri.

The vocabulary of the TOE “is essentially drawn from pre-Norman England” (Roberts and Kay 2000: xvi). Standard Anglo-Saxon dictionaries such as Bosworth and Toller (1954 [1898]) and Hall (1960) (cf. Roberts and Kay 2000: xvi) are the major and basic sources for the Old English slips. The thesaurus represents a good starting point for Old English lexico-semantic studies, in particular regarding its broad coverage of concepts (cf. Robert and Kay 2000: xxxv). Its function is primarily of lexicographical nature, as it does not provide information on detailed semantic aspects. It onomasiologically provides paradigmatic relationships, i.e. quasi-synonyms and also antonyms, of different concepts. According to Roberts and Kay (2000: xix) the TOE is predominantly “a presentation of concepts lexicalised in Old English as single items.” The authors however add a note of caution that “[n]ot all words from the language’s close systems are included” (Roberts and Kay 2000: xix, footnote 14). This means that multi-word structures such as idioms and collocations are not represented in the thesaurus. As the authors admit “all too little is known of multi-word structures in Old English” (Roberts and Kay 2000: xix).

While the function of the thesaurus is limited for this discussion, it is a very useful tool when it comes to the definition and the paradigmatic restriction of the semantic field. Although the TOE predominantly provides paradigmatic lists of single lexical items, the quasi-synonyms and antonyms included in this study have to be cross-checked for meaning and orthographic variation in the dictionaries.

A lot of the Anglo-Saxon words listed in the thesaurus are highly infrequent and restricted to glosses or poetry (see the different flags used indicating the specific restricted use, see Roberts and Kay 2000: xxi-xxxi). Such nonce-occurrences and highly infrequent, restricted forms have minor significance in terms of semantic change. They will be included, however, to describe semantic variation and to illustrate the richness of the Anglo-Saxon word-hoard. Furthermore, Roberts and Kay (2000: xxxiii) specify that the words of each group are not synonyms in the strict sense of the term, which refers to mutual substitution in most contexts; “[r]ather, they are loosely synonymous terms which express the concept defined by the heading.”

Apart from the paradigmatic relations of single lexemes, multi-word structures in form of metaphorical expressions are also investigated in the following analysis. Present-Day English thesauri

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47 An online test version of the content of the second print version of the TOE has been made available since 2005. See http://libra.englang.arts.gla.ac.uk/oesthesaurus/.
have occasionally been helpful in the search for the history of idiomatic expressions. Both *Roget’s Thesaurus* (Roget 2004) and a variety of dictionaries of English idioms (e.g., *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of English Idioms*, Warren 1994) were consulted. Furthermore, the *Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors* (Wilkinson 1993) proved a helpful tool in researching metaphorical expressions with regard to the subsequent diachronic discussion (see chapter 5).

### 3.3.1.2 Dictionaries

There is a general “[b]elief in determinacy of meaning” and “faith in dictionary definitions” (Wierzbicka 1996: 241 and 250 respectively). Dictionaries are relevant as definitions or meanings of words have to be cross-checked. Still, the actual use of words in specific contexts differs from the rather static entries in the dictionaries. Nevertheless, these lexicographical tools are indispensable. While scholars have to be aware of the problem of defining meaning of historical vocabulary with reliability (cf. Kotzor 1985: 176), Anglo-Saxon and Middle English dictionaries are required.

For Old English the following dictionaries were consulted: *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (1954 [1898]) which is based on manuscript collections by Joseph Bosworth and enlarged and edited by T. Northcote Toller; John R. Clark Hall’s *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (1960). Although the *Dictionary of Old English* is being compiled at the University of Toronto and fascicles A to F are available on CD-ROM, most of the lexemes discussed in this study can unfortunately not be checked in this valuable source yet.

The *Middle English Dictionary* – both in print and electronic form – has been consulted as a lexicographical tool as well as a historical corpus (see section 3.3.2.2). As the *OED*’s treatment of medieval words and senses is patchy and unreliable, […] the Middle English Dictionary was one of the major dictionaries to be embarked upon as a necessary supplement to the treatment of certain periods in the *OED*.

(Brewer 2000: 44)

The electronic dictionary is available on the world-wide-web. The print *MED* was completed in 2001 (Kurath and Lewis 1954-2001), while the electronic version ”preserves all the details of the print *MED*” (home page *MED*, [http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/med/](http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/med/)). The digital version, however, represents a huge database with valuable search options (see home page *MED*, [http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/med/](http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/med/)).

The various Anglo-Saxon lexemes are checked for continuity in the *MED*. As for ‘new’ lexemes, i.e. loan words or new creations, Present-Day English was a good source once again. Consequently, non-native terms for ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ have been looked up in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (both online and on CD-ROM, 2nd edition) and Present-Day English thesauri. The words were in turn again cross-checked in the medieval dictionaries.

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48 The *OED* references are taken from the online version in the subsequent analyses (chapters 4 and 5) if not indicated otherwise.
3.3.2 Electronic historical corpora

Corpus-based approaches within medieval studies and diachronic linguistics are relevant regarding present and future electronic compilations of medieval text data. “[D]ictionary definitions and lexicographical locations in time” (Hughes 1988: 26) are not sufficient for an explanation of semantic variation and change. The different usages and occurrences of the lexemes from a syntagmatic perspective cannot be established from dictionary entries, not even from individual citations given in these entries,⁴⁹ but only from analyses of large amounts of authentic discourse. Therefore, historical text corpora⁵⁰ – and in particular digital compilations providing facilitating search tools – should be employed in order to access a wealth of data revealing information on actual collocational uses and distributions of lexemes. These insights are a valuable key to the explanation of what might have triggered the ultimate semantic shifts.

The most essential aspect, however, is sufficient quantity of data for representative analyses and valid results. Historical corpora such as the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HCET, Diachronic Part, see Hofland et al. 1999) covering Old, Middle and Early Modern English in a compact form are merely helpful for diagnostic research and pilot studies (cf. Rissanen 2000: 8). The presently available electronic corpora provide sufficient data for a detailed study on semantic (synchronic) variation and (diachronic) change in Old and Middle English.

3.3.2.1 Dictionary of Old English Corpus (DOEC)

Conceived by Angus Cameron – the founding editor – as a historical dictionary in the tradition of the Oxford English Dictionary, the DOEC is based on records ranging from 600 to 1150 AD (see www.doe.utoronto.ca/about.html). The Dictionary’s compilation has not been completed yet (as already mentioned in section 3.3.1.2).

The Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form was compiled by a research team at the University of Toronto under the guidance of Antonette diPaolo Healey. At the time the present study was carried out the database was “available on the web by site license as authorised by The University of Michigan Press” (http://www.press.umich.edu/webhome/healey/sitelic.html). The DOEC site, however, has been moved to the University of Toronto in February 2007.⁵¹ This online source is an indispensable text corpus and an essential database for Old English studies. It [consists] of at least one copy of every Old English text (and sometimes more than one copy, if significant because of dialect or date). As such, it represents about three million words of Old English.⁵²

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⁴⁹ This kind of approach is based on the assumption that each word has its own history and it simply delivers isolated ‘biographical’ information on an individual word without giving insights into interwoven processes on a generalised level.


⁵¹ www.doe.utoronto.ca/pub/webcorpus/html; last accessed 22/01/07.

⁵² http://www.press.umich.edu/webhome/healey/sitelic.html (last access 22/01/07).
With its total of approximately 3 million words this corpus is a representative sample of Old English (cf. Healey 1997, 1999; Rissanen 2000: 9f, see Diller 2006: 52, footnote 2) and will provide a vast number of results in a great diversity of text types.

The DOEC comprises the following text categories: gloss, prose, verse and some texts which are not specified in terms of text type or period such as runic inscriptions, for example. The Latin-Old English glosses are a very important ‘text type’ as this text category reveals valuable insights as to how the glossator understood the Latin originals and how Latin lemmata were translated into the vernacular. As for the prose texts, homilies make up the largest corpus of texts. In addition to these, there are numerous different prose text types, both historical (e.g. Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, legal texts) and a large corpus of religious texts (saints’ lives, sermons and, as mentioned before, homiletic texts). The poetic data supplies both religious and heroic verse.

While the corpus on CD-ROM can be searched by means of the programme Wordsmith Tools (Hofland et al. 1999), the online version provides more efficient search tools on the internet. Orthographic and morphological variants have to be taken into account, however. The direct search results usually do not extend one line, i.e. one verse or sentence. The context can be extended, but only up to three sentences maximum. This is where the CD-ROM version is an additional helpful tool in order to view the whole (con)text, as sufficient context is indispensable in semantic analyses.

### 3.3.2.2 Middle English Dictionary (MED)

The MED has been briefly described as a lexicographical tool in 3.3.1.2. This database can also be used as a historical corpus covering the period 1100-1500. For this purpose the online version of the MED quotations database provides a corpus of roughly 11,856,248 words.\(^{53}\) The quotations database serves as an initial access to the texts represented in the database. The MED is part of the Middle English Compendium (chief editor Frances McSparran, University of Michigan, see [http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/mec/about/](http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/mec/about/); cf. also Rissanen (2000: 10) for further detail on the Compendium). This ‘rich’ Middle English source provides detailed insights into the language used in both early Middle English texts, as well as post-conquest and late Middle English texts. Its quotations database compensates the deficient representation of Middle English data of the OED quotations database. With the help of the quotations provided by the MED it is possible to draw conclusions on the correlation of the various contexts and text types and the ultimate senses observed. Furthermore, the quotations database supplies a diverse picture in terms of text genres.

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\(^{53}\) Word counts for the MED and CME have been provided by Christina Powell (University of Michigan Coordinator, Humanities Text Initiative/ Encoded Text Services). The numbers are rough approximations as the count includes tags which mark up the text, according to Powell [personal e-mail]. In order to obtain proportional frequencies, I have used the word counts provided for comparative purposes.
3.3.2.3 Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse (CME)

The *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (CME) is also part of the *Middle English Compendium*. This database is public and is a compilation of presently 146 complete texts. The CME archive provides complete editions of Middle English texts and can therefore accomplish results which are sometimes only selectively represented in the *MED*. The compilers’ ultimate aim is to include all editions used in the *MED*. Unfortunately, at the time when this study was carried out, a number of important texts have not yet been included in the database (e.g., *Ancrene Wisse*). Nevertheless, the database revealed a number of additional valuable insights. It allows a comparison of different manuscript versions of texts such as Layamon’s *Brut* (Caligula and Otho), the *Owl and the Nightingale* and the *Canterbury Tales*, for example. Future research will definitely profit from further updates of the archive. Although not yet complete, the current potential of the archive should not be underestimated.

3.3.2.4 The Oxford English Dictionary as historical corpus

Although its quotations database covers a time span of over 1000 years of English usage (Hoffmann 2004: 17), the pre-1500 periods are not sufficiently represented. Consequently, the *OED* quotations database is employed as a historical corpus, in particular for the periods after 1500. The second edition of the *OED* supplies a total of 33-35 million words (Hoffmann 2004: 25) and digital versions of the *OED* allow quick quotation searches. The search mechanisms are similar to the tools described for the other databases above. The online version of the *OED*, however, provides an additional search option: a search of the quotations database within restricted time ranges, as e.g. 1201-1300 or 1501-1600 are possible and very helpful with regard to orthographic and morphological variation (see section 3.3.3.1). Furthermore, a Part-of-Speech Filter can be activated to restrict a particular search. Hoffmann (2004) has attested increase in the average length of the *OED* quotations over time. The average numbers as provided by Hoffmann (2004: 25) have been used to account for the proportional frequencies which are required for the purpose of comparison between the different databases.

However, as section 3.3.3 on advantages and disadvantages will show, the interpretation of the *OED* data requires careful evaluation (cf. Hoffmann 2004: 25). Despite a certain imbalance in the representation of texts in terms of time period, text type and author, the *OED* serves as an indispensable corpus-linguistic tool (for more detail see section 3.3.3) providing general insights into diachronic semantic developments.

54 The online database was last updated in February 2006. The current word count of the CME amounts to 18,402,897 words (see [www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/e/collsizer/collsizer?detail=cmec](http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/e/collsizer/collsizer?detail=cmec), last accessed 21st February 2008).
55 See also Jucker (1994) for a critical review of the 2nd edition on CD-ROM.
56 Sebastian Hoffmann was so kind to provide the absolute numbers of average length (personal e-mail).
57 See Brewer (2000: 40-58) on *OED* sources. The history of the *OED* as described in Winchester (1999) and (2003) recalls the methods employed in the time-consuming process of compiling this valuable source with the help of voluntary readers.
3.3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of the sources

3.3.3.1 General problems

The general problems met with in both the lexicographical sources and electronic corpora are due to the language stage under investigation. Some of the problems in the study of medieval or historical corpora have already been discussed by Fischer (1997b). He has especially referred to the “random” character of the OED quotations database as the “result of a deliberate choice” of the various voluntary readers (Fischer 1997b: 163; see also Markus 2001: 165).

Dates of first occurrences as indicated in the databases have to be treated with some caution with regard to scribal transmission of the different texts. A text such as Beowulf was composed long before it was actually written down. Consequently, the distinction between the date of composition and the date of the manuscript has to be taken into account. Background information on different manuscript versions used in the databases should be integrated into the qualitative analyses if necessary, as there are gaps between the actual manuscript and the edited text, also with regard to the finally digitised text version (see Markus 1997, 1999). Some information lost in editions and digitalisations, however, can be recovered by this background information, as the origin of the texts – or at least a rough contextualisation – is indispensable within a qualitative semantic analysis.

Another major problem is the extreme variability in the graphic form of words. First of all, the non-existence of a standardised writing system in medieval English and the tendency towards phonetic spelling leave the researcher with diverse orthographic variation. As the databases include texts of different dialectal and scribal provenance, orthographic diversity has to be taken into account in order to integrate all occurrences of a lexeme in the Old and Middle English databases. Still, the researcher can only attempt to cover all possible occurrences, as scribal errors might escape his or her searches. Furthermore, as most of the data is online, a great effort had to be made in the present study to sort and quantify the data manually. Thus, the data provided in chapter 4 does not claim completeness, as one or the other form or spelling might have escaped my notice (see Fischer 1997b: 164, footnote 10 on the problem of retrieving all possible occurrences in the OED).

The problem of graphological words and homographs is of utmost importance for a quantitative corpus-linguistic study of medieval English. Runic letters and further unusable unconventional characters like eth (ð) and ash (æ) were normalised and adjusted electronically to facilitate searches. However, allographs such as eth <ð> and thorn <þ> in Old and Middle English or the interchangeable alternation of the graphemes <v> and <u> as well as <y> and <i> in Middle English have to be considered. The dictionaries very often provide some indications on orthographic variation. The TOE, however, only lists one possible spelling. In this respect, the investigator has to take into account dialectal scribal variation. In Kossmann (2004: 184), for example, weleþig (as listed

58 In the case of Beowulf however, the date and geographical origin of both composition and manuscript are still matters of debate. Thus, the ‘Beowulf-problem’ has not been solved yet.
59 Thorn and eth can be searched in both the DOEC and the MED by typing capital T or D, ash can be searched in these databases by typing capital A and yogh by tying capital Y in the search box.
in the *TOE*) was claimed not to be attested in the *DOEC*. However, spelling variation had not been considered in this pilot study, although the form *weleði* is attested in Old English (see chapter 4). Therefore, as mentioned before, orthographic variation is of utmost importance regarding the quantitative analysis.

Second, and to some extent linked to orthographic variation, homonymy causes considerable trouble; a careful investigation of the lexemes affected by homonymy is required. One example is for example *dear*, OE *deor*. In Old English and early Middle English *dear* in the sense of ‘precious, high in price, high in estimation’ and *deor/dear* in the sense of ‘animal, deer’ are homographs. Manual work is required here to exclude all items which are not needed by viewing each result in context (cf. also Fischer 1997b: 164).

A further problem introduces itself at this stage: polysemy. The problems encountered in distinguishing homonymy and polysemy have been discussed by various scholars in prior work on semantics in general (cf. e.g. Lipka 1990: 135ff and Lyons 1977: 550ff). These two phenomena have to be kept apart. Polysemy is relevant in relation to semantic change, as “[n]o historical shift of meaning can take place without an intervening stage of polysemy” (Sweetser 1990: 9). Considering the mechanisms involved in semantic shifts, meanings are related and very often new meanings co-exist alongside old meanings for a particular period of time. The duration of this co-existence varies under particular circumstances (see chapter 4). Because of the polysemous nature of words, a strict and clear categorisation is often not possible in particular cases (see OE *rice* and ME *riche*). Furthermore, the inferences of the modern researcher lead to varying subjective categorisations and interpretations. The written, largely stylised literary material, is thus subject to individual and consequently diverging interpretations.

A third general problem is related to the morphological structure of early English. Old English is a highly inflected language and therefore morphological variation has to be taken into consideration. The databases used in this investigation are not tagged for parts of speech and morphological variation has to be taken into account for the sake of quantitative analyses. The various inflections have to be considered, as the entries are not lemmatised in the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* and the dictionary itself.

Users must therefore consult the dictionaries or their own imagination to recover all the variant spellings of a particular word and find all its contexts. For example, the word *lac* ‘offering, gift’ will be found not only under the spelling *lac* but also under *laac* and *læc*, and under the various inflections *laces, lace, laca, lacum*.

(Healey and Venezky 1980: ix)

Despite facilitating tools provided by electronic databases, manual work is still required regarding these major problems involved in a linguistic study on medieval English.

As semantic studies in general are concerned, one disadvantage of the present databases is related to context provided by the search results. In the dictionary quotations databases only one sentence is usually given to illustrate the meaning of a word. According to Hoffmann (2004) the increase of average length of quotations in the *OED* seems to be indicative for the need of more
context towards the modern periods. One reason for this assumption seems to be the fact that many
words generalise or widen their meaning and largely become polysemous. Consequently, it becomes
clear that for semantic analyses the wider context is indispensable including information on
manuscript provenance, authorship and text type.

3.3.3.2 Dictionaries and Thesauri

Despite dictionary entries and definitions

we still need to ask ourselves why a certain term is or is not used in a text or group
of texts; how far selection is arbitrary, how far determined by the choices already
made in the sentence or by the conditions under which the writer was writing.

(Bately 1985: 47)

Janet Bately (1985) has been quoted in length as her observations clearly reveal the limits of the
lexicographical computerised tools. Furthermore, the quotation also points to some restrictions of
corpus-based studies (see section 3.3.3.3 on e-corpora). Dictionaries are useful tools in the definition
of meanings, they supply helpful information on etymology and spelling variation. This information,
however, has to be reviewed critically and cross-checked with other – and perhaps more detailed –

sources.

The specific openness of medieval texts (cf. Bergner 1995) further complicates the definition
of meanings. This so-called “semantic openness” (Bergner 1995: 44), which the modern linguistic has
to face, particularly figures in

the difficulties in finding the exact meaning of OE words if one considers that the
semantic investigation of words basically works only with the help of context
analysis and that comparative etymological observation or cross connections to
words which possibly exist in modern English can often give only approximate, if
not dangerous support.

(Bergner 1995: 44)

The dictionary certainly is of great and indispensable support for the study of Old English lexical
items. However, as to the distribution and uses of the word more information is required in terms of
semantic variation and change. This means that with regard to the rather scarce Anglo-Saxon text
material which has survived it is hard to “assess the impact on an Anglo-Saxon audience” (cf. Bately
1985: 51). Caution is therefore required regarding “distribution patterns that seem to indicate that
certain words were poetic, or early, or late, or dialectal, or even an indicator of authorship” (Bately
1985: 51).

The quotations of the dictionary entries illustrate the senses only selectively. Evidence for the
frequency and the use of a lexical item in a wider context can only be gained by a corpus-based
method, i.e. by taking the quotations database as a whole in terms of a ‘text corpus’. The quotations
databases are not corpora in the proper sense, however, they represent useful and large textual
compilations similar to ‘real’ corpora.60

60 On corpus design for proper corpora see Biber (1993).
One disadvantage of the *Thesaurus of Old English* is the presentation of Old English – Modern English word-lists, which is defective because of the following problem raised by Schwyter (1996: 29, also quoted in Scheinin 1998: 164). He claims that in the traditional lexicography of Old English each lexeme is treated as a separate, isolated entity with little regard paid to its application, that is its neighbours, syntax, context, or type of texts in which it occurs.

Leisi and Mair (1999: 42) also refer to the reciprocal influence of words in general and confirm that lexemes should not be studied in isolation but with regard to their neighbours. Although the *TOE* lists concepts and their lexicalisations in Old English – which is a useful starting point for semantic field studies – information required for a semantic analysis is completely absent. This deficiency can only be compensated by a detailed contextual and collocational analysis with the help of large historical databases. The quotations databases, however, do often not provide sufficient context; this means that complete editions of the texts, available in print or electronic form, have to be cross-checked for the wider context. For the Old English data, the CD-ROM version of the Old English Corpus was consulted. With regard to the Middle English data, the *CME* partially provided help as far as complete texts are concerned. The relevant texts which are not included in the *CME* archive\(^6^1\) had to be consulted in print form, as far as they were available; this also applies to the *OED* material. Although the databases have not been designed for linguists in a proper sense, they are still very helpful tools for linguistic, in particular semantic, investigations.

### 3.3.3.3 E-corpora

Some of the general problems apply both to the lexicographical tools and the electronic corpora and have already been mentioned and discussed under 3.3.3.1. The databases still reflect some individual weaknesses which need to be pointed out in a brief discussion.

According to Rissanen (2000: 10) the *CME* is biased towards the end of Middle English: questions arise as to whether the *Paston Letters* are to be considered Middle English or early Early Modern English. Temporal categorisation of texts can generally be biased, in particular in transitional stages of two periods, and consequently scholarly opinions diverge in this respect. Therefore, close attention has to be paid to the individual text and its temporal provenance. The *CME* is merely used for supplementary information as mentioned previously.

The problem of insufficiency of context has been referred to before. This applies specifically to the quotations databases of the previously mentioned dictionaries. The *MED* and *OED* provide quotations of usually one sentence only; in the *DOEC* online version, context can be extended to three sentences or lines of verse, which is however not sufficient in most of the examples. Using the *CME* the wider context can be checked as the corpus contains the complete edition of a text. This however means that introductions and notes by the editors are also included. Searching `<wealth>` in the *CME*

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\(^6^1\) Last update February 2006.
yields PDE forms as used in editorial notes and annotations, for example, which have to be excluded manually of course.

As mentioned in the descriptions of the electronic ‘corpora’ a variety of search tools are provided. Although they facilitate lexical searches, there are a couple of disadvantages researchers will come across with. Searching for <rich> in the MED and typing it into the search box without leaving a space at the end of the word will yield items such as Richard, Richmond and all the various tokens of both the noun and the adjective in Middle English. This can be avoided by typing a space at the end of the word and the search engine will only consider the exact spelling <rich>. Once again, morphological and orthographic variation has to be considered individually and typed in manually.

One of the advantages of the electronic corpora is their wealth of data (cf. Rissanen 2000: 7). The so-called “armchair linguistics” (cf. Fillmore 1992), however, has to be accomplished by further background information. The historical, literary and cultural contexts are indispensable in the interpretation as “reference to lexis without considering history and context can lead to misleading conclusions” (Coleman 2001: 86). It is naturally insufficient to restrict a semantic analysis to a purely quantitative ‘corpus-based’ approach. The collections facilitate the semantic and lexical work immensely. Problems emerge in the investigation of purely medieval material: divergence between actual manuscripts and edited texts, dialectal diversity, dating, authorship, historical and cultural context. Further problems are involved when analysing vernacular translations from Latin. How are the Latin sources transferred to the vernacular? What does the specific transfer tell us about the glossator or translator and his or her inferences? The glosses, as well as the vernacular translations and their Latin originals provide valuable information on the cultural and cognitive background of the Anglo-Saxon society, even though only a small section of this society is represented by the texts. Therefore, it is important to consider both Old English translations and their Latin equivalents in the original sources in Old English lexical studies (cf. Bately 1985: 48). But also from a pragmatic perspective, the Latin – Old English translations are essential sources when discussing the issue of inference and authorship, as differences between Latin original and vernacular version can be attributed to “the translator’s habit of making specific what he imagines to be implied by his primary source” (Bately 1985: 49). Furthermore, this aspect of “personal preference” (Bately 1985: 58) is an essential issue which has to be accounted for in the study of meaning. What about the reliability and literalness of the English text? Inferences of the translator play an important role as well as the freedom of translation and creativity to render words in English.

In relation to all these difficulties, the cognitive processes seem to be an interesting source for possible changes. The investigation has to rely on the interpretation of the written data that survives as native speakers of the respective period can no longer be consulted as informants. Thus, the reconstruction with the help of linguistic data plus qualitative interpretation seems to be the only means for a thorough approach.
With the help of historical collections a larger amount of data can be examined in density. Still, one has to consider each single lexical item as the meaning is (con)text-dependent. Nevertheless, digital databases and the appropriate search tools facilitate the analysis immensely despite the problem of non-standardised spelling. The relative quantitative results might reveal the status of a word as to its frequency. Conclusive statements can be made in terms of use and consequently in relation to its change in meaning.

The *OED* is unique in its kind. As the history of the *OED* has been described in other places it will suffice here to simply refer to Winchester (1999, 2003) and Mugglestone (2005) who gave an account of its creation. The story of its genesis is one of laborious and time-consuming effort by voluntary readers to find quotations for originally every word illustrating the respective meaning of the headword. The question arises though whether the compilation method of the *OED* quotations is too subjective and deliberate in order to serve descriptive linguistic purposes. Thus, the selections are clearly based on inferences of the voluntary readers. Therefore, every dictionary carries the inferences of its compilers.

The *OED*, “the great storehouse of semantic change” (Hughes 1988: 3), is used for general and quantitative overall tendencies in the quotations database. However, this database is problematic as it constitutes highly selective samples of texts. There is clearly an imbalance in the temporal representation of quotations. Post-1500 data is sufficiently represented, whereas the pre-1500 data is only inadequately represented (cf. Hoffmann 2004; Brewer 2000). Therefore, the historical databases illustrated above are indispensable for the present analysis as the *OED* treats medieval words in a rather unreliable and highly selective way (cf. Brewer 2000: 44). For OE *spedig*, for example, the *OED* (online and CD-ROM version) does not yield any results, whereas there is sufficient evidence in the *DOEC*. This underlines the importance of Old and Middle English collections for future semantic and lexical studies. The *OED* merely covers Anglo-Saxon words which survive into Middle English and beyond. This is fair enough as this valuable source does not claim to be a special Anglo-Saxon source. Moreover, particular authors are clearly over-represented in the *OED*. Recalling the history of compilation it is becomes obvious that Shakespeare and contemporary authors were preferred by voluntary readers involved in the project (cf. Schäfer 1980, Willinsky 1994, Brewer 2000, Hoffmann 2004).

Despite the imbalance in the material, one advantage of the *OED* is its wealth of data. The *OED* contains true quotations and the sources for these are varied (Hoffmann 2004). In terms of quantification several information is obligatory as to normalise numbers and frequencies in order to obtain proportional frequencies for generalisation purposes and comparisons with other databases. Number and length of quotations has to be taken into account (cf. Hoffmann 2004). Morphological variation can be taken into account by using wildcards in the lexical searches. However, attention has to be paid to forms and thus again manual check. As the texts are not tagged for parts of speech, special care has to be taken of the different syntactic uses.
The problem of multiple quotations occurs in both the *OED* and the *MED*. In the *MED*, researchers have to view single items individually for quantitative analyses as the same quotation may occur several times. The same selection process applies to the *OED*. The elimination of such multiple quotes appears to be a necessary methodological step (see also Fischer 1997b: 164, footnote 11).

Although researchers have to be aware of all these technical, methodological, linguistic problems and some indispensable manual elaborations, these electronic databases are the key to a new dimension in historical linguistics and in particular in medieval studies.

### 3.4 Methodology

The semasiological and onomasiological approaches, which are employed in combination in this study, have been implicitly described in the previous sections, as both thesauri and dictionaries use these methods. For the present study the Saussurian – originally synchronic – distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships is another central structuring method which is applied to the diachronic lexico-semantic developments discussed in the present analysis. Although the two relationships seem to be of opposite nature, they are interdependent to a high degree and need to be taken into account in a discussion of semantic change. These two structural principles prove efficient and helpful structuring methods in an investigation of semantic variation and change.

#### 3.4.1 Paradigmatic relations

Paradigmatic relations are “relations […] which hold between a particular unit in a given syntagm and other units which are substitutable for it in the syntagm” (Lyons 1977: 241) or simply to use David Crystal’s brief definition “set[s] of substitutional relationships” (Crystal 2003: 334). With regard to semantics, lexical relationships such as synonymy and antonymy are examples of paradigmatic relations. They are useful structuring methods when delimiting a semantic field (see Vassilyev 1974: 85 for a definition of paradigmatic fields).

In the present study, the focus is mainly on synonymic and antonymic relations. With regard to the non-existence of absolute synonymy, the interdependence of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic principles becomes evident. With the help of paradigmatic structuring methods scholars can determine the lexemes for their investigations. These relationships are located on the level of *langue*, while the syntagmatic relationships on the level of *parole*, i.e. the actual and individual uses, are also of utmost importance for a diachronic semantic analysis (cf. 3.3.2). According to de Saussure *langue* is a ‘convention’ (de Saussure 1972 [1915]: 26), Lyons (1977: 239) refers to *langue* as “the language-system.” De Saussure (1972 [1915]: 32) compares this abstract system of language to a dictionary.

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62 The relationships exclusively refer to the lexico-semantic level in this study.

63 Syntagm is used in the sense of ‘construction’ (cf. Lyons 1977: 240).
which provides structural options. A thesaurus illustrates this abstract level of *langue* with regard to paradigmatic and onomasiological principles.

Diachronic lexico-semantic developments affect paradigmatic relations by ultimate restructurings of lexical fields or the vocabulary in general. Lexical restructuring is mostly motivated by external, socio-cultural and historical changes. Therefore, there seems to be a close link between paradigmatic relations and culture. These non-linguistic, i.e. external changes, are normally long term developments. There seems to be a correlation between these external developments and the ultimate lexical and semantic changes. Similarly, these language-internal, i.e. semantic and lexical, shifts are often long term developments, but at the same time represent drastic changes. These figure either in the loss of lexical items (such as OE *hean* ‘poor’), in borrowings (e.g., French *poor* ultimately substituting almost all Anglo-Saxon words meaning ‘poor’) or in loan translations (see Leisi and Mair 1999: 45 and Gneuss 1955: 61), for example. Language contact is the most prominent factor in this restructuring process which mostly affects lexical variation, but to some extent also changes in meaning. From a diachronic perspective, shifts in paradigmatic relations occur independently of linguistic context. The analysis of lexical items focuses on discrete meanings, as found in a dictionary, independent of context (cf. also Paul 1880, distinguishing between meaning in and out of context; cf. also Warren 1992, chapter 1). Paul (1880) talks of ‘usual meanings’ as part of the mental lexicon, in terms of conventional meanings.

The reasons for the borrowing and loss of words cannot be explained by the immediate linguistic context. Still, pragmatic and text linguistic aspects on the paradigmatic level might provide some evidence as to the differentiation of register in near-synonyms, in particular with the regard to the Romance and Anglo-Saxon contact situation and its effects on the lexicon. Consequently, lexical and semantic shifts reveal a change of structural options, be it in terms of register specification or new lexical inventory. Structural explanations taken on their own, however, are not sufficient in a discussion of semantic variation and change (see section 3.5 below).

3.4.2 Syntagmatic relations

Syntagmatic relations are relations “which a unit contracts [and] which it contracts by virtue of its combination […] with other units of the same level” (Lyons 1977: 240) or simply – to cut the whole story short – “relationships between constituents” (Crystal 2003: 450). They show the syntactic relation of lexical items within a sentence or text. Collocational distributions, restrictions and preferences provide important insights with regard to semantic variation which will ultimately yield evidence of semantic change (see Vassilyev 1974: 92 for a definition of syntagmatic field).

The lexico-semantic changes affecting these relationships take place at the interface of semantics and pragmatics. The semantic changes affecting syntagmatic relations occur on the level of PAROLE; this means diachronic semantic developments affecting the actual uses (in context) on the

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64 The term ’culture’ is used here to mean historical, social and cultural aspects.
discourse level. This means the individual speech act (de Saussure 1972 [1915]: 27), i.e. utterances and actual uses of words chosen from the ‘abstract dictionary’, occur in specific contexts at the moment of speaking. Lyons (1977: 239) even speaks of “language-behaviour”. Evidence of how words are used in individual utterances calls for an investigation of a variety of aspects: regarding the syntactic environment, which plays a crucial role, collocations can be categorised and analysed more systematically in relation to meaning and meaning change; the role of the author, the implied discourse purposes and the actual utterance in context provide further evidence as to the use and meaning of the lexeme(s) in question. Consequently, (linguistic) context is of utmost importance with regard to changes on the syntagmatic level. Paul (1880) sees context as an important factor in meaning change (cf. section 2.2 and Warren 1992: 23). ‘Occasional meanings’ are located on the level of parole. Stern (1931) also noted primary and secondary senses of a word in certain contexts (cf. also Warren 1992: chapter 1).

The contextual method, in combination with the translational method, is the most fruitful approach and is most frequently used by Anglo-Saxon researchers (cf. Kotzor 1985: 179). Kotzor (1985: 184) approves of the contextual method and considers it one of the primary approaches to meaning in Old English. He believes that “Old English collocations and textual contexts […] will tell us more about OE conditions of use and meanings” (Kotzor 1985: 184). Despite lexicographic and linguistic support from dictionaries, editions of texts, as well as word studies he furthermore emphasizes that we cannot expect to obtain absolute results if we take into account the elusiveness of the term meaning itself, which can subsume such diverse aspects as […] pragmatic […] modification […] irony and emotive modification. (Kotzor 1985: 183)

Developments on the syntagmatic level are generally gradual processes, with old and new meanings co-existing for quite some period of time. Meanings tend to overlap and polysemy figures explicitly (cf. Sweetser 1990: 9 on polysemy as an obligatory and normal developmental stage in semantic change). Given the fact that syntagmatic relations are visible on the discourse level, it seems indispensable to integrate pragmatic aspects in the wider context of explanation, such as discourse purpose, text type (discipline) and authorship.

Furthermore, analyses of diachronic lexico-semantic changes on the syntagmatic level largely yield ‘statistical’ shifts across time. The temporal distribution of different collocational uses provides important insights. The quantitative evidence delivers information on the tendency and frequency of different contextual and collocational uses.

Furthermore, metaphorical expressions can be analysed and discussed in particular with the help of syntagmatic relations. Multi-word structures have not been analysed in great detail, if at all (cf. Roberts and Kay 2000: xix) as no systematic cross-textual study has been carried out so far. The investigation of metaphorical expressions in Old and Middle English is a difficult task however, as very little is known of multi-word structures in this respect.
3.5 A plea for integrative approaches

A specific theory [...] tends to focus on specific aspects of language and language use, neglecting other possible perspectives and the observations of properties that these make possible.

(Alm-Arvius 1999: 45)

As the literature review in the previous chapter has shown, various methods have been developed and applied in the past in order to describe and attempt to explain the complex phenomenon of semantic variation and change. The different focuses of these approaches, however, are by no means mutually exclusive. The various perspectives can be complementary (see Fischer 1997a), and combined in an integrative way they can provide more detailed insights into semantic variation and change. A multidimensional analysis can take advantage of the potentials of these different approaches and can offer more profound explanations. The subsequent analyses in chapters 4 and 5 reveal that a multifaceted description is necessary to fully account for the observational evidence of semantic change. Even if particular mechanisms are more dominant than others, a multidimensional perspective has to be adopted in the study of a complex linguistic phenomenon such as semantic change.

The idea of using integrative approaches is not an innovative thought, neither is the insight that semantic change is a complex phenomenon (see Meillet (1921 [1905/06], in Dinser 1974: 24). Furthermore, the term semantic change itself implies diverse ‘facts’ and therefore multi-dimensional analyses are required according to Meillet. Burkhardt (1991: 16) even maintains that semantic change itself is of a ‘combinatory’ nature. Several other linguists have emphasised the usefulness and the necessity of integrative, combinatory approaches to semantic change (e.g. Stern 1931: 1, Waldron 1967: 128, Nyckees 2000: 31; 37, Györi 2002: 147). As formulated by Waldron (1967: 128) a “chain of causation” in semantic change reveals multifaceted determinants “and at each level we should get a different answer to the question ‘Why did this word change its meaning?’” (Waldron 1967: 128).

Blank (1999b: 70) has come to the conclusion that

recent developments in pragmatics and semantics (esp. cognitive semantics) should be integrated whenever they support classifying concrete examples and further theorizing in this domain of historical semantics.

Most recently Kienpointner (2004: 88f) has also pointed out the necessity of a combinatory approach regarding the question of universality or cultural specification with regard to metaphors of emotions. He speaks of the ‘necessary combination of different descriptive approaches’ (Kienpointner 2004: 88, my translation). A similar argument has been provided by Burkhardt (1991: 33) who states that the ‘endogenous and exogenous causes of meaning change are far too complex and cannot be described adequately by a single theory’. For this reason, the present study favours an integrative approach which will show that ‘different answers’ (cf. Waldron 1967: 128) which are obtained from different perspectives come to terms with the multidimensionality of meaning developments. The subsequent analysis does not aim at providing different answers gained from different approaches, but a more comprehensive answer incorporating different perspectives (for a discussion and evaluation of such an approach see Nerlich and Clarke 1992, Fischer 1997a). As Györi (2002: 147) has already pointed out
“a comprehensive explanation of semantic change involves three aspects, cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural.”

In Nerlich and Clarke (1992) a method is presented to show how traditional and cognitive semantics can be used in combination to analyse semantic change. The authors claim that “most cases of semantic change exhibit a mixture of […] semantic shifts” (Nerlich and Clarke 1992: 204-205).

‘Most cases’ is not clearly defined and this is one of the major difficulties in historical semantics. With regard to predictability and regularity, there is no claim to absoluteness. Furthermore, it is indeed the case that meaning changes cannot be pinned down to one specific mechanism involved. The problem with Nerlich and Clarke (1992), however, is the unsystematic investigation of non-related individual words such as bureau, panel, fair and nice which are provided as study examples; structural considerations such as parallel or related developments affecting groups of words or even entire lexical fields are not included. Only in combination with sufficient data and related words of one domain can research into diachronic semantics gain more detailed insights as to which mechanisms are involved in general. However, as exemplified by Meillet (in Dinser 1974: 28), linguistic, structural conditions provide the possibility of semantic change, and can be considered necessary but not sufficient conditions.

Contrarily, approaches confined to pragmatic or cognitive points of view tend to downplay the importance of socio-cultural factors which might be the ultimate catalysts for both pragmatic and cognitive mechanisms. Therefore, an integrative study is justified as it attempts to close explanatory gaps resulting from a kind of restricted ‘one-way’ perspective, or to put it in the words of David Crystal (2004: 1):

The real story is much, much bigger. [...] for in the history of something as multifaceted as a language, there are always several trends taking place simultaneously.

This means that an integrative approach is an attempt to cover a wide range of possible explanations by taking into account a panoply of different aspects which are involved in semantic change which is “not a straightforward” (Geeraerts 1983: 17) linguistic phenomenon. Furthermore, it seems to represent a more flexible means of unfolding the mechanisms at work. Restriction to a specific focus is thus avoided. Although an integrative point of view might at first seem eclectic, it is open to interdisciplinary perspectives and more flexible explanations.

3.6 Summary
For the purposes of this investigation the semantic field has been restricted to lexical items expressing the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ in medieval English, which are both covered by the unmarked term wealth. This restriction is required as WEALTH is a huge semantic field and the scope of the present study is limited.
Some important print and electronic sources such as the *TOE, DOEC, CME, MED* and *OED* which have been recently compiled or are still being compiled are used both as lexicographical and historical text collections. A wealth of ‘corpus-based’ data is required for quantitative analyses of semantic variation and change in Old and Middle English. Quantitative evidence, however, has to be integrated into a qualitative explanation of diachronic semantic developments.

The Saussurean distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations is applied to diachronic semantics. Both linguistic and socio-cultural aspects are examined and applied to unfold reasons for variation and mechanisms of change. Embedded into the theoretical framework of an integrative approach to semantic change the results are evaluated.

While different types of variation are characteristic of the early language stage under investigation, the databases facilitate lexico-semantic studies to some extent. Even though considerable manual work remains, diachronic semantic discussions are facilitated by electronic corpora. The ultimate aim of the present study is to supply a rich integrative approach to semantic variation and change.
4 Historical lexico-semantic analyses in the realm of wealth

4.1 Preliminaries and section outline

The following chapter provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of lexemes denoting the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ with regard to lexico-semantic variation and change in Old and Middle English. The discussion examines words selected with the help of the Old and Middle English databases as described in chapter 3, while data from the OED quotations database occasionally serve as a control corpus to show lexico-semantic developments and general tendencies beyond the medieval – i.e. the post-1500 – period. The analysis also takes into account contextual and collocational uses of the lexemes, aiming at a thorough and systematic description of the contextually enriched meanings of the lexemes under investigation.

The TOE lists the following lexical items expressing the concept of ‘rich’: gifig, maga, rice, gesælig, spedig, weleþig, welig and the specified state of being ‘rich in (worldly) goods’: æhtspedig, æhtwelwig, woruldspedig, woruldwelig. For the concept ‘very rich, opulent’ the subsequent lexemes are listed in the TOE: eadig, felarice, full welig, oferwelig, toflowende and þurhspedig, as well as specific kinds of wealth such as goldspedig, landspedig, ceapeadig, cornsælig and feohstrang (Roberts and Kay 2000: 644). In the course of the Middle English period, new word formations such as wealthy, as well as various French and Latinate loan words bear witness to lexico-semantic changes.

As the lexemes are listed out of context in the thesaurus, it will be necessary to investigate these items with regard to their syntagmatic relations and semantic variation. Furthermore, the list shows quite a number of different words expressing the concept of ‘rich’ in Old English, as already pointed out by Leisi (1959: 315f). Apart from rich itself the remaining OE lexemes of the list have not survived into Modern English or only few of them are used in different meanings as in the case of MoE silly (OE gesælig, ME seli) and MoE speedy (OE spedig, ME spedi). In the case of MoE wealthy, the dictionaries argue in favour of a new analogical formation and do not consider OE weleþig as the original form.

With regard to the concept ‘poor’ the TOE lists the following lexemes: beþearfende, beþearfod, earm, fealog, feasceaf, feasceafig, hean, medspedig, næftig, þearfende, þearfendlic, þearflic, unrice, wædla, wædlig, wædligend, wanhafal, wanspedig, woruldppearfende; furthermore the following words are listed under the concepts ‘poor, without means’: feohleas, hafenleas, heanspedig, unspedig; while nacod is also listed for ‘[l]acking clothing, poor, needy’ (Roberts and Kay 2000: 645). This list shows the panoply of OE lexemes expressing different kinds of poverty and the lexical items seem to be even more numerous than those for the concept ‘rich’. The concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ imply a wide range of different types of ‘wealth’ in a wider sense: spiritual and emotional wealth, social rank, as well as material wealth. As most of the words listed above are polysemous, it becomes clear that the concept of material wealth is coupled with a number of different concepts (see Leisi 1959: 316; cf. Introduction of this study). In general, the words listed for the concept ‘poor’ are by now obsolete, except for some native relics such as needy, for example. The French loan poor has
completely occupied the lexical scene. Furthermore, the element have as found in OE words such as naeftig or wanhafole, for example, still survives in Present-day English usage to some extent.

Section 4.2 summarises evidence on different hapax legomena and rarely used lexemes in the semantic field of wealth, i.e. the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ are lumped together in this section. Section 4.3 and its sub-sections, on the contrary, are dedicated to the concept ‘rich’ and the investigation of different, frequently used lexemes denoting the concept, while section 4.4 and its subsections are concerned with the analysis of the lexical expressions of the concept ‘poor’.

4.2 Accidents in lexical history: hapaxes and other cruxes
A number of hapax legomena, as well as other specified and highly infrequent lexemes denoting the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ can be found in the semantic field of wealth. Their occurrence is not statistically significant, as they are attested only marginally in the medieval data. Nevertheless, their existence raises a number of interesting questions and the words are therefore briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

The form “gifine” glossing Latin compotem (Meritt 1945, “Isidore, Synonyma” no. 21, gloss 7) is one of the fifteen glosses to Isidore’s Synonyma contained in the Canterbury manuscript MS Harley 110 (cf. Holthausen 1889: 171), dated to the 10th century (Ker 1957: 304, no. 228). Gifig is defined as “in possession of, rich” (Napier 1903-1906: 297; see also Bosworth and Toller 1954 and Hall 1960: 154), but the form gifig as such is not attested in Old English (cf. Holthausen 1889: 171). The semantic components of the Latin lemma (see Marchant and Charles 1952: 114 for further detail) show a certain relation between wealth and power, a crucial aspect which can be observed for other lexemes such as rice (see section 4.3.1) and maga (see this section) as well. The token “gifine” found in the DOEC is probably a free derivation from related words; another possibility is the glossator’s free translation of the Latin text, as Latin compos is otherwise translated as wilfægen ‘glad’ (see e.g., Zupitza 1880: 57, line 15 and Gneuss 1968: 300, hymn 33, verse 4). Contrarily, the attested form could probably reflect either continental influence or a specific dialectal use. Whether “gifine” should be classified as a nonce-word or a nonce-formation is very speculative. However, a definite answer can unfortunately not be provided at this stage, as a further detailed discussion is beyond the scope of

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65 A number of rarely used lexemes such as unrice and spedig-compounds among others are integrated in the corresponding sections discussing their antonyms (rice, spedig etc.).
66 See Holthausen (1889: 171) and Holthausen (1974: 128) for further details on this variant form of OE gifig.
68 Holthausen (1889) and Ker (1957) assign the glosses to the British Museum; the manuscript is now in the British Library in London (cf. Sciacca 2002: 104). Apart from MS Harley, Sciacca (2002: 104) lists eight manuscripts containing Old English glosses to Isidore’s Synonyma.
70 See Hall (1960: 154) for related words.
71 For definitions of wilfægen see Hall (1960: 409) and Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1224).
72 A nonce-formation is a conscious invention or accidental use for one occasion only (cf. Crystal 2003: 315; Hansen et al. 1982: 37; Štekauer 2002: 97).
this study. Suffice it to say that glossing is largely guided by individual inferences revealing individual preferences for lexical choices.

This is also demonstrated by the restrictive use of *naftig* and *næfig* (see the glosses to the Lindisfarne Gospel of John, chapter 12, verse 5 and chapter 13 verse 29; Skeat 1871-87, for example), translating Latin *egenus*.73 These isolated examples show that the word is typical of the glossators of the Northumbrian Lindisfarne and Rushworth Gospels,74 as well as the glossator(s) of Ælfric Bata’s *Colloquies* and the *Liber Scintillarum*. Consequently, these highly restricted and infrequent occurrences point to the fact that the lexemes – both adjective and noun, as well as the verbal contraction – were not very familiar in general. As the majority of the occurrences are restricted to the Lindisfarne Gospels, the lexemes apparently reveal a regional, Northumbrian use specifically of either the glossator or the copying scribe, or at least a specialised monastic, sophisticated use.

The *MED* quotations database still attests an isolated occurrence of the noun *naft* ‘poverty’ (see *Vices and Virtues*, Holthausen 1888: 41, 20, see *MED*, *nafte*, n.). Hall (1920: 443) could be right in claiming that a work of mid-south or south-western origin was adapted by a scribe from the northern South-East. This version in turn was then copied by the scribes of the Stowe manuscript according to Hall (1920: 443). Either the scribe was familiar with the old literature and therefore deliberately used this ‘archaic’ word or an OE exemplar of the treatise could have existed. Unfortunately, these explanations are mere speculations; what seems certain, however, is that the language of the ME text of *Vices and Virtues* is more archaic than the one actually used at the time of the copying (cf. Hall 1920: 443f). The *OED* does not list the noun *naft* and it therefore seems that the noun is an OE relic and is not considered a ME word by the *OED* compilers, as only words which have survived at least into Middle English are usually included in the dictionary. The ultimate and early obsolescence of *naftijg* has been described by Oberdörffer (1908: 23) as the result of loss of (etymological) associations, i.e. the contracted form could no longer be identified (etymologically) and was ultimately replaced by the more precise and simpler French loan *povre*. But Oberdörffer’s argument is a bit too far-fetched. First, *naftijg* is highly restricted in terms of text type (gloss) and regional or scribal use, and was consequently no candidate to spread. The French loan word *poor* does replace a number of Anglo-Saxon words from the 13th century onwards. However, not only lexical change, but also the semantic change of further words influences the loss of the native lexeme. In Middle English, Latin *egenus* is frequently translated by *nedy* (see also section 4.4.5).75 Consequently,
it is oversimplified to suggest that ‘poor’ replaced _næftig_. Second, corpus evidence shows that only the nominal and adjectival uses are highly infrequent in the OE database, while the verbal contractions of the verb _nabban_ are attested in 578 matches in the _DOEC_. Therefore, the verbal stem _næf-_ must have been familiar generally, while the nominal and adjectival uses were less common. Evidence from the _MED_ and the _CME_ also demonstrates that the verbal contraction was still very commonly used.

The compounds _ceapeadig_ and _feohstrang_ ‘rich in cattle or goods’ (see Fehr 1909: 10), as well as _cornsælig_ literally denoting ‘wealthy in corn’ or ‘blessed with corn’ are further examples of isolated lexemes. _Ceapeadig_ (see _Maxims I_, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 160, line 107) is defined by Hall (1960: 65) as “rich, wealthy”, while Bosworth and Toller (1954: 148) provide the definition “rich in goods/ cattle.” _Ceap_ has several meanings: first, cattle; but it also denotes possession or property, bargain, purchase and payment among others (cf. Hall 1960: 65; see also Fehr 1909: 4-5). Thus, the compound _ceapeadig_ literally means ‘blessed with cattle/ possession or money’. _Feohstrang_ is restricted to glosses (see Hale 1978, Prose 3, line 61; Kindschi 1955, gloss 572 and gloss 103). Both _ceap_ and _feoh_ denote property or possessions; _feoh_ ‘cattle’ is thus a symbol for the whole property (see Fehr 1909: 4-5), but both terms can also be used to refer symbolically to money, i.e. to the value of the exchanged goods in early Old English (Fehr 1909: 9).

_Cornsælig_ is attested in a gloss to the so-called collective lunars (Förster 1944: 103), translating Latin _granosus_. Förster suggests that the hapax “corngesælig” probably is a kind of ‘stop-gap’ (see Förster 1944: 103, footnote 5). Cockayne (1866) translated the adjective as ‘rich in corn’. But Latin _granosus_ can only mean ‘grainy’ according to Förster, a metaphorical sense relating to humans (‘robust’), however, is not attested. As most of the manuscript versions read _gratiosus_ ‘popular’, Cockayne (1866) already classified _granosus_ as “a misreading for ‘gratiosus’” (as quoted in Förster 1944: 103, footnote 5).

Hapaxes as well as glosses in general reveal crucial aspects of how texts were interpreted, what kind of (pragmatic) inferences were implied and what could possibly have motivated the actual translation into the vernacular. Thus, the creativity of the author, translator and glossator is reflected in these ‘nonce-formations’.

As was already pointed out in the Introduction of this study, wealth in Old English was not conceived as a purely _economic_ phenomenon indifferent to ethical values, but it also functioned as an indicator of personal or kinship honour; and authority is always coupled with material wealth (cf. Leisi 1959: 316). Leisi’s observations predominantly figure in the semantics of OE _rice_ (see section 4.3.1).

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76 The type _næf_- and its various inflectional endings were checked in the corpus.
77 The negative verbal contractions indicated in the _MED_ (see _MED_ entry _haven_, v.) were checked in the two databases. While the _MED_ quotations database yielded 286 occurrences, the _CME_ supplied 626 matches. See also _OED_, _have_, v., A.9 and the _OED_ entries †nad, nadde, nade; †nave.
78 This second meaning shows a metonymic shift from sense 1; as cattle were one of the principle means of (economic) exchange, the ‘value’ of the ‘product’ developed as a new sense.
79 With regard to the Boethius glosses (Hale 1978), see Chaucer’s translation of the passage in question in his ME version of the _Consolatio_ (Benson 1988: 424) for comparative purposes.
and in the OE adjective maga ‘strong’ or ‘powerful’ (see Bosworth and Toller 1954: 664 and Hall 1960: 228).

OE maga does not survive in ME, and the ultimate obsolescence of the adjective could have been caused by homonymic clash of OE adjective maga meaning ‘strong’ and the noun meaning ‘relative’ and ‘stomach’. On the one hand, the noun in the sense of ‘relative’ co-occurs with the adjective ‘strong’ in OE legal texts and could have led to confusion. The noun maga in the sense of ‘stomach’, on the other hand, is clearly restricted to medical texts and charms, although isolated uses are also attested in Vercelli homily no. 7 (Scragg 1992, line 94), for example. But the more plausible explanation for the ultimate disappearance of the adjective maga is provided by the fact that it was not frequently used in OE and that it is mainly restricted to a small number of (specific) texts.

In the DOEC, maga and its opposite unmaga mainly occur in antonymic pairs, such as se maga and se unmaga, for example, in Anglo-Saxon legal texts (see Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]).80 This phrase seems to represent a kind of quasi-legal formula81 which can be used in a general sense of ‘all, everybody’ (see section 10 of Episcopus, Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 478). Mincoff (1933: 50) defines the legal examples as ‘strong’ and as ‘high in rank, powerful’. These two senses reveal the close relation between physical strength and the figurative strength in terms of socio-political power. In total, only 7 occurrences of the adjective maga have been found in the whole DOEC, while 4 examples reveal the aforementioned quasi-legal, formulaic use.82 Depending on context, maga can be used either for emphasis of socio-political status (see VI Æthelred and Episcopus, Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 258 and 478 respectively) or physical ability (see II Cnut 68.1, in Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 354).83 Liebermann (1960b [1903-16]: 138) defines the adjective maga as ‘rich in possessions, of high rank’, and despite the Latin originals he favours the sense ‘less rich’ for “læssa maga” in Ælfred and Guthrum (section 3) as well as in II Cnut (71.5) (see Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 126 and 212 respectively) – in contrast to Mincoff (1933: 50). Socio-cultural aspects can provide further insights as to which sense is more plausible here. The corresponding sections of the legal code in Ælfred and Guthrum deal with financial compensations (section 3). The preceding section 2 makes explicit mention of the fines which have to be paid as wergeld.84 This type of compensation for a number of crimes can be regarded as a ‘measure of value’ in Anglo-Saxon legal codes according to Wood (2002: 77).85 Even if a largely non-monetary system prevails at the time of the legal text, this...

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80 In addition to the legal texts, the antonymic pair is also attested once in the Handbook for the Use of a Confessor (see Fowler 1965: 19); this instance is not attested in Mincoff (1933).
81 See also eadig – earm, for example in section 4.3.5.
82 The forms checked are of the type mag*, further spelling variants are not included. Mincoff (1933: 50) lists 5 occurrences of the adjective maga in legal texts.
83 These senses are also reinforced by the Latin versions Quadripartitus and Consiliatio Cnuti respectively (see Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 478 and 355).
84 In this section the value of “VIII halfmearcum” refers to gold (see Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 126, see also OED, mark, n.2 and half-mark and Hall 1960: 260). It seems that in this 9th-century legal text, ‘half-mark’ is used as a measure of value.
85 Wood exemplifies with the help of the earliest legal texts by Æthelbert of Kent that the value of “50 shillings”, for example, only represents “an evaluation of the crime” (Wood 2002: 78) as the economic system was non-
does not necessarily exclude the sense ‘wealthy’; consequently, both socio-political and material ‘power’ can be inferred here.

The corresponding antonym unmaga is used in the sense ‘weak, unable, also with regard to possessions’ in legal texts (see Liebermann 1960b [1903-16]: 229; see also Hall 1960: 382). As already shown in the preceding discussion of maga, it becomes clear that the legal texts reveal both the socio-political and physical components of unmaga. Mincoff (1933: 50) only lists 4 occurrences of unmaga in legal texts, defining them as ‘weak, low’ and ‘minor’, ‘intellectually weak’, while 14 occurrences of unmaga are attested in the DOEC. Apart from the four legal and instructional uses of unmaga mentioned above, further matches are found in two different versions of *Vercelli Homily* no. 9 (Scragg 1992), the OE *Esther* (Assmann 1889) and in different OE Psalter versions of Psalm 36, verse 14 (see Kimmens 1979, Roeder 1904, Harsley 1889 and Campbell 1974). Although Latin inops can mean both ‘poor’ and ‘weak’, the word unmaga seems to be used in the sense of ‘the weak’ in Psalm 36, verse 14, as the aspect of poverty is already supplied by the double gloss of þearfa or wædla. In any case, unmaga and its near-synonyms refer to the same social group or rank, particularly those who are not in power or of high rank regarding both socio-political and material power.

The ME data attests only two isolated uses of unmawe, probably derived from OE (un)maga according to the MED. The two occurrences are restricted to the ME romance *Sir Firumbres* (Herttage 1879, lines 2658 and 2766). The word is used in a specialised military sense in Middle English (see MED, unmawe, adj. and OED, uncumawe, a.). As the version of *Sir Firumbres* is of late-medieval provenance (14th century), it seems very likely that the translator used this native word either as an archaism, particularly for stylistic and rhetorical reasons, or as a mark of local colour using the Germanic word unmawe in the translation. The adjective seems to be a dialectal survival or a relic in the oral tradition to which the ME translator recurred.

A doubtful inclusion in the TOE and DOE is the form felarice, which is not attested in the DOEC at all, neither in Hall (1960) nor Bosworth and Toller (1954). The only evidence found in the OE database are 3 tokens of fela rice – spelled in two words – used in Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies*. 

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86 Variant forms were considered; the two occurrences in the sense of ‘orphan’ have been included here; the type unmæge is not included here, neither is the scribal error “hu magon” in the *Vitellius Psalter* (see Rosier 1962, Psalm 36, verse 14).


88 In the OE Psalters the vernacular gloss translates Latin inops ‘weak, poor’. In contrast to the OE versions using þearfa and unmaga, see the Wycliffite version of the psalm in question (Forshall and Madden 1850, CME). For helpless in the sense of ‘poor’, see OED, helpless, a., sense 1 and MED, helpless, adj., sense b).

89 This military sense could have been influenced by the OE noun mægen ‘army’ (cf. Mincoff 1933: 46f).


91 Orthographic variation has been taken into account. See also Roberts and Kay (2000: xxi) on non-identified hapaxes.
exclusively (see e.g., “Third Sunday after Epiphany”, Clemoes 1997: 247, line 170), in the sense of ‘many of the rich men’. Neither the MED nor the CME yield any occurrences, so the existence of the word in Old English is very implausible. Consequently, I am not sure whether the inclusion of the word in the TOE and the DOE is justified, as the existence of the compound could not be verified and the Latin glosses favour the meaning given above.

The adjective weleþig is attested twice in the entire DOEC. The occurrences are restricted to two Old English prophecies (see Förster 1912a: 299 and Förster 1912b: 21). Weleþig can relate both to social standing and to material wealth. Due to its close similarity to ME welþi, Förster suggests that one might immediately think of the meaning ‘rich’. I am not sure, however, whether weleði is the predecessor of ME welði. Both the MED and the OED claim a morphological change of the noun weal by probable analogy with health (see MED, welth(e), n. and OED, wealth, n.). The adjective is attested in the MED quotations database only from the 15th century onwards, thus it seems not very plausible that ME welthi represents a continuation of weleþig. As the OE texts do not represent original formulations, two late Latin versions strengthen the sense ‘wealthy’, as they both read diues (Förster 1912a: 302). The element of superstition is characteristic of fortune telling, and therefore such texts are subject to individual and personal interpretations. This in turn means that the actual meaning of the text largely depends on the readers’ inferences.

The hapax þurhspedig “very wealthy” (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 1079) is attested in Ælfric’s Catholic homily Dedicatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis (see Clemoes 1997: 465, line 8) exclusively. The supposed nonce-word þurhspedig is an isolated, idiosyncratic use by Ælfric, which could be interpreted as a direct loan translation from Latin perdives. But the Latin source on which Ælfric’s homily is based reads “vir praedives” according to Godden (2000: 282). One assumption could be that Ælfric misread praedives for perdives and therefore rendered the word as þurhspedig. Or þurhspedig was motivated by analogy to various other adjectival compounds of quality with þurh- as intensifying prefix. Although þurhspedig is not attested in the MED, the dictionary reveals the productivity of the prefix thurh- in Middle English. Compounds with thurh- figure in 110 entries in the MED. However, only 8 adjectival compounds are attested, while the majority of matches reveal

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92 See also Ælfric’s homilies for Annunciation (Clemoes 1997: 288, line 203) and Saint Andrew (Clemoes 1997: 510, lines 96ff).
93 See glossary in Godden (2000: 708). See also Godden’s commentary on these three homilies (2000; I.6; I.13 and I.38).
94 In an early pilot study only the token weleþig was checked; spelling variants were not taken into account, which consequently led to the premature conclusion that the word did not figure in the DOEC (cf. Kossmann 2004: 184).
95 On the controversy on the etymological origin of weleði see Förster (1912a: 299, footnote 2) and Förster (1912a: 304).
96 The prefix often renders Latin per-, sometimes also trans- (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 1078). See also Ingersoll (1978: 126ff) on þurh- as an intensifying prefix. Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1079) also point to the lexical variation in the Blickling Homilies (see Saint Michael, Morris 1874-80, line 25). The Latin version of the Blickling Homily reads vir praedives (Godden 1990: 49). See also the ME Early South-English Legendary (St. Michael, Horstmann 1887: 300, line 8) for lexical variation.
97 See the Liber scintillarum (Getty 1969, gloss no. 1) and the glosses to Aldhelm’s De laude virginitatis (Napier 1900, No. 1, glosses 155; 2600; 3434 and 4136), for example.
verbal compounds. Although the prefix *thurh-* was still productive in Middle English, other linguistic means are chosen to express the sense ‘very wealthy’; in addition, the semantic change of *spedi* reveals that the word is no longer associated with the concept of wealth in Middle English.

The expression *full welig* ‘very rich’ is only attested in King Alfred’s OE version of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* (Sedgefield 1899: 24, chapter 11, line 7). The proem to the vernacular translation states that King Alfred was the translator of the *Consolation*, and he explicates that he sometimes translated word by word and sometimes sense by sense (Sedgefield 1899: 1, line 2). A comparison with the Latin original version of the passage in question demonstrates that King Alfred’s vernacular version is a free (‘nonce’-)translation according to sense. Although the adjective *welig* is attested until the 15th century in the *MED*, Chaucer translates the passage in question differently, using mainly Romance loan words (see Chaucer’s ME version *Boece*, Benson 1988: 412; Book 2, Prose 4, line 84f). The Romance words clearly reveal the restructuring of the native word-stock and the vast lexical change in late Middle English.

Further hapaxes are attested such as *woroldwelig* (see Napier 1903-1906: 335 and Hall 1960: 420; see “In Lentania maiore”, Bazire and Cross 1982, line 47) and *oferwelig*. Although the *TOE* lists the latter among the lexemes expressing the concept ‘rich’, no examples are attested in the *DOEC*. The only form attested is *o[ef]r[wel]gan* ‘very rich’ in MS Junius 85, folio 35b, line 16 listed in Napier (1903-1906: 314). According to Napier ofe stands at the edge of the parchment and the lost r was certainly written (Napier 1903-1906: 314). The *DOEC* actually contains the same source: the edition of two OE apocrypha (Willard 1967 [1935]) from the Junius Manuscript 85/86 fols. 25 and following. In contrast to Napier’s attested form *o[ef]r[wel]gan*, Willard’s edition simply reads *welgan* (lines 407ff), which might reflect a misreading of the manuscript. Possibly, the partial prefix *ofe* had no longer been decipherable at the time of the edition. The ME data attests the adjective *overwel* meaning “exceedingly well off, very fortunate” (*MED*, *overwel*, adj.), as well as the adverb *overwel* (see *MED*, *overwel*, adv.) and the noun *overwele* (see *MED*, *overwele*, n.).

The noun is only attested in two different manuscript versions of the *Cursor Mundi* (Morris 1874 I: 174-175, line 2901). The adjective is attested in one example only (*Al es bot*, Hall 1895, line 12), while the adverb is used more commonly, perhaps due to its more general meaning. The matches attested in the *MED* quotations database range from the 14th to the 16th century. It is unlikely that the ME words are reflexes of the OE word because of the considerable temporal gap.

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98 In contrast to German, this word-formation process is now obsolete or archaic in English (see *OED*, *through*-). The *OED* attests a past participle *thorough-sped*, illustrated in an 18th- and a 19th-century quotation (see *OED*, *thorough*-).

99 Based on Book II, prose 4 of the Latin original (see Sedgefield 1899: 24; see Moreschini 2000: 38; 14). For a modern English translation of the OE version, see Fox (1999: 23).

100 The now obsolete noun *overweal* is not listed in a separate entry in the *OED*, and no quotation is provided to illustrate the noun (see *OED*, *over*-, senses 8.a. and 29.d.). An adjective *overwealy* is not attested in the dictionary at all. On the element *over*- see *OED*, *over*-, senses 25 and 26. In OE, numerous adjectives used this prefix to express the notion of excess (see *ofersælig* in section 4.3.2 and *oferflowende* in chapter 5 of this study, for example).

Poetic language also reveals a number of hapaxes and infrequent lexemes, such as the adjectives *feasceaft* “destitute, miserable, helpless, poor” and *feasceaftig* “destitute, poor” (Hall 1960: 113), as well as the hapax *fealog* (see Hall 1960: 112). The adjective *feasceaft* is composed of the two elements *fea*102 ‘few’ (cf. Hall 1960: 112) and *sceaft* ‘created being; creation, condition’ (cf. Hall 1960: 292), while the hapax *fealog* is composed of *fea* and *log (loh)* ‘place’ or ‘stead’ (cf. Hall 1960: 221, see Holthausen 1974: 206). Hall’s definition of *feasceaft* has been questioned by Robinson (1970: 109), however. Considering the different contexts in which the adjective is used, different inferences can indeed lead to semantic nuances in various (individual) interpretations of the texts (cf. Robinson 1970: 109).

The hapax *feasceaftig* is attested in *The Seafarer* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 144, line 26; see Hall 1960: 113), and the noun *feasceafnes* ‘poverty’ (cf. Hall 1960: 113) is only found in the glosses to Aldhelm’s prose *De Laude Virginitatis* (see Goossens 1974, line 1222 and Napier 1900, No. 1, gloss no. 1171; see also Derolez 1960: 86), translating Latin *paupertas*. The adjective *feasceaft*, however, is attested in 19 examples in the whole *DOEC* and occurs exclusively in texts from the Junius Manuscript, the *Exeter Book*, the *Beowulf*-Manuscript and the *Vercelli Book*. Roughly speaking, the manuscripts are dated to the late 10th century (Vercelli and Exeter) and the early 11th century (Junius, Beowulf).103 But as pointed out by Treharne (2004: 89) even if the texts of the *Vercelli Book* were copied towards the end of the 10th century they “need not all have been written in this period.” Consequently, the adjective could have been considered archaic at the time of copying in the late 10th and early 11th century and thus became obsolescent early in the OE period. The scribes were familiar with the traditional Anglo-Saxon oral culture and copied those ‘archaic’ words because they were specific to the OE traditional poetic language in terms of rhetorical effects and strongly motivated by alliterative rhyming patterns (see *Genesis A,B* lines 2173-2176, Krapp 1931: 65, for example).104 The common link between all the poems is the fact that people are *feasceaft* because of wars and battles, personal struggles and exile, but also because of immoral behaviour. The texts – be they heroic or religious – imply a kind of ‘extreme’ or ‘great’ deprivation, which means that *fea-* ‘little, few’ could be considered a litotes as *feasceaft* describes a kind of deprivation which can be characterised as desperate and very miserable.

The hapax legomenon *fealog* ‘destitute’ occurs in the poem *Guthlac* (cf. Hall 1960: 112) and its use seems to be semantically motivated by Guthlac’s hermitage, i.e. he dwells in an abandoned and solitary place, while alliteration also seems to influence the ultimate choice (see Krapp and Dobbie 1936, line 246). Usually, OE verse and prose texts describe exiles as *wreccas*, who are forced to lead a life in isolation. But *wrecca* can also be applied to a ‘voluntary exile’, i.e. a hermit (cf. Bosworth

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102 *Fea* is the contracted form of OE *feawa* and the word is also attested in other Germanic languages (see *OED*, few, a., etymology section; see also Holthausen 1974: 98). Besides, there seem to be regional constraints in Old English according to the *OED* (see *OED*, few, a., etymology section).

103 See Lockett (2002: 172) dating the Junius Manuscript to the 10th century.

104 For poetic formulas such as *freonda feasceaft* ‘destitute of friends’ and *(a)frefran feasceaft* see for example *Genesis A,B*, Krapp 1931: 63, line 2100 and *Andreas*, Krapp 1932a: 34, line 1128 respectively.
and Toller 1954: 1273; see also section 4.4.4 on wretch). But fealog gives testimony of early OE poetic language, and the word was chosen for stylistic and rhetorical reasons in the poetical account of Saint Guthlac, as this word appears to have best suited the poet’s creative intention.

Similarly, heanspedig and medspedig105 “poor” (Hall 1960: 174 and 232 respectively) are restricted to the OE poem Gifts of Men (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 137f, lines 9 and 26 respectively). The type of ‘poverty’ implied in these two adjectives refers to their abstract possession of talent or gift and not to material (concrete) possessions. The two hapaxes reveal rhetorical effects intended by the writer. The respective poem is rich in such adjectival compounds, almost every line of the poem contains a compositional adjective (see lines 8, 10, 36, 58 and 78, for example), revealing the author’s poetic creativity. The compounds seem to be influenced by the theme of the poem: human talents are manifold and often unique. Therefore, this diversity and perhaps uniqueness of certain talents can be expressed by a number of hapaxes in this poem such as medspedig, heanspedig and feþespedig, for instance. The poem Gifts of Men enumerates a host of different talents, which are embedded into an antithetical structure. This antithesis is even reflected in the compounds themselves (hean-spedig and med-spedig).106

The semantic element ‘have’ is related to both wealth and poverty. Hall (1960: 166) defines the adjective hafenleas as “destitute, needy, poor”; a similar definition is supplied in the MED (havenles, adj.(2), sense 2.a.).107 The sense relating to poverty (see OED, haveless, †havenless, a., sense 1) is attested until the 15th century according to the OED, while Scottish and dialectal uses of this lexeme are still attested for the 19th century (see OED, haveless, †havenless, a., sense 2). Despite considerable semantic changes of the verb have (see grammaticalisation of have, used as an auxiliary) possession in the wider sense has been preserved as one possible relation (see OED, have, v., B.). In colloquial MoE usage, the nouns have and have-got can be used to refer to persons or nations who have or possess (see OED, have, n., sense 2.), while have-not – usually used in the plural – is used to express the opposite (see OED, have, n., sense 2.).108

Hafenleas is not very frequent in the DOEC, neither in the MED. In general, the adjective is restricted to religious discourse, except for one nominal match in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Irvine 2004, annal 675, lines 23ff). More than half of all OE occurrences are used in texts by Ælfric, especially in his homiletic texts. The word is preferably used in homilies, while minor occurrences are found in saints’ lives, in monastic rules, as well as in glosses.109 The MED quotations database reveals only isolated examples of the adjective havenles. Almost half of the matches attested for the adjective

105 See also Holthausen (1974: 218).
106 On parallels to Gregory’s Pastoral Care (chapter 32) in terms of rhetorical effects (antithesis) and the pedagogical function of the text see Short (1976: 500f).
107 See also the etymology section of the OED (OED, haveless, †havenless, a.). See also ME havand “wealthy” (MED, have, v., sense 1.a. (a) and (g)).
108 The phrase have(s) and have-not(s) is attested for the 19th and 20th centuries in particular, the last quotation provided in the OED online is dated to 2000 as of 09/10/06.
109 In contrast to the other OE psalters, only the Lambeth Psalter reveals hafenleas as a lexical alternative in Psalm 11, verse 6 (Lindelöf 1909a). On multiple glossing in the Lambeth Psalter see Lindelöf (1914: 47f).
and the noun are used in 12th- and 13th-century versions of OE homilies, as well as in the Winteney version of the *Benedictine Rule* (Schröer 1888). But the word still occurs in the late 14th century alongside Romance *poor* in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (see Macaulay 1900-01, lines 2506, 2616 and 6968). But the use of *havenles* seems to have been ultimately motivated by the rhyming pattern in this text, as only isolated matches are revealed. In various other 15th-century manuscripts the word is still attested. But even in the beginning of the 16th century the adjective is still attested (see *Belle Dame Sans Mercy*, Furnivall 1866, line 605) in the *MED* quotations database. The *CME* confirms the infrequent and restricted use of the adjective. In the *OED*, the adjective is attested in isolated examples in the quotations database until 1450. There is a gap from this date onwards, as further rare examples are only attested in the 19th century. The reason for this gap can be attributed to the fact that the word is perhaps dialectal – thus it specifically occurs in spoken language – and the adjective is consequently represented only marginally in the written data of the *OED*.

Of course, *hafenleas* and *have-not* are not absolute synonyms as historical circumstances motivate the birth and death of new words, phrases and ultimately new senses. Still, what can be observed is the fact that practically the same ‘universal’ lexical tools are used to express the notions of poverty and wealth across different historical periods, but these tools appear in different shape at different times.

The component ‘have’ is also found in the OE adjective *wanhafol* “needy” (Hall 1960: 397) and its corresponding nouns. As stated in the *OED*, the prefix wan- was used to form a large number of words in Old English, and only one of these, *wansped*, survives into Middle English; none of the compounds has survived in Modern English. However, as the *OED* furthermore explicates, the prefix was extremely prolific in northern usage and its productivity seems to have continued well into modern usage (see *OED*, wan-). But it appears that none of the words is used currently (see *OED*, wan-). A list of northern dialect and Scottish words is given in the *OED*, based on dialect dictionaries (see for example Warrack and Grant 1911). The adjective *wanhafol* is restricted to Ælfric’s *Saints’ Lives* (Skeat 1881-1900; see also Hall 1960: 397). No evidence has been found in the *MED* quotations database or in the *CME*. Possibly, Ælfric’s choice of the adjective could be motivated by rhetorical and stylistic aspects, in particular by the use of an alliterative style (see Skeat 1881-1900: vif). It can therefore be claimed that both the textual restriction, rhetorical and stylistic reasons as well as the possible dialectal influence have to be

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10 The ratio between *havenles* and Romance “povere” is 3:53.
11 See the *Cursor Mundi* (Morris 1874-1878) and *St. Cuthbert* (Fowler 1891). While the date of composition of the *Cursor* is usually dated to the first quarter of the 14th century, the Vespasian MS is dated to the beginning of the 15th century by the *MED*. But the composition of *St. Cuthbert* is dated to the mid-15th century according to the dictionary. An important source from the 15th century is provided by the poem *King conseilles* (see Heuser 1965: 184). This text reveals proverbial character and thus reflects the traditional and oral culture (see Pritchard 1967: 75).
12 However, none of the presently discussed compounds is attested in Warrack and Grant (1911) or Craigie et al. (1937-2002). But prolific evidence of further wan- compounds is supplied by these two lexicographic sources.
13 For the nouns *wanhafolnes* and *wanhaf(e)nes* “want, hunger” (Hall 1960: 397) see the *Lambeth Psalter* glosses (Lindelöf 1909a, Psalm 33, verse 10 and Psalm 43, verse 24).
considered as the major reasons for the ultimate and early loss of the lexeme *wanhafol*, at least as evidenced in the written texts.

The previous discussion has shown that hapaxes and low frequency words show the importance of the translator’s and the author’s (perhaps also the scribe’s) pragmatic inferences and individual interpretations with regard to glosses and translations from Latin. Hapaxes, which are used in vernacular originals, also reveal the creative and imaginative power of the author. Most of the hapaxes reveal the stylistic, rhetorical and literary creative potential of individual lexemes, which served only one special occasion. This applies also to a number of vernacular glosses which also seem to be ‘nonce-formations’. These ‘accidents’ in the history of the English lexicon do not reveal any regular tendencies, the discussion has demonstrated that a certain number of cruxes remains. Despite these irregular observations several words selected from the semantic field of wealth – in a wider sense – reveal astounding generalising and regular tendencies.

4.3 Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of lexical items denoting ‘rich’ in Old and Middle English

4.3.1 OE *rice*: from power to wealth

The conceptual metaphor *MONEY IS POWER* is explicitly stated in an *OED* quotation from *The Strange Death of President Harding* (see *OED, money*, n., P3. Proverbs, g).\(^{114}\) The close link between political and ‘economic’ power has been exemplified in one of the previous paragraphs on OE *maga*. But a proper distinction between these two types of power in medieval English still is a semantic challenge as exemplified by OE *rice* (ME *riche*).\(^ {115}\)

The semantic development of OE *rice* has been discussed in two previous studies by Mincoff (1933) and Godden (1990) (see also chapter 2 of this study). Mincoff (1933: 3ff) restricted his analysis of *rice* to a ‘small’ number of texts and merely provided selective examples of *rice*\(^ {116}\) (see Mincoff 1933: 77-83), exemplifying in rough the different meanings of the OE adjective. A short discussion of *rice* follows in Mincoff (1933: 147-153), while Godden (1990) supplies an extensive analysis of *rice* revealing a “very close and mutual relationship between social change, semantic development and moral debate” (Godden 1990: 65), especially in texts by Ælfric.

Burnley (1992: 490) has suggested an assimilation of OE *rice* ‘powerful’ to the ‘new’ French sense ‘wealthy’. But Mincoff (1933) and Godden (1990) assume that the ultimate change took place in late Old English – although a number of examples and dubious cases make an early OE polysemy plausible, as also suggested by Mincoff (1933). The Robert dictionary of the history of the French


\(^{115}\) On the etymology of *rice* as an adoption of Celtic *rix* see the etymology section in the *OED* (rich, adj.); see also Serjeantson (1935: 55); Sheard (1954: 120); Barney (1977: 57-8); Hughes (1988: 69). See also Ris (1971: 9-18) on the etymology of German *reich*.

\(^{116}\) Different parts of speech are taken into account in Mincoff’s discussion.
language (Rey 2006: 3247) states that French *riche* had the meaning ‘powerful’ in Old and Middle French, referring to both political, social and material power. According to the dictionary the development of French *riche* in the sense of ‘having a lot of possessions’ is attested in the 11th century, while the semantic change in Old English is suggested around the 10th century (see also Mincoff 1933, Godden 1990). Godden (1990) and Mincoff (1933) have furthermore argued that *rice* shows an independent semantic change, i.e. independent with regard to influence from further languages such as French and German, which in turn reveal a parallel semantic development of the adjective. This common semantic tendency in various languages points to a generalising nature of the change. Based on evidence supplied by the two studies (Mincoff 1933, Godden 1990) and the subsequent analysis, it will become clear that Burnley’s claim (1992: 490) has to be refuted. The difficulty in determining to which extent *rich* was influenced by French is also stated by Crystal (2004: 146). The impact of French, however, could have played a role regarding the ‘new’ sense ‘splendid, magnificent’ in Middle English (see discussion of ME *riche* below). Hughes’ claim (1974: 8) that *rich* changes its meaning from powerful to wealthy “[f]rom the thirteenth century” has to be modified. The word changed its meaning well before this period and reveals a polysemous structure; both senses ‘powerful’ and ‘wealthy’ are used well into the 16th century according to the *OED* data. The core sense, however, is indeed ‘wealthy’ in later Middle English. Hughes (1988: 69) furthermore claims that the semantic change of *rich* reflects the increasing importance of money “as a source of power”. He does, however, not specify exactly when the change occurred. He simply refers to the fact that the ‘modern’ sense ‘wealthy’ can be traced to Old English (see Hughes 1988: 69). As stated by Godden (1990: 42) “a growing awareness of the place of wealth in society” can be observed in the late OE period, and people were also concerned about its moral implications. This becomes particularly evident in homiletic texts, where the moral judgement of worldly wealth is a prevailing motif. But these socio-cultural aspects are not the only factors in the semantic development of *rich* as will be shown in the following analysis.

The definitions and the textual sources provided in Hall (1960: 281) show that he also favours the polysemous structure of *rice* in the OE period. Bosworth and Toller (1954: 794) also attest both senses. The proportional frequencies of *rice* (*riche*) in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database are illustrated in the chart below, irrespective of the actual meanings. The different collocational uses and the different senses of *rice* are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

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117 Hughes (1974: 8) classifies the meaning change from ‘powerful’ to ‘wealthy’ as a ‘specialisation’. I disagree with this classification; why should ‘wealthy’ be more specialised than ‘powerful’. Perhaps Hughes thought of a ‘specialised’ kind of power in terms of material or moneyed power. Nevertheless, the change reflects no specialisation in my opinion, but rather a shift in focus based on a variety of factors.
The sense ‘powerful’ can be observed particularly in early OE heroic and religious poetry. As already pointed out by Godden (1990: 43), the adjective usually refers to God as ‘powerful ruler’ or to Jesus in religious poetry (e.g., Andreas, Krapp 1932a: 13, line 364 and Dream of the Rood, Krapp 1932a: 62, line 44 respectively). But apart from the reference to God, the adjective is also used to refer to worldly queens and kings as for example Queen Helena (Elene, Krapp 1932a: 77, line 411) or King Hrothgar (Beowulf, Dobbie 1953, line 310; see also Godden 1990: 43). Used with humans, the adjective normally refers to socio-political status in these early poems. Thus, rice characterises persons on the higher social scale. Whether material implications can be inferred – at least by the modern reader who is subject to ‘modern’ inferences – is debatable. In any case, the socio-political dimension is in the foreground in these early poetic texts, while further connotations are nevertheless possible as illustrated in the OE poem Juliana (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 113, line 19; see Godden 1990: 43f for a discussion). The use of “rice gerefa” in Juliana (line 19), for example, exemplifies the difficulty of separating socio-political power from wealth (cf. Godden 1990: 44). It seems to me that rice focuses on the socio-political status, while welig (lines 38 and 569 later in the poem) and æhtwelig (line 19) are reserved to refer to his material wealth specifically (see Godden 1990: 44). But words referring to socio-political status such as “gerefa” ‘senator’ (line 19) reveal that the sense ‘powerful’ is also plausible (cf. Godden 1990: 44). Consequently, the difficulty remains whether one or the other sense is

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118 The proportional frequencies in this chart and the subsequent figures are per 100,000 words if not indicated otherwise. Furthermore, orthographic and morphological variants have been considered (ryc(h)*, ric(h)*, rice*, rihc*, riec*, rik*, rech*, ruch*, see MED, riche, adj.). The OE noun rica ‘ruler, person who has influence’ (cf. Hall 1960: 281) has been included in the following quantitative account. The noun rice in the sense of “rule, reign, power, […]” (Hall 1960: 281) – translating Latin regnum in the various OE-Latin glosses – has been excluded here. As to the proportional frequencies in the MED quotations database, a note of caution is necessary. I have eliminated all multiple quotes and thus, the charts in this study reveal a slightly distorted picture regarding the proportional frequencies of the whole database. Variants from different manuscript versions and editions have been included in the quantitative account, though. I have mainly used the MED quotations database as a ‘window’, i.e. as a facilitated access, to the different texts and not in the proper sense of a ‘corpus’ in corpus-linguistic terms, as the quotations databases of the OED and the MED are not ‘proper’ corpora as such (see chapter 3 of this study). I have also included all OE examples from 12th- and 13th-century manuscripts included in the MED quotations database.

119 This also shows why a strict categorisation into the two different senses (‘powerful’ and ‘wealthy’) is difficult for the OE and the ME period, as a proper distinction is often subject to individual interpretation.
intended (see *OED*, *rich*, a., adv. and n., sense 1.a.; also quoted in Godden 1990: 43; see Mincoff 1933: 150). The OE-Latin glosses in the *DOEC*, however, provide a more clear-cut picture as to the different senses of OE *rice* in the glosses. The subsequent figure shows the frequency of the adjective *rice* and its Latin equivalents in the *DOEC* glosses.

![Figure 2: OE rice and Latin equivalents in DOEC glosses](image)

As shown in Figure 2, *rice* prototypically translates Latin *potens*, while *dives* is merely attested in some isolated matches. Nevertheless, *potens* is double glossed in a number of cases (see e.g., glosses to Book 3 of Boethius’ *De consolatione philosophiae* (Hale 1978) metre 5, line 1 and prose 9, line 44; *Canterbury Psalter*, Liles 1967, canticle 10, verse 7, for example). Such double glosses reveal the different connotations, such as the aspect of pride (*wlanc*) and socio-political power (*mihtig*). It is possible that these double translations could have functioned as disambiguation of *rice*, at least in those cases, where *rice* is written in first place (see Rosier 1962, canticle 9, verse 7).

The only examples from the glosses where *rice* is used as the vernacular equivalent of *dives* are the following: the *Lambeth Psalter* (Lindelöf 1909a, Psalm 9, verse 29), the OE *Prudentius Glosses* (Meritt 1959, gloss number 168) and the *Liber Scintillarum* (Getty 1969, chapter 58, sentence no. 47 and chapter 62, sentence no. 21). In the *Lambeth Psalter* (Lindelöf 1909a), the prototypical word for ‘wealthy’ – *welig* – is used first, *rice* is added as lexical alternative. But, as already pointed out by Mincoff (1933: 151), *dives* is most frequently translated by the prototypical lexeme *welig* (see also Godden 1990: 46). Nevertheless, these isolated examples show that the distinction between ‘powerful’ and ‘wealthy’ as such is not a straightforward one.

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120 Frequencies indicated in percent, relative of all occurrences of the adjective *rice* counted in the glosses as represented in the *DOEC*.

121 For further similar double glosses see Harsley (1889, psalm 71, verse 12). See also Roeder (1904, canticle 9, verse 7), Rosier 1962 (psalms 23, verse 8; 85, verse 14; 88, verse 9); Lindelöf (1909a, psalm 85, verse 14, psalm 126, verse 4). Note that Latin *potentes* is translated as *wlance* in Sisam and Sisam (1959, canticle 8, verse 7). Ris (1971: 44) has also pointed out that Latin *potentes* is rendered by *mihtig* in the more recent Psalter glosses instead of *rice*.

122 See similar OHG glosses as provided in Ris (1971: 38f).
Although a considerable number of glosses show that the meaning of ‘powerful’ is the (early) prototypical sense of OE *rice*, an early polysemy seems possible. Plausible reasons for this claim are of various kind: first, even if the Latin text shows an equivalent for ‘powerful’ (e.g., *potens*), we do not know whether the translator exclusively associated *potens* with (political) power or whether he [or she] might have had inferences which could also relate to the (material) wealth of this social rank in particular (cf. Godden 1990: 48). The same applies to Latin *dives*, which is glossed and translated as *rice* in the earliest vernacular prose texts, such as Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (cf. Godden 1990: 46).

As Godden correctly states, *welig* usually translates Latin *dives*, while *rice* is the ‘prototypical’ equivalent for Latin *potens* in the OE version of Bede’s *History* (cf. Godden 1990: 46). Probably the translator of the Latin text associated ‘the rich’ with those in power; in any case both *potens* and *dives* refer to the same group or rank of people, as maintained by Godden (1990: 47). He furthermore emphasises that, on the whole, Bede refers to birth and social rank rather than to material possessions in those contexts where *rice* translates *dives* (Godden 1990: 46). However, we cannot state with absolute certainty what the translator inferred and how he [or she] interpreted the Latin original. Despite the contexts and the Latin originals, which would favour the ‘old’ meaning in early prose texts according to Godden (1990), the connotation of material wealth could still have been implied (see Ris 1971: 54 on German *reich*). The prototypical and therefore dominant sense in early texts is ‘powerful, mighty’; but the secondary sense, which implies a close link to material possessions as one characteristic feature of powerful ranks, cannot be excluded. The claim of such an early polysemy of *rice* can also be reinforced by the previous case of *maga*, which shows that implications of wealth could marginally be inferred by the previous case of *maga*, which shows that implications of wealth could marginally be inferred in particular contexts (see previous section 4.2). But there are clear-cut cases in which the adjective is used in the sense of ‘wealthy’. Such examples are definitely represented in texts which take into account the parable of Lazarus (see Luke 16, 19-31), as, for example, in Vercelli homily no. 10 (see Scragg 1992: 192). Scragg (1992: 192) furthermore points to the popular theme of the transience of worldly wealth, which re-occurs in a number of other homiletic texts. In addition, the story of Zacheus (see Luke 19, 1-9) is another example which should be mentioned in this context. However, both meanings are implied with regard to Zacheus, as he is both ‘rich’ and of high rank (see Godden 1990 for a discussion of these examples). Furthermore, the sense ‘powerful’ is normally clear-cut in collocations with socio-political ranks, despite the ambiguous case in the OE *Juliana* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 113, line 19, see above). In *Esther* (Assmann 1889, line 1) and in the homily *The Transience of Earthly Delights* (Irvine 1993, line 126) the adjective refers to the king’s and the emperor’s ‘political’ power respectively. But more general expressions of the type *þaric* or *rican men* – which occur very frequently in the prose texts – are not clear-cut. Only the Latin sources can shed more light on the ‘prototypical’ sense. Furthermore, the contexts can help in

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123 Ris (1971: 57) suggests *rice* as an early vernacular equivalent for Latin *dives* in a specifically Christian sense (e.g., in Bede). What Ris means by ‘Christian sense’, however, is not clear to me.

124 See Ris (1971: 53) exemplifying that Latin words were often not understood or only in a vague sense.

125 See also Vercelli homily no. 10 (Scragg 1992: 196-213, “Tuesday in Rogationtide”, line 233).
determining the meaning more precisely. Also, in particular word pairs such as “se rica and welega” (Skeat 1871-87, Gospel of Mark, chapter 10 verse 25) *rice* seems to emphasise the aspect the socio-political power, while *welig* refers to wealth. But it is still obvious that the two (near-) synonyms refer to the same group of people. In addition, a number of examples reveal both the association of the ‘powerful rank’ and pride, such as in the *Sermo ad Anglos* (Bethurum 1957, line 114) and in *Law Grið* (Liebermann 1960a [1903-16], section 21; see also “Be rihtan cristendome”, Napier 1883, line 168), while the co-occurrence of *rice* and *æþele* in “De Paraceve” (Scragg 1992, Vercelli no. 1, line 355)\(^{126}\) and in the Benedictine Rule (Schröer 1885-8a: 103, chapter 59, line 10) emphasise the social status. As for the use with near-synonyms, Godden (1990: 50) refers to these synonymic pairs as a typical element of style in prose texts. But also the poetic use of variation should not be neglected here. The Latin originals as well as the contexts make a polysemous use plausible, however, the near-synonyms might also be used to disambiguate *rice* (cf. Godden 1990: 50). Thus the co-occurrence of *welig* and *rice* seems to show *rice* in its old sense, while *welig* exclusively means ‘wealthy’ at least in early texts. In King Alfred’s *Boethius* Book 3 Latin *dives* is always translated as *welig* (Godden 1990: 45). According to Godden there is a clear distinction between *welig* and *rice* by Alfred, and *rice* is therefore not used in the sense ‘wealthy’ in the OE *Boethius* (Godden 1990: 46). But in late textual evidence by Ælfric the co-occurrence of *rice* and *welig* reveals their use as alternatives (Godden 1990: 52). In the homily “The Healing of the Blind Man” (Irvine 1993, line 254), Ælfric uses both *welga* and *rice* for Latin *dives*. As Irvine (1993: 76) states “the word *rica* could imply ‘prosperous, rich’, rather than just ‘powerful’” (cf. section 4.3.4 on *welig*).

Apart from these synonymic word pairs, a number of antonymic ones are attested in the *DOEC* such as *rice* – *þearfa*, *rice* – *earm*, *rice* – *wædle*, *rice* – *unrice* and *rice* – *hean*.\(^{127}\) The first opposition – *rice* and *þearfa* – is mostly attested in Ælfric’s homilies and saints’ lives. As *þearfa* prototypically translates Latin *pauper* in the glosses (cf. section 4.4.5), it seems that *rice* refers to wealth in particular. The antonyms *rice* and *earm* co-occur only in the OE *Orosius* and in Ælfric. In this oppositional pair, the social dimension seems to be plausible (see Ris 1971: 154 for MHG), and this also seems to be an adequate interpretation for the combination of *wædla* and *hean*.

The antonymic pair *rice* – *unrice* is attested in *Law IV Eadgar* (Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]: 206ff, section 13.1) and the Winteney version of the Benedictine Rule (Schröer 1888, chapter 59). In contrast to Hall’s definition of *unrice* (1960: 383), Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1124) provide a wider range of senses for this adjective. The subsequent brief analysis will show that the wider definition is the more appropriate one. In the legal text (see above) the social status within the community or society in general is implied and therefore ‘powerful’ is the more plausible sense, as the formulaic phrase *earmum & eadegum* is exclusively used in the sense ‘poor and rich’ in this particular legal text.

\(^{126}\) Version edited from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 340, VercHom 1 MS. E.

\(^{127}\) And vice versa, i.e. *hean* – *rice*, for example. See also Weisweiler (1923: 304ff) and Wirth (1966: 95f) for antonymic pairs.
This is also reinforced by the Latin version provided in Liebermann (1960a [1903-16]: 208). In contrast to the aforementioned legal text, the OE versions of the Rule of St. Benedict (see Chapter 59, Schröer 1885-8a: 105, line 7, see also Wells Fragment, Schröer 1885-8b: 104, line 7) show that *unrice* can be interpreted as a polysemous word and that it can also be used in the sense “poor”. In contrast to these two versions of the Rule, the scribe of the 13th century Winteney version interestingly left a number of ‘archaisms’, while modernising, i.e. exchanging old words for new ones, in other places (Schröer 1888: xvii; see also Schröer 1888: xxvii). This can be observed in the different title in Winteney version for the chapter in question, while the text passage in question is left unchanged (see Schröer 1888: 121, line 117), apart from some minor orthographic and morphological differences. The variant spelling of ‘unrich’ in the Winteney version to some extent emphasises the transition from Old to Middle English (see Schröer 1888: xv), which is furthermore demonstrated by the inclusion of the Winteney version of the Benedictine rule in the MED quotations database.

The *OED* simply provides one quotation from the 19th century in the whole quotations database taken from William Morris’ translation of Virgil’s *Æneid* (1875) (see *OED*, *unrich*, a.). It seems that the adjective is felt to be archaic and is used for the purpose of archaic style. The highly infrequent use in both historical and modern periods can be explained by the fact that “the use of *un*- with short simple adjectives of native origin” is considerably restricted. The negative meaning is “naturally supplied by another simple word of an opposite signification” according to the *OED* (*OED*, *un-, prefix, sense 7.a.). As stated in the *OED*, the restriction described above results in “little or no tendency now to employ” (*OED*, *un-, prefix, sense 7.a.) forms such as *unrich* or *unspeedy*, for example.

The antonymic pair *rice – hean* ‘high and low’ – has been attested most frequently in the OE data (33 occurrences), in both prose and verse. The text types comprise legal texts – both secular and religious – homiletic and hagiographic writings, poetic and prose texts. Homiletic writings and the saints’ lives in general reveal the most frequent use (17 examples), while the legal text, the handbook for a confessor and the Institutes of Polity (Jost 1959) count merely 5 occurrences. The remaining 11 matches are isolated examples distributed across the previously mentioned texts. Whether the phrase refers to either social rank or to material wealth, or whether both meanings are implied seems to be

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128 See also Liebermann (1960a [1903-16]: 210-211). The two formulaic ‘phrases’ – *earm - eadig* as well as *rice - unrice* – are used in order to show the validity of the law for all people on the socio-economic and political levels (cf. Ingersoll 1978: 83 on the implication of the sense ‘everyone’).

129 The Latin version of the text reads *pauperiores* (cf. also Bosworth and Toller 1954: 1124), while all the OE translations reveal multiple translations, using three near-synonyms to render *pauperiores*. Schröer (1888: xxviii-xxix) pointed out that the transfer into the vernacular is not an exact translation; extensions and reductions are therefore common characteristics.

130 On the Winteney version see (Schröer 1888: xv and xxvi).

131 This text supplies the only two examples of *unrich* in the *MED*. For definitions of the adjective see *MED*, *unrice*, adj.


133 E.g., *Riddles* (Krapp-Dobbie 1936) among other poetic texts, the Biblical Deuteronomy (Crawford 1922, chapter 1, verse 17), the OE Boethius (Sedgefield 1899: 46), Bede’s Ecclesiastical History (Miller 1890-98: 160, Book 3, chapter 3, line 18) and an account on Wulfstan II of Worcester (Thorpe 1865: 445, line 12ff).
secondary, as the phrase is used in the general sense of ‘all, everybody’. *Rice and hean* is the most frequent formulaic use attested in the OE data. All the word pairs and antonymic uses refer to two social poles: the powerful and rich on the one hand, the low and poor on the other. The individual context reveals whether social or material power is stressed, but it seems that the aspect of social power is dominant. However, inferences of the present-day reader and the Anglo-Saxon translators and writers are different, and do prevent a clear-cut picture. Fact is that the social standing seems to have been more important according to the contexts, but connotations relating to wealth cannot be excluded completely.

*Rice* is prototypically used in collocations with persons, while the use with things is highly restricted to only a few examples, as for example in the OE *Daniel* (Krapp 1931: 124, line 456) or in *Bald’s Leechbook* (see Cockayne 1864-6, Book I, chap. 42, line 2, line assigned by DOEC and Cockayne 1864-6, Book I, chap. 44, line 2.1, line assigned by DOEC).\(^{134}\) The ME data still reflects this use, as for example in Layamon’s *Brut*, where *riche* can refer to strong and powerful horses (Brook and Leslie 1978, Caligula version, line 13375). *Rich* can be used for things in Present-Day English, but not in the sense of ‘powerful’. According to the *OED*, the last occurrence attested in combination with non-human things in the sense of ‘powerful’ is attested for the 15\(^{th}\) century (see *OED*, *rich*, a., adv. and n.).

The 10\(^{th}\)-century Vercelli homilies show that the new ‘material’ sense develops and “becomes increasingly common” (Godden 1990: 48). In the late 10\(^{th}\) century, *rice* and *welig* for example are already used as alternatives (cf. Godden 1990: 50f).\(^{135}\) *Rice* in the sense of ‘wealthy’ is more clearly implied in later source texts (cf. Mincoff 1933: 150), but still the meaning is relatively flexible and both meanings could be implied even in the later text sources.

According to Godden “[t]he actual process involved [in the semantic change of *rice*, B.K.] is hard to define” (1990: 53). I would hypothesise that the mechanism involved is metonymy, i.e. “the association of one word with another” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 57), which is reinforced by socio-cultural and pragmatic factors. The metonymic shift is brought about by contextually invited inferences (see Traugott and Dasher 2002). Such inferences reveal an appropriate explanation of the sense development of *rice*. The so-called “if-then relations” (cf. Warren 1992: 30, see Geis and Zwicky 1971) between the old meaning ‘powerful’ and the implicational new sense ‘rich’ can be formulated as follows:

*If somebody is powerful, he or she will also be rich.*

This “if-then” relation reflects a typical pragmatic inference in Traugott and Dasher’s sense. It also reveals that encyclopaedic knowledge, i.e. all knowledge about the concept, is an important part of the meaning (Croft 1993: 336; see also Jahr 1994, Langacker 1987). This pragmatic inference became more and more likely due to socio-cultural and economic changes (Hughes 1988). In the late OE period (10\(^{th}\) and 11\(^{th}\) centuries) England was wealthy, which is proven by archaeological evidence (see

\(^{134}\) See Mincoff (1933: 149) on the examples from Cockayne (1864-1866).

\(^{135}\) Godden (1990: 50, footnote 34) refers to Napier (1916: 33, line 21 and page 70, line 6).
Sawyer 1965, also mentioned in Godden 1990: 41). The gradual development of wealth as “expressed in terms of money” (Godden 1990: 41) shows that pragmatic aspects of this world knowledge (Croft 1993: 337) imply that the same group, which is referred to, includes both powerful and rich. In addition, socio-cultural factors, such as the commercial revolution in the 10th century (see Godden 1990), for example, consequently contribute to the ultimate full-fledged polysemy of rice. Thus, the prototypical centres start to shift due to these diverse factors of both pragmatic and socio-cultural nature. Social change could be reflected as the powerful and authoritative rank is associated with wealth (cf. Godden 1990: 54); Godden furthermore regards Ælfric as a kind of driving force in this semantic development (Godden 1990: 55).

As mentioned in a previous paragraph, the ME use of the word riche seems to show influence from French (see OED, rich, a., adv. and n.). French is likely to have had an impact with regard to the meaning ‘splendid, magnificent’ (cf. Greimas 2001, sense 4). In particular, the genre of romance predominantly uses ME riche in this sense. The association with value, material wealth, preciousness is especially observed in the (idealising) rhetoric of romances.

In Middle English, the first sense attested for riche in the MED is “wealthy” (MED, riche, adj., sense 1.a.) referring to persons in terms of both concrete and abstract notions (see MED, riche, adj., senses 1.b. and 1.c.). Nevertheless, the ‘old’ sense “powerful” is still implied (MED, riche, adj., sense 1.d.) as well as the reference to the socio-political aspects of highborn rank (see MED, riche, adj., sense 1.e.). The word can also relate to places or localities such as countries, cities or monasteries, for example, to express their wealth (see MED, riche, adj., sense 3). Furthermore the adjective is used in the senses ‘splendid, excellent, magnificent, costly’ in reference to concrete items (see MED, riche, adj., sense 2). The definitions show that the prototypical centre has shifted. In Middle English, ‘wealthy’ becomes the predominant sense, although old and new senses still co-exist throughout the ME period. In early texts such as Layamon’s Brut the transitional stage is obvious as both old and new meanings are attested: the difference senses range from ‘powerful’ and ‘wealthy’ to ‘noble’ and ‘splendid’. The prototypical OE word for ‘wealthy’, OE welig, ME weli, however, ultimately becomes obsolescent and riche takes over the function of weli (cf. section 4.3.4).

The sense ‘powerful’ is still attested in collocations in which the adjective modifies socio-political ranks such as kings or dukes, for example. The extended sense ‘splendid, costly, precious’ – which is not observed in OE – is typically used for military equipment, clothes and jewels, for example. In particular, the idealised courtly environment described in ME romances is reinforced by this ‘superfluity of preciousness’. Riche is most frequently and thus ‘prototypically’ used in collocations with humans, followed by the above mentioned non-human entities (see figure 3 below). Other non-human entities include localities (see Trevisa’s ME version of Higden’s Polychronicon, Babington and Lumby, 1865-86, 1.119 and 2.55, for example), while in Old English welig would have

\[136\] Wealth as expressed in terms of money, i.e. as a more or less economic entity, is revealed by a number of loan words in the ME period which especially refer to this economic or ultimately moneyed wealth (see section 4.3.6.2 in particular).
been used in such collocations (cf. section 4.3.4). In isolated examples *riche* is also used with colours, food, beverage and feasts, as well as tombs and sepulchres. Furthermore, ‘economic’ entities, for example, are modified by *riche* (e.g., “riche markes”, *Heil seint Michel*, Heuser 1965: 156; and “riche purs”, *Tale of Melibee*, Benson 1988: 233, B.2794). In all these collocations *riche* is used in the sense ‘splendid, abundant’, while the OE sense ‘powerful’ is reserved for humans in particular. The adjective is used collectively to refer to ‘the rich’, and the traditional phrase *rich and hene* is still used in some early texts (see *Brut*, Brook and Leslie 1978, Caligula, line 27220). The formula is ultimately superseded by *rich and poor* (e.g., *Havelok*, Skeat 1868, line 2471). The subsequent chart summarises the collocational uses described above.

Figure 3: *riche* - collocational uses in the *MED* quotations database

As mentioned previously, the ‘new’ sense relating to splendour is predominantly observed in romances. There seems to be a correlation between text type and the actual sense (see Goossens 1998). As Goossens (1998: 140) states “the cultural spirit of the text type in which the instantiation occurs may be an important ingredient.” But also changing socio-historical circumstances coupled with changing associations of social rank with material wealth are reflected in this sense.

According to the *OED* entry the sense ‘powerful’ referring to humans is still observed in the 16th century (1535), while the sense ‘powerful’ referring to non-human entities is last attested in the 15th century (1470). Thus, *rich* was polysemous – in terms of the old sense powerful and the new sense wealthy – far beyond the medieval period. The prototypical sense in post-1500 periods, however, is

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137 For further phrases see Babington and Lumby (1865-86, 7.385) and Kane (1960, 1.219) among others (cf. *MED, riche*, adj., sense 7). Multiple, synonymous uses also reveal that semantic change took place. Examples include Burton (1998, line 4463) and Plummer Plummer (1885: 149) among others.

138 Percentages in relation to all counted occurrences. The category “other” comprises figurative uses with non-material and non-human notions such as mercy, wisdom, deeds and beauty, for example.
‘wealthy’ in contrast to Old English. The focus and the prototypical sense have therefore shifted from Old to Middle English and relics of both senses are still preserved in post-1500 data according to the OED.

The adjective rich reveals the complexities involved in semantic change. The word is a witness of socio-cultural change in the late OE period. I cannot correlate any particular historical event to the ultimate semantic shift. It seems that the changing socio-historical circumstances merely trigger the ultimate metonymisation by means of pragmatic inferencing. The writers’ perspectives and attitudes change and influence the use of the word (see Ælfric, for example); and the adjective shifts from its focus on socio-political power to wealth. Wealth is given different values in the late OE and early ME periods. Still, the word maintains its polysemous structure for quite a long time, before the semantic component of power finally becomes obsolescent, at least in the explicit definition of the word.

4.3.2 (ge)sælig: from blessedness to foolishness – a case of pejoration

Pejoration is closely linked to subjective, i.e. emotional language. Koziol (1967: 88ff) shows that pejorative meanings very often develop due to ‘poor’ regard and contempt relating to profession, social status or education for example (see Koziol’s study examples knave, villain and idiot). Furthermore, terms denoting political rivals or military enemies can develop pejorative senses or connotations (Koziol 1967: 90f; see also chapter 2 of this study).

(Ge)sælig is a well-known and common textbook example illustrating the development of pejorative senses (cf. Kollberg 1904: 19f; Schreuder 1929: 148ff, Menner 1945: 65-66, Lindheim 1949: 208f, Dobnigg 1950, Koziol 1967: 93, Hughes 1988: 10, Figure 1.1. on the semantic development of silly, for example). Kollberg (1904: 19-20) refers to the remarkable semantic change of original OE gesælig and simply lists five different senses of the adjective. Menner (1945: 61) states that sælig is one of those adjectives “which are not so likely to be subject to the accidents of social history.” He restricts his analysis to the definitions of the then NED without attempting to show the “fundamental causes or processes” (Menner 1945: 59), which might be involved. Similarly, Koziol (1967: 93) simply refers to sælig as one of those adjectives where pejoration is the result of ‘multiple reasons or factors’. However, he does not describe these factors specifically.

In Old English, the adjective (ge)sælig has positive connotations and no pejorative meanings are observed according to Schreuder (1929: 149). Schreuder, however, stays vague as far as an explanation of the ultimate “degeneration” (Schreuder 1929: 149) is concerned. He exemplifies that sælig has repeatedly served as “a proof of the moral perversity of the human character” (Schreuder 1929: 152). He states that via over-use old words ultimately become imprecise and new words consequently fulfil the need of more precise semantic content (Schreuder 1929: 152). In the case of sælig words such as blessed, prosperous, happy and innocent have replaced the Germanic word in these particular senses (Schreuder 1929: 153). Schreuder’s “moral perversity” (1929: 152), however,
need not be the sole reason for semantic change, as humans have always been morally contemptuous. A similar attempt of explanation can be found in Dobnigg (1950: 86). In her interpretation, the emotional associations, which ultimately have led to the semantic change, are implied. These ‘explanatory’ attempts, however, are not sufficient, as they fail to determine the actual processes involved in the semantic change.

An investigation of OE (ge)sælig reveals that the concept of happiness and thus a kind of spiritual or emotional wealth is the predominant semantic component associated with the lexeme in Old English. Whether the cultural background plays a role as opposed to Menner’s claim (1945: 61) still needs to be discussed after an evaluation of the text material. The definitions for (ge)sælig given in Hall (1960: 287) and Bosworth and Toller (1954: 434), as well as the Latin equivalents listed in the latter dictionary, show that the word was mainly coupled with the concepts luck, happiness, success, well-being and bliss.

Latin-OE glosses serve as an indispensable tool for the determination of the prototypical sense(s) of (ge)sælig in Old English. The Latin-OE glosses represented in the DOEC reveal the following Latin lemmata for gesælig as represented in figure 4 below. The quantitative account of gesælig and its Latin equivalents in the glosses shows that gesælig is predominantly used in the sense of Latin felix ‘happy’, while only in isolated cases the OE word is used to refer to other aspects such as prosperity, fortune or success. The subsequent chart shows the distribution in the DOEC glosses.

![Figure 4: gesælig and Latin equivalents in DOEC glosses](image)

As shown in Figure 4 gesælig is prototypically translated as ‘happy’ (Latin felix). Typically the adjective is attested most frequently in glosses to OE hymns and prayers, in the vernacular version of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* (Sedgefield 1899), in prophecies, as well as *Ælfric’s Grammar* and *Glossary* (Zupitza 1880).140

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139 The double gloss secundos .i. prosperos (Goossens 1974, line 4429) has not been included in the chart. The frequencies are indicated in percent (relative of all occurrences accounted for in the glosses).

140 For further isolated occurrences see Oliphant (1966) and Cockayne (1864-66) among others.
As evidence from the glosses has shown, the prototypical senses of gesælig are closely linked to happiness and blessing, as well as fortune and success to a minor extent. The lexeme is predominantly used in homiletic texts and saints’ lives, where the adjective refers to a state of blessing achieved by leading a life according to Christian values. The expression gesælige bið/ beoð þe ‘he/ she be blessed/ happy who’ reflects a quasi-Biblical expression or formula. The prototypical word, however, which is normally used in such beatifying formulas in Old English, is eadig, as for example exemplified in the gospel of Matthew (5, 3-12). In this (Biblical) formulaic use (ge)sælig is a synonym of eadig (L beatus).

Gesælig refers to persons in general. Usually the formula (ge)sælige bið (see e.g., “Saint Vincent”, Irvine 1993, 332) generally addresses human kind as a whole. Spiritually favoured persons such as saints carry the epithet gesælig. Especially, the Virgin Mary is characterised as gesælig (“Annunciation”, Clemoes 1997: 288, line 214). But eadig usually is the prototypical word used for Mary, virgins or anchoresses, saints and martyrs in general. Some occurrences of gesælig also show that underprivileged persons are given this epithet such as poor persons and Lazarus specifically (see “Saint Martin”, Skeat 1881-1900, DOE line 69 and “Homily for Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent”, Assmann 1889: 27 respectively). The religious texts, homilies and saints’ lives specifically, imply the sense ‘blessed’ and ‘spiritually favoured’, while the OE Boethius exclusively uses the adjective in the sense of ‘happy’, as the major topic is the lament over miserable condition; happiness figures as a philosophical issue in this text, a dialogue between Mind and Wisdom or Reason.

Furthermore, law codes and instructional texts such as the Institutes of Polity (Jost 1959) reveal the use of gesælig. The Institutes state that a wise king will lead his people to a ‘happy, fortunate and glorious’ life (see Jost 1959, section 14), which clearly refers to what Cavill (1999: 97) has called “temporal prosperity.” In the OE Pseudo-Apuleius’ Herbarium (de Vriend 1984, chapter 179.1) the person is gesælig ‘fortunate, happy’, who gets hold of a specific herb called “priapisci.” In the OE Prognostics, gesælig is used as a general positive attribute which is predicted for the specific days of the birth (see Förster 1912b: 22).

Apart from human references the adjective also occurs in collocations with non-human entities: the town Ravenna is characterised as gesælig in the saint life of St. Appolinaris (Skeat 1881-1900, 207), for example. Furthermore, the adjective occurs in combination with time (see Bede, Book 4, Miller 1890-98: 258, chapter 2, line 18 and OE Orosius Book 5, Bately 1980: 116, line 21). Further abstract notions such as ‘study, reading’ (Bede, Book 5, Miller 1890-98: 454, chapter 17, line 27) and ‘teaching’ (Appolonius of Tyre, Goolden 1958: 18, line 8) or ‘rumour’ (Bede, Book 4, Miler 189-98: 336, chapter 24, line 23) are modified by the adjective. The adjective is only used once to refer to animals in the OE Boethius (see Sedgefield 1899: 70, chapter 31, line 14). The word is used in the sense of ‘happy’ in contrast to ME uses, where the adjective has pejorative senses when used with

\[141\] For a discussion of ‘gnomic formula’ (Cavill 1999: 84) of the type ‘X bið’ see section 4.3.5 on eadig.

\[142\] In contrast to OHG, beatus is never translated by rice in OE (see Ris 1971: 58 for evidence in OHG).

\[143\] See “Lucy”, Skeat (1881-1900, DOE line 5) or “King Oswald”, Skeat (1881-1900, DOE line 52).
animals. In the OE Genesis A,B the adjective gesælig specifically refers to material ‘prosperity’ and wealth (Krapp 1931: 54, line 1769f), as Abraham is described as ‘rich and blessed with gold and silver’. This specific material sense implied here is emphasised by swidfeorm. In Gregory’s Dialogues (Hecht 1900-7: 281, Book 4, chapter 15, line 13) the juxtaposition of þearfa and sælig does not have a material reference, but the juxtaposition reveals poverty in worldly goods as opposed to wealth in merit and reward on a spiritual level.

A number of factors become evident in these texts, which also motivate the use of gesælig. The salvation of the soul and the strife for eternal happiness are major topics, as well as the saints’ cult revealed in hagiographic texts, especially the cult of the Virgin Mary. But isolated examples also occur in legal and instructive texts, as well as ‘quasi-medical’ texts (see de Vriend 1984).

The subsequent figure shows the proportional frequencies of gesælig in both Old and Middle English. As the chart reveals there is a strong decrease in the MED data. The frequencies are irrespective of the different meanings, which have been described above, and show the total amount of occurrences in the DOEC and the quotations database of the MED.

Figure 5: (ge)sælig, (i)seli in the DOEC and the MED quotations database

The decrease in Middle English is influenced by lexical restructuring, as different words such as blessed or happy take over the semantic function of (ge)sælig. The ‘old’ sense, however, is still reflected in a number of texts (see “Ecclesiasticus” (14.2), Forshall and Madden 1850; 15th-century

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The following orthographic and morphological variants were checked in the DOEC: Iseli(-e, -g), iæl(-e, -g), gesæli(-e, -g), gesæli(-e, -g), seli(-e, -g), seli(-e, -g), gisæli(-g), gisæelg*, gesælg*, gesæleg*, gesæleg*. A search for Latin felix yielded the token “gesligran” in OE prognostics (Förster 1910, 191), which is included in the quantitative account. However, it was not possible to account for all spelling mistakes. ME orthographic variants were taken into account (see MED for orthographic variants). Due to the immense orthographic variation in Middle English, homonymic spellings occur for both seli and selli and sele (‘brave, good’). Especially in the Cursor manuscripts confusion of ME seli with ME selli ‘noteworthy, remarkle’ (cf. MED) is frequent. In those cases, where disambiguation was possible the matches were excluded; in those occurrences where the semantic distinction was not clear-cut and no possibility was given to check in the MED, the examples were included in the quantitative account.
glossaries such as *Medulla Grammatice*¹⁴⁵ and Way 1843-65: 452). But also the semantic development of the adjective itself is reflected. In *The Book of the Knight of la Tour-Landry* (Wright 1868: 52, line 22) “sely monke” translates French *le povre moigne*, while Trevisa renders Latin *simplices homines* as “sely men” in his translation of Higden’s *Polychronicon* (Babington and Lumby 1865-86, 8.91). Consequently, *seli* changes in meaning in the course of the ME period, but the above mentioned examples from the 14ᵗʰ and 15ᵗʰ centuries show that the ‘old’ meanings ‘happy’ and ‘blessed’ were still preserved.

In the *MED*, there are two separate entries for the adjectives *iseli* and *seli* (see *MED, iseli(e)*, adj. and *MED, seli*, adj.). The first senses listed in the *MED* are comparable to the meanings in Old English. Sense 1.a. refers to blessedness and holiness; while further sub-senses include “worthy, noble” (*MED, seli*, adj., sense 1.b.), “fortunate, lucky” (*MED, seli*, adj., sense 1.c.), “happy” (*MED, seli*, adj., sense 1.d.) and “wealthy” (*MED, seli*, adj., sense 1.e.).¹⁴⁶ The ‘new’ senses, which develop in the course of Middle English, show pejorative denotations such as shown in definitions 2.b. and 2.c. as well as in senses 3.a. to 3.c. (see *MED, seli*, adj.). The only example, in which the sense “wealthy” can be observed, is attested in the 14ᵗʰ-century English version of 1 Peter 3.4 (Paues 1904), where the word is used figuratively with reference to spiritual wealth. Apart from the *Ancrene Wisse* (see Day 1952: 80, 18), the word pair *e(adi) – (i)seli* is only found in copies of OE homilies revealing the meaning ‘blessed’.

The meaning of *seli* develops from religious, pious connotations to connotations of pity and foolishness. The semantic components ‘deserving pity, miserable’ are attested at the end of the 13ᵗʰ century according to the *OED*, but there are earlier examples in *Vices and Virtue* at the beginning of the century as already shown in Käsmann (1961: 169). Käsmann (1961: 168) maintains that evidence for *seli* in the sense of ‘blessed’ and *eadi* stop simultaneously. The databases of the *MED* and the *OED*, however, do not confirm this claim as far as the dates for the manuscripts are concerned. The latest occurrences for *eadi* in the sense of ‘blessed’ have been attested for 1333 in Shoreham’s poem “The Five Joys of the Virgin Mary” (Konrath 1902: 125, line 323)¹⁴⁷ and in Friar Herebert’s translation *Heyle leuedy* (Brown 1924: 20-21) in the *MED*. According to Brown (1924: xii) poems in 14ᵗʰ-century manuscripts could actually have been composed before 1300, which also applies to 15ᵗʰ-century manuscripts. But he states that “[w]e are unquestionably within the limits of the fourteenth century” (Brown 1924: xiii) with regard to Herebert’s verse. *Seli* in the sense of ‘blessed’ is also still attested in the poem *Earth upon Earth* (Murray 1911: 12, 24); the manuscript can be dated to the 15ᵗʰ century and only this 15ᵗʰ-century version of the poem preserved in Rawl. C.307 (Oxford, Bodleian

¹⁴⁵ See *MED, MS Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, A.1.10, 27b/a. Blueprint of MS in possession of MED.*
¹⁴⁶ For further detail and further definitions see *MED, seli*, adj.
¹⁴⁷ The *OED* – originally *NED* as referred to in Konrath (1902) – dates the poem to 1315. Konrath (1902: xi) states that the manuscript can be dated to the “earlier half of the 14ᵗʰ century” according to Sir Frederic Madden. Konrath refers to a colophon, which reveals that the manuscript “cannot have been written before 1327” (Konrath 1902: xi). It is not clear on which evidence the date given in the *OED* is based on (Konrath 1902: xiv).
Library) reveals the ‘old’ sense ‘blessed’ of *seli*.148 This consequently provides further evidence that *seli* in its ‘archaic’ meaning is still attested within a time limit between the 14th and 15th centuries. Datings vary of course largely as the different databases refer to different manuscripts. But it still seems obvious that *seli* continues to be used, at least occasionally, in its old meaning ‘blessed’ beyond the 14th century in contrast to *edi* in specific religious (con)texts.

The difficulty still remains, however, when it comes to determining the senses of the adjective. Subjective inferences are typical of the modern reader and consequently different interpretations, classifications and translations are the result. The *MED* classifies “sæli menn” in *Vices and Virtues* (Holthausen 1888: 67, 21), for example, as “spiritually favoured, blessed” (*MED*, *seli*, adj., sense 1.a). Holthausen also translates the ME adjective as MoE ‘blessed’. Käsmann (1961: 169), however, argues for the new sense ‘deserving pity, miserable’ in contrast to the one given in the *MED*. Both meanings are possible here, although personal preferences favour one or the other sense. It seems indeed more plausible to assume the new sense, ‘miserable, wretched, poor’. Given the context in Holthausen (1888: 67, 21), I would also prefer the new sense, as the passage refers to underprivileged persons.

The meaning of *seli* shifts to the opposite meaning – from senses such as ‘noble, exalted, blessed’ to ‘poor, defenceless, innocent, foolish’. I do not think that socio-cultural change is explicitly reflected in the semantic development of *seli*. It is more likely that metonymic shifts based on psychological factors and pragmatic inferences lead to the ultimate meaning change. Furthermore, text type seems to be a further key to the different senses in use. This can be well illustrated in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. The source of the fun in the fabliaux tales (e.g., *The Miller’s Tale*) is the cuckoldling of innocent husbands, and thus reflects the often stated ‘sadistic’ nature of the human character. The victims are characterised as *seli*, which has to be interpreted as ‘innocent’ or ‘foolish’. In these humoristic and vulgar tales the sadistic intention is stressed, while the *Physician’s Tale* is very violent and shows Virginius’ innocent daughter as a tragic victim who is slain unjustly, as quoted in the Host’s comment on the tale (Benson 1988: 193, line 292). In the *Man of Law’s Tale*, *seli* describes “innocent Custance” (Benson 1988: 97, line 682) and can be both interpreted as ‘blessed’ or ‘innocent’, as she represents an ideal nature and she also functions as a kind of exalted character, in particular reinforced by her Christian faith, and is thus comparable to saints or martyrs in early homiletic texts and saints’ lives. The sense ‘poor’ is implied in the *Nun’s Priest Tale* (see Benson 1988: 260, line 3374), as well as in the *Shipman’s Tale* (see Benson 1988: 203, line B.1201). The *Canterbury Tales* are diversified in terms of text genre and subject matters. Therefore, the text type as well as the contexts (subject matters) exploit the different meanings of the word and reveal its polysemous nature even in late Middle English.

A major difference which can be observed is the fact that in non-religious contexts, ME *seli* tends to be used in its new ‘opposite’ meaning in completely different contexts, revealing human contempt. This, however, is not the ultimate factor which causes the meaning change of the word. The

148 See also Maskell (1970 [1882]: 13, vol. 3) and *Abbey of the Holy Ghost* (Perry 1867: 54, 5).
reason why *seli* is used in these particular new senses has to be explained otherwise. It seems that there is a metonymic or inferential shift at work. The contiguity relation suggested by Blank (1999c: 180) shows a relation between “Actor” and “Typical Aspect” (Blank 1999c: 179). The semantic change of OE *sælig* can be classified as a “metonymic semantic change based on co-present conceptual relations” (Blank 1999c: 180). This means that in a ‘synchronic’ frame or scenario various relations are simultaneously represented. Traditionally, *seli* characterised people who were characterised as innocent and ‘morally pure’, but also underprivileged persons. Therefore, characteristics arousing pity can be implied, as ‘blessed’ people were usually associated with these typical aspects relating to pity, for example. This ‘deterioration’ of the meaning, i.e. the development of opposite senses compared to the original meanings, is already discernable in the ME period in contrast to Hughes’ diagram (1988: 10). Furthermore, the figure summarises the semantic pejoration of *, silly*, suggesting deterioration “particularly since c.1600” (Hughes 1988: 10). Of course, the ‘negative’ senses have been established and furthermore developed in the modern period, but the senses ‘weak, foolish, simple and ignorant’, for example, can be attested in the ME data, i.e. in pre-1500 periods.

A search of the *CME* archive reveals the majority of occurrences in religious texts. Furthermore, Robert Henryson’s ME version of *Æsop’s* fables (Smith 1906) includes various examples of *seli*, modifying animals in particular and reflecting the ‘new’ sense ‘silly, stupid’. In addition, the poem “A song of the times” from the Kildare collection (Heuser 1965: 135) also exploits the beast fable to implicitly draw parallels between fiction and the actual political situation. Usually, the donkey is described as *seli*, as this animal is likely to be associated with innocence, helplessness and with foolishness (see Heuser 1965: 131, *CME*). It seems indeed the case that honest and innocent people are victimised and exploited socially and consequently their behaviour is associated with foolishness.

A search of the *OED* quotations database reveals that *seli* was used most frequently in the 13th and 16th centuries. The later form *silly* figures in post-1500 periods, mainly in the ‘new’ senses ‘innocent, foolish’ (cf. *OED, silly*, a., n. and adv., senses 1 to 3). The subsequent figure shows the distribution of *silly* in the *OED* quotations database.
According to the OED, the senses relating to pity, helplessness and animals (see OED, silly, a., n. and adv., sense 1), as well as reference to weakness (see OED, silly, a., n. and adv., sense 2) and the senses ‘simple’ and ‘humble’ (see OED, silly, a., n. and adv., sense 3) occurred very frequently from the mid-16th century to the last quarter of the 17th century. The senses are first attested in the 15th and 16th centuries. In numerous examples “it is difficult to decide which shade of meaning was intended by the writer” (OED, silly, a., n. and adv.). The PDE sense ‘foolish’ only developed in the course of the 16th century according to the OED.

The development of ME seli (OE gesælig) is a case of pejoration. According to Traugott and Dasher (2002: 279) one major mechanism in semantic change is subjectification. In particular, pejoration – next to amelioration – is “the direct [outcome] of subjectification at the content level” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 282). My non-technical use of subjectification refers to the use of emotional language, which is closely linked to the semantic – and pejorative – development of seli. Social power and beliefs, different attitudes, but also prejudices (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 282) can be factors contributing to the deterioration of the originally positive senses of OE (ge)sælig. The semantic development of (ge)sælig is independent of socio-cultural factors and is largely based on psychological and pragmatic factors in contrast to the development of rice which owes its development in large part to the transformation of social structure. The semantic change of seli is based on subjectification and thus on the psychology of emotive discourse. The present development has remained specific to English and found no parallel in other Germanic languages (German selig and Dutch zalig, cf. Schreuder 1929).

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Figure 6: seli silly in the OED online quotations database

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149 Early, variant forms such as seli for example were included in the search. Based on OED data 31/07/06. A further note of caution is necessary here. As the OED online is constantly updated, ‘statistics’ are of course subject to these updates. Quotations are added and eliminated and thus the online database fluctuates to a great extent in terms of data and material.

150 Traugott and Dasher (2002: 282) refer to Hock and Joseph (1996) who have specified that if pejoration is predominant, this is the result of social power and prejudice.
4.3.3 *spedig*: from wealth to speed

In MoE *speedy* prototypically means ‘quick, prompt’ in contrast to Old English (see *OED*, speedy, a., senses 3, 4 and 5). The *OED*, however, does not show any separate, individual definition concerning its OE meaning ‘prosperous, wealthy’ and therefore no quotations illustrate this latter sense. The dictionary simply refers to this earlier sense in the etymology section. The older and now obsolete meanings ‘wealth’ and ‘power’, by contrast, are listed under the entry of the corresponding noun *speed* (see *OED*, speed, n., senses 1 and 2). *Speediness* is simply defined as ‘quickness’ (cf. *OED*, speediness n.),\footnote{OED online; last accessed 18/01/06.} the Old English meaning ‘wealth, opulence’ is neither mentioned nor illustrated.

According to Bosworth and Toller the noun *speed* has various different meanings in Old English ranging from quickness, success and wealth to faculty, for example (see Bosworth and Toller 1954: 899-900; see also Hall 1960: 315; Lindheim 1949: 202). The core meanings refer to luck, wealth or power. The corresponding adjective *spedig* has 4 different meanings according to Bosworth and Toller (1954: 900): 1) having good speed;\footnote{I assume that ‘good speed’ here refers to luck, as it occurs next to ‘prosperous’. ‘Good speed’ referring to quickness is only implied marginally in the OE data. Compare ME *god sped* ‘quickly’ (see *MED*, sped, n.).} 2) rich in material wealth; 3) rich in, abounding in and 4) powerful (see also Hall 1960: 315 for similar definitions).

The adjective is not very frequent in Old English, though. The total number of the absolute occurrences of the adjective *spedig* in the *DOEC* amounts to 27. *Spedig* is the vernacular equivalent of the subsequent Latin lemmata: *diues* (see Garmonsway 1939, line 301), *copiosus* (see Lindelöf 1909b and Roeder 1904), *sumptuosas* (see Napier 1900, No.1, gloss no. 303)\footnote{See also Goossens (1974, gloss 3495).} and *opulentes* (see Napier 1900, No. 17, gloss no. 56). The glosses mostly reveal reference to wealth, as exemplified by the Latin lemmata listed above. The Latin lemma *sumptuosas* reveals the semantic nuance of preciousness and *copiosus* refers to abundance. In the *Bosworth Psalter* (Lindelöf 1909b) and *Regius Psalter* (Roeder 1904) *copiosus* is not used to refer to material wealth but to the spiritual wealth of divine mercy (see Psalm 85, verse 5). Another similar use is attested in the *Phoenix* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 94, line 10), for example, where the creator is ‘abundant or rich in power’. In the OE poem *Genesis A,B* (Krapp 1931: 83, line 2803) the adjective refers to ‘abundant offspring’. The meaning ‘having good speed’ in the sense of quickness is implied in two passages from *Saint Nicholas* (Treharne 1997, lines 257ff), where the phrase “mid spedigum winde” is attested. This means that ‘prosperous’ or ‘fortunate’ winds make the journey easy and quick. In *Genesis A,B* (Krapp 1931: 54, line 1783) the sense “prosperous in travel” (see Bosworth and Toller 1954) is attested, which could also imply the sense of quickness. The meaning ‘powerful’ and the phrase ‘powerful in deeds’, in particular, refer to the powerful nature of God or Christ in 6 examples, e.g., in the *Paris Psalters* (Krapp 1932b: 47, Psalm 79 verse 14,) or the *Dream of the Rood* (Krapp 1932a: 65, line 151). The sense ‘rich, wealthy’ can be attested in 9 examples. The context of this last sense is clear-cut, i.e. the wealthy condition is specified by reference to ‘worldly (material) wealth’ as for example in the OE *Orosius* (Batley 1980:...
In conclusion, the adjective *spedig* is prototypically used in Old English to refer to God. Furthermore, it is used to refer to material wealth as illustrated in the examples above. The sense ‘rich, wealthy’, however, seems to be closely coupled with the notions of success and luck. The implication of quickness is only marginally represented in the data.

In addition, a number of compounds exemplify the relation to ‘worldly’ wealth:154 *godspedig* in *Genesis A,B* (Krapp 1931: 33, line 100; see Hall 1960: 158); *woruldspedig* in the *Cura Pastoralis* (Sweet 1871; see Hall 1960: 420, Bosworth and Toller 1954: 1197) and in the OE *Andreas* (Krapp 1932a). Furthermore, *goldspedig* and *æhtspedig* in *Juliana* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 114, line 39 and line 101 respectively). Latin *locuples* is glossed as *landspedig*, i.e. ‘rich in land’, and this compound is restricted to glosses exclusively. In Middle English, Latin *locuples* is simply translated as “riche” in Trevisa’s ME version of Bartholomew’s *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (Seymour 1975: 796, line 28).

In combination with *spedig* the two prefixes *un-* and *wan-* are used to form the corresponding antonyms (see Hall 1960: 384 and 397 respectively). 18 tokens of the adjective *unspedig* and 15 tokens of *wanspedig* are attested in the *DOEC*. *Unspedig* is typically used in the Psalter glosses (10 matches) and prototypically glosses Latin *inops*, while the remaining matches are only attested in isolated examples. Similarly, *wanspedig* always glosses Latin *inops* and is used to refer to ‘poverty’ and ‘want’. The adjective *unspedig* can refer to both social and material status as illustrated in two Ælfric homilies (see “Andrew”, Clemoes 1997: 508, line 38ff and “Purification”, Clemoes 1997: 251, line 78ff). These two examples show that the semantic nuances can vary according to context. The borderline between social and material power is very often fluid, and the reader or interpreter is confronted with the problem of polysemy.156 These fluid semantic transitions are typical of Biblical usage in particular.157 Thus, religious texts such as homilies, which largely draw on Biblical sources, are relatively flexible when it comes to interpretation.

The *MED* lists two senses of the adjective *unspedi*, showing considerable semantic development from Old to Middle English as revealed by the dictionary definitions (see *MED, unspedi*, adj., senses a and b) and the parallels to the meaning change of *spedig* are obvious. In the ME version

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154 Compounds such as *medspedig, heanspedig, jurhspedig* are discussed in section 4.2. Lindheim (1949: 202) has pointed to the prolific formation of compounds of the noun *sped*, revealing a “remarkable vitality” of the word.

155 The annotation is given in the quotation from John de Trevisa, translation Bartholomew de Glanville’s *De Proprietatibus Rerum*; Photostat of MS Add 27944, fol. 188a/b (*MED*). Compare the adjective *locuplete* (see *OED, locuplete*, a.).

156 For similar examples see the OE *Orosius* (Bately 1980: 17, Book 1, chapter 1, line 2 and Book 1, chapter 2, Bately 1980: 21, line 25). Bately (1980: 400) defines the two matches of *unspedig* as “poor” and “most indigent” respectively. But I think that the context of the first example favours the emphasis of socio-political status, rather than material status. Bately (1980) does not comment specifically on the Latin equivalent of *unspedig* in this context. Both senses – poverty and low rank –can be implied here.

of Guy de Chauliac’s *Grande Chirurgie* (Ogden 1971: 534, 9) the *MED* sense “ineffectual” (cf. *MED*, *unspedi*, adj.) is implied, while the ‘old’ senses “not prosperous, unfortunate” and “powerless, impotent” are only attested in a 12th-century homily (Warner 1917) and the 14th-century Rolle *Psalter* (Bramley 1884) respectively. Probably the translators deliberately formed the opposite of *spedi(g*) by adding the negative prefix *un-*, as they could probably not think of another lexical item, while scribes copied archaic forms. This seems plausible as short adjectives prefixed with *un-* are highly infrequent as opposites (see *OED*, *un-* prefix, sense 7.a; see also section 4.3.1 on *unrice* in this study). A sense referring to slowness, is marked as rare in the *OED* and the only example provided in the whole quotations database is a 17th-century quotation (see *OED*, *unspeedy*, a., sense 3). The ‘old’ sense “powerless” is not included in the *OED* at all, although the sense is – though rarely – still attested in the 14th century (Rolle *Psalter*, Bramley 1884, Psalm 16, verse 14). As for *wanspedig*, the word changed its meaning towards the ME period as the semantic components ‘poverty’ and ‘want’ as such have passed to a more abstract level relating to fortune and luck according to the *MED* definitions (see *MED*, *wanspedie*, adj.). ME *wanspedie* only survives until the 13th century, while the noun is sporadically used in 14th- and 15th-century texts (see also *OED*, *wanspeedy*, a. and *OED* *wanspeed*, n.). Whether the word was possibly more frequent in the spoken language cannot be determined at this stage. If the word was used in spoken registers, this could consequently be one reason for the general dearth of occurrences in the written data (see also section 4.2 on *wanhafol*).

The different senses of the adjective *spedig* attested in the OE data show that there is a rather equal distribution between ‘powerful’, ‘rich in’ and ‘wealthy’; the sense ‘having good speed, prosperous’ implying quickness occurs least frequently in adjectival use (cf. Lindheim 1949: 204). This distribution, however, is inversely related to the ME data. The *MED* defines *spedi* first as “[b]eneficial” (sense a) or “profitable” (sense b); second in reference to an image it can mean “perfect” (sense c) and third the component of agility, swiftness or quickness can be expressed (senses d, e and f; see *MED*, *spedi*, adj. for further detail). As the *MED* entry does not list the ‘old’ meaning referring to wealth, this sense seems to have become obsolescent very early. However, the meaning of ‘wealthy, rich, prosperous’ is still attested in one example in the *MED* quotations database, in particular in a 12th-century version of the OE *Elucidarium* (Warner 1917: 143, line 21). The ‘old’, archaic meaning is preserved in this copy of the OE original. The use of the OE word does not necessarily mean that the sense was still actively ‘used’ at the time.

The figure below illustrates the proportional frequencies of *spedig* as attested in the *DOEC* and *MED* quotations database. The frequencies are irrespective of the different senses.

158 Date of composition indicated by the *MED* is 1340, the manuscript is dated to 1500.
159 The only example of *wanspedie* “[u]nfortunate” (*MED*, *wanspedie*, adj.) is attested in a 13th-century version of the ME homily *De Sancto Andrea* (Morris 1873: 177, homily XXIX). The *CME* results confirm the isolated uses in the complete texts of the homiletic text. This suggests a probable regional restriction of *wan-* and the noun is therefore preferably used in the *Cursor Mundi*, though only rarely. The use of the noun in the *Destruction of Troy* (Panton and Donaldson 1869 and 1874) might have been influenced by the rhyming scheme, as the text is “an alliterative romance” as suggested in the title of the edition (see line 9327 for illustration).
The occurrences of the ME adjective *spedi* are all attested for the later Middle English period, i.e. ranging from the end of the 14th to the 15th century. Earlier examples are not attested, apart from the 12th-century OE example stated above. The old sense ‘powerful’ has completely disappeared; one possible reason could be its restriction to OE verse. The OE version of Psalm 85, verse 5, for example, is rendered in the Wycliffite Bible translation as ‘of much mercy’ (see Forshall and Madden 1850, *CME*). Therefore, the word *spedi* is interpreted differently, which is revealed by the new senses and the ultimate shift in its prototypical meaning. This might have been influenced by other parts of speech, mainly the verb *spedan* (ME *speden*) and the noun *sped* (ME *spede*). The noun has the ‘core’ senses ‘luck, success’ and ‘prosperity’, while the notion of promptness is also peripherally implied. The noun *sped(e)*, however, still carries the senses ‘abundance, substance, wealth’ in ME (cf. *MED, sped*, n., sense 1.e.), while the prototypical sense is coupled with luck, success and fortune. The sense ‘wealth’, however, seems to be of early usage and in an example from *Ormulum* (Holt 1878, line 12252) the noun is used in the sense of abundance (cf. *MED* entry *sped(e)*, n., sense 1.e.). A search for the token *spede* in the *MED* quotations database shows extensive use of both the noun and the verb in contrast to the adjective. A search in the *CME* also confirms this tendency. The adjective *spedi*160 is attested in religious writings – predominantly in Wycliffe – in the sense of ‘efficacious’. Sense (f) “prompt” only occurs in non-religious, ‘secular’ texts, and in official documents, letters and epistles (see Wülfing 1902-03: 371, line 12598; Fisher et al. 1984: 176, for example). The religious texts predominantly reveal sense (a), while the medical texts exclusively show this sense. An interesting use of the sense ‘prompt’ is attested in 15th-century examples from the *Paston Letters* (see Davis 1976, part 2, 2.135) and the *Boke of Noblesse* (see Nichols 1860, 42).

The most frequent and prototypical sense attested on the basis of the *MED* quotations database is sense (a) ‘beneficial’ or ‘efficacious’, followed by senses (f) ‘prompt’ and (e) ‘agile’. The distribution of the different senses is illustrated in the figure below.

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160 The forms checked in the *CME* are: *spedi*, *spedy*, *speedy*, *speedi*.
The ultimate cause for the semantic change of *spedi* seems to be of a pragmatic nature: invited inference (Traugott and Dasher 2002) seems a very plausible mechanism. The fact that something or somebody is successful or efficacious ‘invites’ the inference of promptness and easiness. This means that the semantic component ‘success’ is emphasised. If a remedy, for example, is efficacious this might also imply ‘quick’ cure. The notion of promptness is furthermore expressed by the adverb *spedili* and the noun *spedihed* specifically.

The control corpus in form of the *OED* quotations database reveals the following distribution of *speedy* across the centuries.

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161 Last accessed and updated 20/01/06, *OED* online.
The examples from the *OED* quotations database predominantly refer to speed in motion or actions or to the beneficial nature of something (e.g., in combination with a remedy). Apparently, the first quotation attesting the sense relating to quickness of the adjective is attested for 1375 (cf. *OED*, *speedy*, a., sense 2.a.). The early sense ‘beneficial’ has become obsolete in the course of the 15th century according to evidence provided by the *OED* quotations database. The ‘new’ sense referring to quickness is therefore attested from the 14th century onwards, while 16th-century quotations exclusively reveal this sense, showing that the component ‘quickness, promptness’ has become the core semantic feature of the adjective. A 16th-century example reveals the modern sense ‘quick’ in the co-occurrence of two near-synonyms *quick* and *speedy* in Roger Ascham’s *Toxophilus* (1544). Collocations such as ‘speedy remedy’ (see quotations 1519 and 1577, *OED*, *speedy*, a., sense 5.a.), ‘speedy horse’ (see quotation 1533, *OED*, *speedy*, a., sense 2.a.), as well as other combinations with *haste*, *pace* or *pursuivant* exemplify that motion and quickness in operation are predominant from the 15th century onwards. It seems that cultural changes also had an impact on the developments, at least to a certain extent. In Ascham’s *Toxophilus* military engines or bows are referred to, i.e. changes in warfare and further progress and inventions have contributed to efficiency and consequently quickness in actions. The cultural influence can also be revealed by a number of specialised uses such as *speedy cut* (from the 16th century onwards), *speedy trial* (from the 18th century onwards) and most obviously in the sense ‘be on drugs’ in the 20th century. According to the data provided in Figure 9 the most frequent use of the adjective in the *OED* quotations database is attested for the 17th century.

One problem, however, has to be addressed here: the quotations database is subject to the inferences of the compilers of the dictionary. The sense ‘wealthy, rich’ is not integrated, which can be explained by the fact that pre-1500 data has largely been neglected. This in turn can be attributed to the various voluntary readers who were probably less aware of the old senses of *speedy*, even though some ‘old’ ME senses are attested in the quotations database.

*Speedy* is yet another interesting case of semantic change, which is motivated by pragmatic inference and to a minor extent by cultural factors. As shown for the previous lexemes, metonymy and pragmatic inference are the major processes at work.

### 4.3.4 *welig* – the Anglo-Saxon prototype of wealth

As stated by Mincoff (1933: 150) *welig* is normally used to express the concept ‘rich, wealthy’ in Old English. The definitions given in Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1186) indicate that this word was exclusively used to refer to both the material and non-material wealth of persons, to “places where wealth is accumulated” and to places or things which provide an abundant produce. Hall (1960: 402) simply defines the word as “well-to-do, rich, prosperous”. This prototypical sense is furthermore

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162 Ascham, Roger. *Toxophilus, the schoole of shootinge*. (1545). Edited by Edward Arber. London: Arber, 1868. This example has been attested when the *OED* online was last accessed on 20/01/06. As of 10/08/06 the quotation could no longer be found in the quotations database, but a similar example is attested in a quote for 1548 (see *OED*, *lurkish*, a.).

163 Date of last access 10/08/06.
illustrated by evidence from OE-Latin glosses, where the Latin lemmata *dives* and *pecuniosus* (Kindschi 1955, gloss 387), as well as *prodigum* (Holthausen 1941, prayer no. 45, line 15) among others are translated as *welig*.\(^{164}\) *Dives* and *divites* are attested most frequently; Latin *dives* is translated into the vernacular as *welig* in roughly 92% of all the glosses represented in the *DOEC*, while the other Latin lemmata mentioned above merely occur in isolated examples. *Welig* is therefore the prototypical lexeme expressing the concept ‘rich, wealthy’ before *riche* and further lexemes ultimately take over its place in the course of the early ME period.

The figure below illustrates the proportional frequencies of the total number of matches of *welig* in both the *DOEC* and the *MED*. As the figure shows there is a drastic decline in the frequency of *welig* as provided in the data of the *MED* quotations database.

![Figure 10: *welig* in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database\(^{165}\)](image_url)

A search of the *DOEC* reveals the following distributions concerning its collocational uses. The word can be used to refer to both material and spiritual wealth, and it occurs in combination with both human and non-human collocates. Explicit reference to material wealth is provided by the *DOEC* data, such as in the OE *Genesis* (Krapp 1931: 5, line 87) and Ælfric’s Letter to Sigeweard (Crawford 1922, lines 737ff). But *welig* can also refer to spiritual wealth such as in the poem *Christ* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 44, line 1495f) and to abstract concepts such as ‘merit, consideration’ as opposed to concrete wealth (see Godden 1979: 58, line 168ff). The non-human collocates comprise concrete items such as

\[^{164}\text{For further Latin lemmata translated as *welig* see also Meritt (1945, “Bede, Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum” no. 4, gloss 2 and 29), Getty (1969, chapter 59 sentence no. 11 and chapter 80 sentence no. 11), Stryker (1951, gloss no. 1896), Oess (1910, Psalm 21, verse 30) and Rosier (1962, Psalm 21, verse 30). Compare Latin *pingues* translated as *fæt(te)* in Psalm 21, verse 13 of the *Arundel Psalter* (Oess 1910) and in the *Vitellius Psalter* (Rosier 1962). This reveals that the association with fatness and corpulence can also be used figuratively to refer to wealth. See *MED*, *fat*, adj., sense 7.a., 7.b. and sense 8.}\]

\[^{165}\text{Spelling variants that were searched are the following: *weli(e)*, *welig*\(^*\), *welg*\(^*\), *weol*\(^*\), *weal*\(^*\), *weli*\(^*\), *welg*\(^*\), *weleg*\(^*\). The homonymous spelling of *welig* ‘willow’ was naturally excluded from the quantitative account (for the association of *welig* ‘willow’ with the adjective *welig* see Storms 1947: 36). Nominal collective use ‘the wealthy’ has been included here. ME personal names and ship names, as well as the adverbial use of *wely* and the phrase *wely wise* have been excluded from the ME quantitative account in the chart.}\]
buildings or places in Ælfric’s Lives of Saints (“Maccabees”, Skeat 1881-1900, line 530) and in Book 1 of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (Miller 1890-98: 26, line 2) for example, as well as abstract and figurative notions such as ‘learning’ in Ælfric’s Catholic Homily “Martin” (Godden 1979: 289, line 61). The adjective can be used nominally in the collective sense of ‘the rich, the wealthy’ or it is used in attributive function.

The word is very frequently used in prose and in glosses, while only marginal evidence can be observed in poetry. The figure below shows the distribution of *welig* across these three text categories in the *DOEC*.

![Figure 11: welig in three text categories in the DOEC (in percent)](image)

A considerable number of the occurrences in prose are attested in homiletic texts and saints’ lives, while vernacular versions of Biblical texts, referring to OE versions and paraphrases of Biblical texts such as the *Psalms, Genesis* or *Deuteronomy* for example, reveal less frequent use. The word is not used very often in poetic language either. In legal texts and confessional handbooks the lexeme is hardly used as shown in the subsequent figure.

![Figure 12: Text types within text category PROSE in the DOEC (in percent)](image)

In terms of syntagmatic relations the OE data supplies a number of antonymic pairs in different text types. Such antonymic quasi-formulaic pairs include *welig – wædla* (e.g., Förster 1912b: 20), *welig –
hean (e.g., prose Paris Psalters, Psalm 48, verse 2; Bright and Ramsey 1907), earm – welig (e.g., Förster 1912b: 26 and Liebermann 1960 [1903-16], Alfred-Ine, law no. 43) and welig & hearfa (e.g., Arundel Psalter, Oess 1910, Psalm 48, verse 3). In the legal text the antonymic pair is used collectively to refer to ‘everybody’; as shown previously, the legal codes should apply to all people equally; thus various antonymic pairs in Old English are used in this collective sense. But also the co-occurrence of near-synonyms and synonymic pairs such as eadig – welig (Vercelli Homily no. 2, Scragg 1992, line 90), welig – rice (Lambeth Psalter, Lindelöf 1909a, Psalm 9, verse 29), welig – worldrice (Blickling Homily no. 10, Morris 1874-80) and welig – wînc (Lindisfarne gospel of Luke, Skeat 1871-87, chapter 12, verse 21), can also be found in the OE data. As mentioned before, variation is a common rhetorical device; but the multiple lexical choice also specifies the connotations implied. In Old English, welig is the prototypical lexeme expressing the concept ‘rich’ referring to material wealth, but it can also refer to spiritual or abstract wealth, and can be used for both human and non-human entities. In many of the religious texts, welig is regarded as a negative attribute, as exemplified also in the gospel of Matthew (19, 24), which is related to the didactic function of the texts (homilies, saints’ lives): the teaching of Christian values.166

In the MED, the first core meaning of weli is “affluent, rich; well-off, fortunate” (MED, weli, adj., sense 1.a.); in the phrases weli on win/ on mod, the adjective is used in relation to non-material, i.e. spiritual wealth (see MED, weli, adj., sense 1.a.). The adjective can also be used as a collective noun in the sense of ‘the wealthy’ (MED, weli, adj., sense 1.c.); furthermore, the sense “mighty and powerful” is attested; referring to rushing water the adjective can mean “forceful” (MED, weli, adj., sense 1.b.). This sense ‘powerful’, however, is controversial in a number of cases. In reference to plants the adjective can mean ‘vigorous, abundant’ (see MED, weli, adj., sense 2.a.) and with regard to places the adjective can be used to denote their magnificence (see MED, weli, adj., sense 2.b.).

The only gloss attested in the MED is a 13th-century copy of Ælfric’s Glossary in Worcester Cathedral MS F. 174 (Butler 1981: 540, 6), where vernacular weli translates Latin dives. Worcestershire can be regarded as an area where literary traditions were still important (Burrow and Turville-Petre 1996: 96; see also section 4.4.2 on hean). Latin dives is generally translated as riche in the data from the MED quotations database, as for example in the ME Psalter in Psalm 68, verses 2 and 17 (Bramley 1884, see CME), which reveals the semantic shift of riche from ‘powerful’ to ‘wealthy’. Senses 1.a. ‘rich’ and 1.c. ‘the wealthy’ are attested in almost 70% of all occurrences in the MED quotations database. This figure includes OE tokens in 12th- and 13th-century manuscripts. Excluding the OE forms the two senses (1.a. and 1.c.) roughly figure in 30% of the ME forms. In any case, the meanings relating to wealth are the prototypical senses in terms of frequency, but they mostly occur in early texts. Minor occurrences reveal the meaning ‘powerful, mighty’ (sense 1.b.). But this sense seems controversial, in particular the phrase “pe vælga rice” (Belfour 1909: 68, line 24, MED).

The adjective is defined as “powerful, mighty” according to the MED. In contrast to the dictionary

166 Explicit reference to the deadly sin of avarice is provided in homilies (e.g., “Third Sunday in Lent”, Morris 1874-80, line 204) and Gregory’s Dialogues (Hecht 1900-7: 201, Book 3, chapter 14, line 14), for example.
definition, I think that sense 1.a. (‘wealthy’) is implied here. In the OE homily (see Irvine 1993 and Belfour 1909: 68, line 24) Ælfric uses both rice and wælga (cf. section 4.3.1 on rice), and I would suggest that both words relate to wealth and welig is used to disambiguate ‘rice’ (cf. Irvine 1993: 76).

Regarding the uses of welli in the Ancrener Wisse (Tolkien 1962: 202, 9) and Brut (Brook and Leslie 1963, line 6938), the MED notes that the senses in these two quotes “could also be construed as belonging to wili adj [‘cunning’, B.K.]” (MED, welli, adj.).¹⁶⁷ The assumption of the sense ‘powerful’ is controversial and it seems more plausible to regard the two occurrences in the Ancrener Wisse and Layamon’s Brut as variant forms of wili ‘clever, cunning’. The MED furthermore classifies “welgest fourre” (Cleanness, Menner 1920, line 1244) as ‘powerful, mighty’ (see MED, welli, adj., sense 1.b.), but if fourre is a variant form of furre ‘garment’, then sense 1.a. seems to be the more plausible sense in this case. This discussion reveals that some examples still remain controversial as far as their exact meaning is concerned. With regard to the frequency of the adjective weli, a drastic decline is attested in the ME period as represented by the data of the MED. The CME does not add any further evidence apart from merely one additional variant form in the Fairfax MS 14 of the Cursor Mundi (Morris 1875 II: 256, line 9135).

Plausible reasons for the rapid decrease in ME could be confusion due to orthographic homonymy with wili and/ or due to the competitive increasing use of both adverbial and adjectival wel. But even more crucial is the fact that riche takes over the function of welli as its new core meaning ‘wealthy’ and ‘splendid’ figure predominantly in the ME data. Riche usurps the place of welli in the course of the ME period and welli is no longer associated as the word expressing the notion of wealth. Therefore, the word must have become obsolescent in the course of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century. Evidence from the OED provides further insights as to the date of obsolescence. According to the OED the first core meaning of the obsolete adjective wealy was “wealthy, prosperous, happy” (OED, wealy, a., sense 1). A second sense denotes good health (see OED, wealy, a., sense 2), while all 16th-century quotes denote a luxurious state (see OED, wealy, a., sense 3). Evidence from the OED quotations database for the periods ranging from 801 to 1500 is practically identical to the data provided by the medieval corpora. A search in the OED online reveals the quantitative distribution shown in Figure 13 below.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of “weolie” in the Ancrener Wisse, see Dobson (1974: 124f).
The chart confirms the high frequency of *weligi* in the early OE period (801-900), while the subsequent periods show a steady decline in the use of the adjective after the first decrease in late OE (901-1000). The post-1500 data shows that *wealy* is still attested randomly in the 16th century, but seems to have become obsolescent in the course of the 14th century. From the 17th century onwards the word is no longer attested in the *OED* quotations database.

The ultimate loss of *weli* can be explained by language-internal structural shifts, i.e. *riche* has developed a new meaning ‘wealthy’ and takes the place of weli which is no longer associated with and understood in the context of wealth. Further competitors of the adjective *weli* are *wealthy*, Latinate loan words such as *prosperous* and *fortunate*; the extended use of native *well* as in *well off* and *well to do* can be observed in post-medieval usage only.

### 4.3.5 Being “rich as Croesus”\(^\text{169}\) : the case of *eadig*

The available Old English dictionaries list a host of different meanings for *eadigi*: “wealthy, prosperous, fortunate, happy, blessed, perfect” (Hall 1960: 92; see Bosworth and Toller 1954: 224f for similar definitions and Latin equivalents). Apart from Latin *beatus* only *faustus* is attested for *eadigi* in the *DOEC* glosses, specifically in *Ælfric’s Grammar* (Zupitza 1880: 293, line 15); As Käsmann (1961: 168) already pointed out *eadigi*, in the sense of ‘blessed’, always translates Latin *beatus* and the *DOEC*

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\(^{168}\) Only dates have been counted here. Entries marked as“(l)OE” or “Beow.” for *Beowulf* have not been included in the figure. Proportional frequencies per 10,000 words. Last access 12 June 2006.

\(^{169}\) In the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of English Idioms* this idiom is marked as informal and defined as “extremely wealthy” (Warren 1994: 228), see also the *OED* entry *Croesus*. The idiom was chosen as a title to the subsequent section as the lexeme is listed in the *TOE* under the concept of “very rich, opulent” (Roberts and Kay 2000: 644). On the figurative use of *Croesus* and its development see Warren (1995: 145). According to the *OED*, the phrase is not frequent at all, one reason for this could be the fact that the idiom is informal (Warren 1994: 228) and consequently, it does not figure frequently in the written data of the *OED*. The hapaxes *full weligi, oferwelig, þurhspedig* and *felarice* listed in the *TOE* under this concept have already been discussed in section 4.2. The lexeme *toflowende* is discussed in chapter 5 of this study.
glosses reveal *eadig* as prototypical vernacular equivalent of this Latin lemma. The subsequent chart shows the distribution of the lexeme in the three text categories prose, verse and gloss.

![Figure 14: *eadig* in different text categories in the DOEC](image)

The majority of occurrences are attested in saints’ lives and homilies. In these text genres the word is used in relation to saints, martyrs and other ‘holy’ people in general. Furthermore, the Biblical formula as found in the gospels, the *Psalms* or in homilies such as *eadig beoð* ‘blessed are’ refers to the “Sermon on the Mount” (see Matthew, chapter 5) and the beatitudes (cf. section 4.3.2 on *gesælig*). In contrast to *gesælig*, *eadig* is the prototypical word used in this context. As for the formulaic structure of this ‘phrase’, Cavill (1999: 91) has argued that formulas with the headword *eadig* mostly occur in the *Metrical Psalms*. He has referred to this formula as a “blessing formula”, but he has also pointed to the ambiguity of OE *eadig*: while it refers to “spiritual prosperity and blessing” in the *Psalms*, it refers to “temporal prosperity” in the OE *Maxims I* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 158, line 37; Cavill 1999: 97).

Gneuss (1955: 61f) points out that the original sense of *eadig* was ‘rich, happy’ and refers to etymologically related words in other Germanic dialects (Gneuss 1955: 61; see Köbler 1991: 184 for OHG *edili*). Köbler (1991: 184) lists a number of Latin equivalents for the OHG adjective, of which only *dives* and *nobilis* are also attested for OE *eadig* in legal texts (see Liebermann 1960a [1903-16]). The senses of the OHG cognate emphasise the original ‘old’ meaning referring to wealth and social rank, but also the meaning of the noun *ead* can serve as proof (cf. Gneuss 1955: 61). Isolated examples, in which *eadig* shows reference to wealth, are listed by Gneuss (1955: 61) and confirmed by the corpus-based search in the *DOEC*. According to Gneuss (1955: 61) the sense ‘happy and rich’ is revealed, for example, in *Beowulf* (Dobbie 1953, line 1225), while *eadig* is used in the sense of ‘rich in children’ in *Genesis* (Krapp 1931: 35, line 1107); ‘wealthy’ is implied in *Beowulf* (Dobbie 1953, line 2470) and the poem *Judgement Day II* (Dobbie 1942: 62, line 163) according to Gneuss (1955: 61); in King Alfred’s OE version of the *Cura Pastoralis* *eadig* translates Latin *locuples* (174, 14 see Gneuss

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170 The reference to the Latin lemmata relates of course only to those cases that are represented in the *DOEC*. In some few cases, texts have been checked beyond the corpus to find evidence in Latin original versions.

171 Frequencies in percent relative to total number of occurrences included in my quantitative account.

172 Cavill (1999) focuses on the use of such formulas in OE maxims in poetry specifically from a literary perspective. For further details the reader is referred to his work.
As an equivalent to Latin *beatus*, the meaning of *eadig* is in opposition to the original meaning (cf. Gneuss 1955: 61). The word is used in particular in relation to the pious, poor or helpless who are said to be blessed and can be full of hope for the kingdom of God (cf. Gneuss 1955: 61). Therefore, Christianisation has played a role in this first meaning change; being blessed was not only associated with earthly wealth and happiness, but was predominantly extended to spiritual and divine blessedness in religious texts (see Daunt 1966: 70). Thus, an early metaphorical extension can be assumed for this word in early Old English due to Christian influence. The ‘old’ meaning still prevails, which can be observed in the (quasi)-formulaic use in the antonymic pair *earm – eadig* and vice versa: both in legal and religious texts as well as in poetic texts (see *Rune Poem* Dobbie 1942: 30, line 76; “Exeter Book Riddle” no.84, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 237, line 28;174 “The Nine Herbs Charm”, Dobbie 1942: 120, line 40) this formula is used. Although Wirth (1966: 95f, quoting Weisweiler 1923) mentions *eadig – earm* in relation to frequent use as a legal formula, the antonymic pair can be attested in further text types such as religious and miscellany poetry as well as religious prose. In poetry, alliteration is one possible motivation, but the phrase is also used collectively to refer to ‘all’ people in order to indicate universal validity or address (see Weisweiler’s notion of “Volksmenge” (1923: 320), also quoted in Wirth 1966: 95). With regard to the religious texts using the ‘old’ sense ‘rich, wealthy’ rhetorical (alliterative) reasons are implied, but also a didactic purpose is involved, as homiletic and legal texts serve instructional purposes. The legal texts, in which the phrase *eadig – earm* occurs, translate Latin *pauper* and *dijes* (Liebermann 1960a [1903-16], II Cnut section 1.1; IV Eadgar sections 1.4 and 2.), Latin *nobili neque ignobili* in VI Æthelred (section 8) and *siue locupleti siue egenti* in IV Eadgar section 2.2. The Latin versions show variation, while the vernacular always uses the same phrase for different Latin lemmata. Consequently, *eadig* is used in these contexts to refer to both wealth and rank (‘noble’) and reflects its original, ‘old’ sense as attested in the OHG cognate *edili* (‘noble’), marking a distinction between social ranks, which in turn involves implicit implications on the ‘financial’ status of the different social strata.

The influence of modern inferences and the problem of individual interpretations of the texts can be observed, for example, in the interpretation of *eadig* in *Beowulf*. While Magoun (1947: 40f) translates *eadig* as ‘blessed with’ in *Beowulf*, Smithers (1970: 72) thinks that the word is “unlikely to carry any Christian implications such as ‘blessed’”. The non-Christian implication of destiny in the Germanic (Pagan) sense seems more plausible in *Beowulf* and consequently Smither’s translation “marked out by destiny” (1970: 72) shows the early, ‘old’ and non-Christianised sense which seems to be predominant in this early text.175

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173 I was not able to find evidence for Gneuss’ reference. According to my search in the DOEC, Gneuss’ reference seems to refer to (Sweet 1871: 175, chapter 23, line 13).

174 In this passage the two adjectives are not used in a proper formula, but simply in juxtaposition to each other.

175 See Robinson (1970: 109) on the problem of ambiguous meanings and stylistic subtleties. Puns, for example, are a major problem in the semantic categorisation of meanings (cf. section 4.4.2 of this study on *hean* in the *Dream of the Rood*).
Co-occurrences of *eadig* and *welig* are attested in Vercelli Homily No. 17 (“Purification of Mary the Virgin”; Scragg 1992, line 68, see also section 4.3.4 on *welig*). Furthermore, the sense referring to material wealth and well-being is attested in the OE *Genesis* (see Krapp 1931: 64, line 2148f), while reference to prosperity can also be observed in the OE *Daniel* (Krapp 1931: 111, line 1).

The databases provide the following distribution in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database. The subsequent figure shows the proportional frequencies of *eadig* in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database irrespective of the different meanings.

![Figure 15: *eadig* in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database](image)

The word is very frequent in OE, but in ME the word is used only peripherally, mostly in 12th- and 13th-century texts, isolated examples are nevertheless attested in 14th- and 16th-century texts. The first sense provided in the *MED* is “rich, wealthy”, used with persons and buildings (*MED, edi*, adj., sense 1.a.), while a second sense “prosperous, fortunate” can be attested in connection with persons and dreams (*MED, edi*, adj., sense 1.b.), where the aspect of luck and fortune (in the sense of ‘luck’) is stressed. The second sense attested in the *MED* for the adjective *edi* refers to spiritual blessedness and is used denoting people “worthy […] of adoration, holy, blessed” (*MED, edi*, adj., senses 2.a. and 2.b. respectively), while sense 2.c. relates to devout behaviour. As the *MED* definitions show, the word preserved most of its OE meanings in the ME period.

According to Käsmann (1961: 167) *edi* is rarely used in secular contexts in Middle English (see also Winter 1955: 221-27). The only secular texts – Layamon’s *Brut* (Brook and Leslie 1963, line 6638, for example) and *Destruction of Troy* (Panton and Donaldson 1869-74, lines 5324 and 5950) – reveal the senses ‘wealthy, rich’ and ‘prosperous’. The religious texts in general reveal the sense ‘blessed, devout’, and only in the antonymic formula *eadig – earm* can the sense ‘wealthy’ be implied. *Edi* is most frequently used with humans in religious texts. About 20% of the matches are marked as “OE” with regard to the origin in the *MED* and have been included in the quantitative account.

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176 Forms checked in the databases are *eadi*, *eadg*, *eadeg*, *eadd*, *edi*, *ædi*; *edi*, *edy*, *eddi*, *eddy*, *eadl*, *eadl*, *eadl*, *edi*, *ædi*, *æedi*, *æadi*.

177 The dates used here refer to the dating of the manuscript. Most of the 12th-century manuscripts are copies of OE texts.
Therefore, quite a number of parallel uses and collocations as attested in Old English are observed and will only briefly be referred to in the following. The figure below shows the distributional frequencies of the two meanings of ME *edi* – ‘blessed’ and ‘wealthy’ – as represented in the *MED* quotations database.

![Figure 16: edi in the MED quotations database](image)

The collocations in the ME data show continuity from Old English: roughly a fifth of all occurrences are attested in ME manuscripts representing copies of OE texts in the *MED* quotations database. More than half of the tokens are used in reference to saints, virgins (especially the Virgin Mary), Biblical persons, divine beings (angels, God, Jesus) and any objects or body parts associated with these people (e.g., the ‘blessed nails’ of Jesus, the ‘blessed womb of the Virgin Mary’ among various others). The word is used in the formulaic phrase ‘blessed is the one who’ referring to people in general or to a specific group of people (the poor, the mild-hearted, for example). The formulaic use of the antonymic pair *eadig* – *edi* is attested only marginally; the sense “rich, wealthy” in relation to persons is not frequent at all. This sense can be found in Layamon’s *Brut* with regard to a ‘rich’ building (see Caligula version, Brook and Leslie 1963, line 1182). In three cases the word is even used metalinguistically (see *Ancrene Wisse*, Tolkien 1962: 77, 5). Isolated examples are furthermore found regarding dreams in the sense of “presaging good fortune” (*MED, edi*, adj., sense 1.b.). Devout actions refer to fasting and ‘blessed deeds’ in general, while the use with abstract notions, such as prayers and virtues, for example, was not attested in Old English specifically. In most of these collocations the meaning ‘blessed’ is the predominant sense. In a small number of examples synonymic word pairs such as *eadig* and *blessed* and *eadig* and *seli* are attested: for example, in Homilies in Lambeth MS 487 (Morris, 1867-8, 47; cf. Käsmann 1961: 168) and in the *Ancrene Riwle* (MS Cleopatra, Dobson 1972: 138, 18). As the distribution of *eadig* in the *MED* quotations database has shown, the sense ‘blessed’ is the prototypical meaning used in religious texts. The sense ‘wealthy’ is only preserved in the formulaic use *eadig* – *earm*, particularly in secular texts. The use in the latter text type, however, is not frequent at all (cf. Käsmann 1967: 167f).

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178 Frequencies in percent relative to the total amount of tokens counted.
Although *eadig* still occurs in ME religious texts, Käsmann (1967: 168) was not able to detect the possible cause for the decrease of *eadig* in the ME material. It is indeed striking why the word became obsolescent so rapidly. One plausible reason might be the fact that the traditional ‘oral’ formula *eadig – earm* is only preserved in early texts (date of composition 12th century, manuscripts dated to the 13th century) as represented in the *MED*. The sense relating to fortune and luck (see *MED*, *edi*, adj., sense 1.b.) was prototypically expressed by *spedig*. But also the semantic shift of *gesælig* and the lexical replacement of both *edi* and *seli* by the word *blessed* show changes in the ultimate lexical choice of the ME writers. The traditional formula was ultimately superseded by the ‘new’ pair of antonyms: *rich – poor*. Otherwise, it remains difficult to explain why the word became obsolescent. It seems that a number of lexical alternatives such as *blessed* and *riche* replaced a word which was – as long as it was used – ‘avoided by many’.

The adjective *edi* is most frequently attested in the 13th century. The last occurrence of *edi* attested in the *MED* is dated to the first half of the 16th century in *Destruction Troy* (Panton and Donaldson 1869, 1874) in the sense “fortunate” (*MED*, *edi*, adj., sense 1.b.). The actual composition of the text is dated to 1400 according to the *MED*. The tokens attested in this alliterative romance are “edist” and “eddist” (Panton and Donaldson 1869, 1874, lines 5324 and 5950 respectively). The origin of the adjective and its sense are not straightforward as shown in the *OED*. The use of the adjective *ed* is interpreted by the *OED* as of uncertain origin and the dictionary states that “it has been identified with” OE *ead* (OED, ed, a., etymology section). Only the superlative is attested in the *Destruction of Troy* (Panton and Donaldson 1869, 1874) according to the *MED* and the *OED*. The *MED* includes the quotations under the entry *edi* (< OE *eadig*), while the *OED* provides a separate entry *ed* (see *OED*, *ed*, a. for a definition) and the dictionary assumes the possibility that the form *ed(d)ist* represents a scribal error for *oddest* which occurs in other places in the text (see *OED*, *ed*, a., etymology section). A search of the complete text of the *Destruction* in the CME yielded 17 matches for the basic form *od* and 12 tokens for the superlative in the *Destruction of Troy*. The superlative *edist* is only attested in the two examples mentioned above, whereas the tokens *oddest*, *oddist* and *od* are attested in 29 matches; consequently, the scribal error is very plausible. The glossary index of the edition (Panton and Donaldson 1869, 1874) also refers to the form *od* under the entry *ed* and the context of the two passages in question also favours the sense ‘outstanding, brave, famous’. However, the ME use of *ed(d)ist* could still be derived from OE *eadig* (cf. German *edel*) as an archaic use in its original secular meaning together with the attribute “honerable” in the text (Panton and Donaldson 1869, 1874, lines 5324, 5950). Although I would favour a scribal error, the relation to OE *eadig* cannot be completely refuted, if the pre-Christian sense of OE *eadig* is taken into account.

The first sense provided for the obsolete word *eadi* in the *OED* relates to wealth, while the second sense refers to happiness and blessedness. According to the *OED*, this latter sense is attested earlier (825) than the concrete sense (1000). But as the data from the *DOEC* has already shown, the

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179 The form *ed* is not attested.
The word has a non-religious meaning in *Beowulf* (cf. Gneuss 1955: 61). A search of the *OED* quotations database shows that the word started to become obsolescent in the course of the 14th century, and was no longer used in the subsequent periods.

**Figure 17: eadig in *OED* online quotations database**

The distribution of *eadig* in the figure above reveals a rapid decrease in frequency from the 13th and 14th centuries onwards, the last occurrence in the 16th century does not even figure in the chart. The adjective is most frequently used in quotations of the 9th, 10th and 12th centuries.

OE *eadig* is first used in a non-religious, secular sense ‘rich, happy’, attested in a few early texts in the *DOEC*. Furthermore, Germanic cognates bear witness to this early secular sense (cf. Gneuss 1955: 61). As already pointed out in Gneuss (1955: 61), OE *eadig* seems to be a loan translation of Latin *beatus* and evidence from the OE glosses revealed that *eadig* is the prototypical vernacular equivalent of *beatus*. This Christianised, religious meaning stands in opposition to its early secular meaning. Figurative transfer, motivated by the socio-cultural factor of Christianisation, can explain the development of this opposite sense. The senses ‘rich’ and ‘happy’ are interpreted from a spiritual perspective and therefore religious discourse adopts the ‘new’ sense ‘blessed’ in Old English. In Middle English, the ‘Christianised’ sense is predominant, while the ‘secular’ sense is only attested marginally. In secular texts, and in the formula *eadig* – *earm*, the old, original meaning relating to wealth can be found. The latest occurrence from the alliterative *Destruction of Troy* is not straightforward, as the superlative *edist* can be interpreted as a scribal error. The word starts to become obsolescent in the 14th century, as indicated in the chart above (Figure 17). *Eadig* was confined to a learned, monastic context; homilies and glosses figure most prominently in the OE data. Evidence from the *MED* quotations database shows the traditional term in a number of copies of OE texts, in the ‘traditional’ formula *eadig* – *earm*, and in early religious ME texts. Due to this ‘learned’ restriction as

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See footnote 176 for orthographic variants. *OED* online last accessed 21/03/06 for update of the figure. Proportional frequencies here per 10,000 words.
well as lexical and semantic developments in the course of the ME period the word is ultimately replaced by alternative lexemes, such as blessed, for example.

4.3.6 Lexical changes in the history of English
Apart from few native word-formations, such as wealthy, the English language is ‘enriched’ by a number of Latin and French borrowings during the Middle English period. In the following sections, these ‘new’ words will be investigated in terms of lexico-semantic variation and change in Middle English and subsequent periods.

4.3.6.1 wealthy
The word wealthy as such is not attested in Old English (see section 4.2 on weleði); the words prototypically used to express ‘wealth’ are the OE noun wela and the adjectivewelig. The word wealthy seems to be a ‘new’ formation in Middle English; the adjective is claimed to have been derived from the noun wealth. The noun in turn was formed by adding the affix –th to weal (< OE wela), probably in analogy181 to health (see MED, welthe (n.) and OED, wealth, n.; see Williams 1983: 331). The noun wealth is much more frequent in the MED quotations database than the adjective which is only attested in a small number of quotations (see figure 18 below). The adjective is first attested at the beginning of the 15th century (see MED quotations), while the noun is already attested in 13th-century manuscripts of the Proverbs of Alfred (Armgarth 1955: 82, 107). The CME furthermore confirms the rather infrequent use of the adjective and the extensive use of the noun: a search for the tokens welthi and welthy yielded a total of only 5 matches in three texts, while a search for the tokens welth and welthe yielded 377 matches in 70 texts. The subsequent figure provides the proportional frequencies of welth and welthi in the MED quotations database.

![Figure 18: Welth and welthi in the MED quotations database](image)

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181 Analogy is not considered a cause in semantic change, but rather a ‘tool’ (cf. Bréal 1964: 60).
182 Spelling variants as indicated in the dictionary have been taken into account; for the noun welthis, welthys (spelling variants <þ>, <ð>) have been added.
*Welthi* is defined as “possessing wealth, fortunate; rich, wealthy” referring to persons (*MED, welthi, adj., sense a*); sense (a) can also be used figuratively, as, for example, in the *Secretum Secretorum*, where *welthi* denotes a kind of abstract wealth (see Manzalaoui 1977: 13, 30). The adjective can also be used in reference to countries in the sense of “prosperous, flourishing” (*MED, welthi, adj., sense b*; see Fortescue’s *Governance of England*, Plummer 1895, 149 and 348).

The adjective is used most frequently in reference to persons. Williams (1983: 331) assumed that the reference to the wealth of a country was earlier than that to the wealth of a person. According to the *MED*, however, it seems that the reference to persons occurred earlier. The noun occurs in phrases such as ‘worldly wealth’ or ‘wealth of this world’ (e.g., Lydgate, *Fall of Princes* 6.14, Bergen 1924; Trevisa’s *Polychronicon* 1.7, Babington and Lumby 1865-86). But it is also used in the plural in the sense of riches (e.g., *Destruction of Troy*, Panton and Donaldson 1869, 1874, lines 8168f). Furthermore, the phrases ‘common wealth’, ‘public wealth’ and ‘universal wealth’ are mostly attested in 15th- and 16th-century texts. The noun is used both in religious and in secular texts and referred to happiness and prosperity in a wider sense (see *MED, welthe, n., sense 1*; see Williams 1983: 331f on the semantic development of the noun *wealth*) as well as to material possessions and riches (see *MED, welthe, n., sense 2*). The distinction between the two senses, however, is sometimes not straightforward (cf. *MED, welthe, n., sense 2.a*), which applies to the adjective as well.

A search in the *OED* quotations database reveals that *wealthy* is more frequent in post-medieval periods. Sense 1.a. relating to life or conditions of life and sense 1.b. relating to the body as being in good health are obsolete in Modern English (see *OED, wealthy, a.*). The *OED* furthermore lists sense 1.c. referring to well-fed cattle, which is marked as dialectal by the dictionary. The core meaning (sense 2 in the *OED*) refers to people having abundant material wealth. The *OED* also attests the reference to countries and communities (sense 3), as well as extended, i.e. figurative uses (see *OED, wealthy, a., sense 4*). Furthermore, sense 5 referring to value (see *OED, wealthy, a.*) is obsolete in Modern English (cf. subsequent section 4.3.6.2 on *precious* and *valuable*).
The *OED* data reveals that the adjective *wealthy* lost all the connotations relating to health and well-being, as well as fortune in the sense of happiness. The word is used to refer to material wealth; however, extended figurative uses (see *OED*, *wealthy*, a., sense 4) are attested from the 17\textsuperscript{th} century onwards. A materialised sense is attested in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, while 14\textsuperscript{th}-century data largely reveals the component of happiness. The first increase in frequency in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century can possibly be correlated to economic developments, while the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} centuries are marked by diverse crises. Well-being was associated with material wealth, the loss of this connotation has been observed in various other lexemes as well: but the ultimate semantic development is different. *Wealthy* was predestined to specialise in terms of material and abstract wealth as this sense was one of the core meanings of OE *wela* (note also the prototypical Anglo-Saxon adjective *weliga*). According to Williams (1983: 332) economic changes in the early modern periods are reflected in the predominant monetary sense of *wealth* and *wealthy*. The aspect of quantity and the reference to money have become the core connotations, in contrast to connotations such as happiness and well-being during the medieval and early modern periods.

### 4.3.6.2 The foreign element and the mixed vocabulary of English

The diversification of the concept wealth as relating to social rank, abstract wealth (spiritual, intellectual) as well as to material status, quantity and excess in general has been exemplified by the selected lexemes in the previous discussion. The following paragraphs will give an overview of loanwords which relate to these different concepts of wealth. First, the general sense of ‘abundance’ and ‘prosperity’ is exemplified by a number of borrowings from both Latin and French. Second, specific ‘economic’ or ‘money’ terms are listed which reflect socio-economic changes to some extent.

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\textsuperscript{183} Spelling variations were taken into account. Proportional frequencies per 100,000 words; *OED* online last accessed and updated (21/03/06).

\textsuperscript{184} E.g., the *Hundred Years War* (1337-1453), the *Plague* (1348), the *Peasants’ Revolt* (1381) (see Maurer 2002).
And finally, a few post-medieval lexemes are listed, demonstrating the remarkable changing lexical character of the English language.

The French loan word *plente* can refer to “[a]bundance, prosperity, wealth” and to “funds, payments” when used in the plural (*MED, plente*, n., sense 1.a.). Both the noun and adjective are prolific in the *MED* data, and so are derivations such as *plenteth* (noun and adjective) and *plentevousness*, for example (see *MED* entries for further detail). The adjective and the noun *plente* as well as its derivations predominantly occur in 14th- and 15th-century texts in the *MED* quotations database. The survival of MoE *plenty* is the result of this frequent use of *plente* which now generally refers to large quantities and abundance (see *OED, plenty*, n., (a., adv.)).

Another lexeme, which is closely related to the concept of ‘plenty’, is the Latinate loan *copious* (see *MED, copious*, adj. and *OED, copious*, a). The adjective *copious* occurs in merely 32 matches in the *MED* quotations database185 and refers to abundance of concrete items (45% of all occurrences) and abstract entities (55% of all occurrences). The adjective is attested from the end of the 14th century onwards and it mainly occurs in vernacular translations.186 Furthermore, the written texts show the ultimate differentiation of registers. This means that high style texts (e.g., romance and poetry) and specific ‘scientific’ texts (philosophical, historical or political and medical) show a larger amount of borrowed Latinate/ Romance words in the ME period. The highest frequencies in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries of the *OED* data can be attributed to the very specialised use of the adjective *copious*.187 The specialisation and differentiation of registers is reinforced by evidence from the *OED* quotations database. As far as material substances are concerned, the word occurs predominantly in medical, chemical and specialist contexts. In addition, the increasing use with regard to ‘language’, the importance of rhetoric and the influence of the printing press is reflected in the respective periods.

Furthermore, the loan word *abundant* is used to denote great quantities and excess (see *MED, abundaunt*, adj., senses 1 and 2) of both concrete and abstract notions. According to the *OED*, the adjective is derived from Latin *abundantem* and it literally means ‘overflowing’ (see *OED, abundant*, a., etymology section) and is extended metaphorically to other substances as well as qualities (see *OED, abundant*, a., sense 1). Similarly to *plente*, the lexeme *abundant* generally refers to large quantities and is closely related to liquid metaphors, revealing that wealth can be conceived figuratively as an overflowing liquid (see chapter 5). Words such as the verbs *pour* and *stream*, the noun and adjective *lavish*, as well as *affluent* (see chapter 5 of this study) demonstrate the importance of liquid metaphors in the semantic field of wealth. Other lexemes relating to abundance include the verb *flourish* (see *OED, flourish*, v., senses 1, 2 and 3), as well as the adjectives *fertile* (see *OED, fertile*, a., sense 1).

185 Spelling variations have been considered.
186 E.g., Trevisa’s translations of Higden’s *Polychronicon* and of Bartholomew’s *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, as well as the *Wycliffite Bible*, Walton’s ME version of *Boethius* and the ME translation of Henry Suso’s *Orologium Sapientiae*.
187 See the special sense of the corresponding nouns *copie* and *copiousness* in the EMoE period, referring to the ‘richness of the vocabulary’ (see *OED, copy*, n., A.I., sense 1.c and *OED, copiousness*, sense 2).
fertile, a., sense 3) and fecund (see OED, fecund, a., sense 1). Post-medieval borrowings relating to the concept of ‘abundance’ are luxuriant (16th century) and prolific (17th century), for example.

The influence of Latin and French is shown in various borrowings, such as prosperous (for ME definitions see MED, prosperous, adj.); the MED refers to Antique Latin prosperosus and Old French prosperous in terms of origin. As has been shown before, Latin prosperos can be translated into the vernacular as gesælig (Goossens 1974, gloss 4429) among others revealing a close association with well-being and bliss, while no reference to material wealth as such can be observed. In the OED quotations database, the lexeme prosperous is used most frequently in post-1500 data. The word is still semantically related to success and good fortune, which ultimately can result in ‘flourishing’ conditions in a material sense. This means that economic success, for example, is interpreted in a monetary and thus material sense in modern usage. Further loan words include fortunate (14th century) referring to ‘luck’ specifically; as well as successful (16th century). The word luck, in turn, is a borrowing from Low Germanic (see OED, luck, n.).

The vast impact of the post-Conquest contact situation is furthermore reflected in the adjective moneyed derived from the French loanword money.\textsuperscript{188} The adjective clearly expresses our modern sense of wealth: i.e. wealth as prototypically associated with material and in particular monetary possessions in modern usage (see OED, moneyed, a., (and n.), sense 1.a.). The adjective moneyed can refer to the quality of a person (see MED moneien, v., sense a). First examples in the ME data are attested in the 15th century, while special uses of the phrase moneyed man in the sense of ‘capitalist’ are only attested in the 18th century according to the OED.

The adjective pecunious is already attested in the ME data in contrast to its antonym, impecunious (see section 4.4.7.1). The word is defined as “[w]ealthy, rich” by the MED, but it is only attested in Piers Plowman (see Skeat 1869, Passus 11.57, B-Version and Skeat 1873, Passus 13.11, C-Version). The word is highly infrequent, which is confirmed by the OED data. According to the OED, its antonym is used more frequently (see OED, pecunious, a.). Even though these two words are only used restrictively, they reflect the ‘monetarisation’ of society, which in turn is ultimately reflected in the lexical expressions.

Furthermore, the concepts cost and value can be expressed by the adjective precious (14th century; see OED, precious, a., (n., adv.), sense 1), while the adjective valuable is a post-medieval borrowing (16th century). In Middle English, costly materials were modified by ‘riche’ (note also the old sense ‘valuable’ of wealthy, see section 4.3.6.1). Apart from these words a number of borrowings refer to the socio-political status, such as excellent (14th century) and noble (13th century) as well as the 17th century loanword opulent (see OED, opulent, a.).

This selective list of loanwords, on the one hand, shows that most of the borrowings mentioned above are now used in everyday language and are thus part of the common vocabulary.

\textsuperscript{188} Note the specialised sense of OE gield (see Hall 1960: 153) and ME yeld ‘tax’ (see MED, yeld, n.) in contrast to modern German Geld ‘money’. Compare also OE ‘wergeld’ (Hall 1960: 405), as well as ME wer-geld and dane-geld (see MED).
(e.g., plenty, money, precious). On the other hand, some of the Latinate-Romance words are highly specialised and used only rarely (e.g., pecunious). Nevertheless, the number of Latinate-Romance words in the common, everyday English vocabulary clearly shows the remarkable difference between English and its related language German.

4.4 Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of lexical items denoting ‘poor’ in Old and Middle English

4.4.1 Preliminaries

An outline of the different OE lexemes listed in the TOE has already been given in section 4.1 of this chapter. Most of the hapaxes and other rare or specific words, such as fealog, feasceaf(t)ig, næftig, wanhafoil, hafenleas, as well as medspedig and heanspedig, have already been discussed in section 4.2. The lexeme unrice is included in section 4.3.1, while unspedig and wanspedig are discussed in section 4.3.3. In the following, the remaining lexemes – hean, earm, pearf, and wædla are discussed in more detail. With regard to pearf, the discussion of the native word needy is included. As far as OE wædla is concerned, a number of loan words referring to the semantic component of ‘beggar’ are included in the discussion in section 4.4.3. In addition, the semantic change of the adjective wretch is integrated here, as the word shows a remarkable semantic development. Furthermore, words relating to a specific ‘economic’ sense such as feohleas and moneyless among others and a diverse number of loan words are analysed in sections 4.4.7.1 and 4.4.7.2. Most important among these loan words is of course the French borrowing poor which is discussed separately in section 4.4.7.3. The Romance word has naturalised and is the common word expressing the concept of poverty in English in contrast to German (cf. G arm, OE (e)arm).

4.4.2 The semantic component of humility: OE hean, ME hen

“Honi soit qui mal y pense” is the motto of the Knights of the Garter founded by Edward III in the mid-14th century (see end of fit IV in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Treharne 2004: 650, footnote 22). This French saying contains a word of Germanic origin: OHG hōni ‘shameful’ (cf. Köbler 1991: 478). While Modern German still uses this word, its English cognate became obsolescent in the course of the ME period.

In Old English, the form hean can represent both hean(e) ‘exalted, high’ (as derived from heah) as well as hean ‘low, poor, mean’ (see Hall 1960: 174, see also Bosworth and Toller 1954: 520). The Latin-OE glosses therefore reveal the Latin lemmata alta and excelsus and Latin humiles189 respectively. The disambiguation of the two homographic variants is facilitated by the contexts and collocations in which the words are used. But still, in one case or the other the painstaking task had to

189 See e.g., Wildhagen (1910, Psalm 81, verse 3) among various others.
be envisaged to disambiguate the contexts in order to separate – if possible at all – the two opposing senses.

The ultimate lexical change in the history of the English language is demonstrated in Psalms 83, verse 10 and 114, verse 6 in the OE metrical Paris Psalters (Krapp 1932b: 51), which reveal the use of *hean*, while the Wycliffite Bible (Forshall and Madden 1850) reads “cast awei” and “meekid” respectively. These lexical discrepancies are the result of lexico-semantic changes during the ME period, when a number of different lexemes were borrowed from French and Scandinavian. *Mek* and *low*, for example, are of ON origin, while *humble* and *poor* are results of the Norman contact situation (see MED and OED). Latin *humilis* is rendered in the ME data in manifold ways as *ed-mod(i)*, *mild*, *lowe*, *humble*, *meek* and *buxom*, for example, while the Latin word was mainly glossed as *eadmod* (92.7%), occasionally as *hean* (7.3%), in OE.

In Old English, more than half of all occurrences of the adjective *hean* are attested in verse. However, the word is also used quite frequently in homiletic texts and saints’ lives (20% of all occurrences), especially in antonymic pairs (*rice – hean*, *welg – hean*, *heah – hean* and *wlanc – hean*). The rather common use of the antonymic phrase *hean – rice* has already been commented on in section 4.3.1. As already pointed out, this latter phrase is a kind of set formula which is not restricted to legal texts, but which is used in a variety of other texts such as homilies and verse among others. This pair of antonyms occurs quite frequently, while the other oppositional pairs are only attested in isolated examples.

But also various synonymic co-occurrences can be found, such as *laess* (see Nativity of John the Baptist, Morris 1874-80, line 156f), *earm* (see e.g., Christ and Satan Krapp 1931: 139, line 119), as well as *unwraeste* in the OE Orosius (Book 3, chapter 1, Bately 1980: 55, line 8), for example. The socio-political aspect seems to be predominant in the example from Orosius, while the examples from Christ and Satan imply ethical senses. It is God’s foe (cf. Christ and Satan, Krapp 1931, line 96), Satan, who calls himself ‘low, downcast’ and ‘wretched’ (Krapp 1931: 139, line 119). Yet another aspect is revealed in the OE Elene (Krapp 1932a: 99, l. 1212ff) where a number of pitiful humans are enumerated.

In antonymic pairs or in combination with near-synonyms the sense is more or less evident. In other cases, however, puns make the distinction more difficult. Puns – based on both polysemy and

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190 See MED, *buxam*, adj. Note also the Latinate word *abject* used in the sense “humble, lowly” (MED, *abiect*, sense 2.a.) in Middle English.

191 For further lexical alternatives see Lindelof (1909a, Psalm 81, verse 3), Meritt (1945, Bede, “Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum” no. 4, gloss number 377) and (Rosier 1962, Psalm 112, verse 6) Actual tokens checked in the DOEC are *humile*, *humiles* and *humilem*, as well as *humili* and *humilia*.

192 Cf. The spatial and at the same time metaphorical dimension: hell as a ‘low’ place in contrast to heaven, the ‘high’ place.

193 See Juliana (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 126, line 457), where *hean* is used as an epithet for the devil.

194 Similar enumerations of near-synonyms revealing an ethical sense can be found in other religious poems such as Christ (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 30, lines 993), Andreas (Krapp 1932a: 33, lines 1087 and Krapp 1932a: 33, line 1367) and Genesis (Krapp 1931: 29, line 879), for example. In these poetic sources the use of *hean* is also motivated by alliteration.
homonymy – aggravate a clear differentiation of senses, as for example in the *Dream of the Rood* (Krapp 1932a: 62). The accusative *heanne* modifying *gealgan* (line 40) can either mean ‘high’ (*heah*) or ‘mean, abject’ (*hean*) according to Huppé (1970: 86).

In sum, *hean* is still used in late Old English (see Ælfric’s homilies). The word, however, is mainly preserved in the set formula *rice – hean*. Otherwise the word is typical of early OE poetic texts. Some traces of this adjective are still left in Middle English, but in the course of the ME period the influence of contact languages (French, Scandinavian) leads to the ultimate loss of Germanic *hean* as already exemplified before. As the adjective was predominantly used in poetry in Old English, it becomes clear that the word *hean* reflects an early oral (Germanic) literary tradition. The subsequent figure shows the proportional frequencies of the adjective in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database.

![Figure 20: hean/hene in the DOEC and the MED quotations database](image)

OE *hean* was typically used in the set formula of the type *rice and hean* across various text types and the adjective was particularly frequent in verse. This traditional oral literature as well as traditional formulas were quite resistant and survived in early ME verse and early religious texts (homilies, saints’ lives) in the sense ‘poor, wretched’. As becomes obvious from the chart, the frequency is drastically reduced in the ME data (for ME definitions see *MED, hen*, adj.). Only in early ME texts is the word prominent, although the form *heyne* is still attested in a 15th-century Wycliffite text (Todd 1842: 26). The singular use in the Wycliffite text, however, seems to reflect an archaic use and a possible dialectal survival.

The phrase *rich and hene* denoting ‘all, everybody’ is only preserved in Layamon’s *Brut* (Brook and Leslie 1978, e.g., lines 15319, 15743 (Caligula); line 179, Otho) and in 12th-century copies of OE homilies. Alternative phrases, in particular ‘rich and poor’, ultimately supersede this former phrase in the course of the later ME period. Furthermore, an early ME proverb in MS Cambridge Trinity College O. 2.45 (Förster 1900) reveals the use of the adjective *hen*, giving evidence of the oral

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195 See *OED* for similar definitions (see *OED, hean, hene*, a.). The *OED* only attests isolated examples in its quotations database and does not provide further evidence as the history and the obsolescence of the adjective is concerned (as of 31/07/06).

196 See *MED, hen*, adj., sense a and *MED Hyperbibliography* for further detail on this text.
tradition which is preserved in the saying (see Förster 1900: 6). Consequently, this demonstrates that the ‘set’ formulaic use was able to survive more easily, and that oral, traditional phrases contributed to the survival of the adjective in the early ME period. Additional relics of the native word *hen* in traditional religious texts dating from the 13th century are attested in saints’ legends (*St. Juliana of Cumaec*, d’Ardenne 1961: 26, 227 and *St. Katherine of Alexandria*, Einenkel 1884, line 1947) as well as the Winteney version of the Benedictine Rule (Schröer 1888: 107, chapter 53, line 18).

A comparison of the aforementioned versions of Layamon’s *Brut* with the help of the *CME* confirms the archaic nature of the Caligula version, which has been pointed out before (cf. Burrow and Turville-Petre 1996: 96), while Otho seems to be more progressive semantically (see Stanley 1969: 29; 33). According to Stanley (1969: 32) the Caligula version reveals native devices rather than French ones. Burrow and Turville-Petre (1996: 96) characterise the work (Caligula) as “very un-French” and they point out that Layamon stayed in (Worcestershire) – Areley Kings as indicated in the preface of *Brut* specifically (lines 1-5; Treharne 2004: 359) – where native literary traditions were still en vogue at the time in question (cf. also section 4.3.4). Thus, the Caligula version shows the deliberate use of archaic forms (cf. Treharne 2004: 359) for stylistic, as well as alliterative reasons. The scribe of MS Otho, however, was more innovative and this version reveals more French influence than the Caligula version, as 8 tokens of *povere* are attested in Otho in contrast to only 1 token in Caligula according to the complete texts represented in the *CME*. The examples from Layamon’s *Brut* show the importance of different manuscript versions in linguistic interpretation. Although the French loan *poor* is not numerous at this early stage of the ME period, evidence of lexical change due to French influence is observable.

4.4.3 *wædla*, *wedle*

The fate of OE *wædla* “poor” or “destitute” (Hall 1960: 392) is similar to the other lexemes listed in the *TOE* expressing ‘poverty’: it becomes obsolescent in the course of the early ME period. The *TOE* furthermore lists *wædla* under the concept “Deficient in, poor in, wanting” and according to Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1150) *wædla* can be used both of persons and things, in particular with the genitive “of what is wanting” (sense I.a.), and can be used both adjectivally and nominally (senses II. and III.).

Apart from ‘poverty’ in general the word also implies the aspect of begging (see Hall 1960: 392), which is exemplified in a small number of the Latin-OE glosses as, for example, in the *Vitellius*...
Psalter (Rosier 1962, Psalm 39, verse 18) where Latin mendicus is translated as “wædliga” (see also Bosworth and Toller 1954: 1150, sense I.b.). The OE-Latin glosses in the DOEC reveal wædla as the vernacular equivalent of the following Latin lemmata: inops, egenus and egens, indigens, mendicus and pauper. The subsequent figure shows the proportional frequencies of the Latin lemmata and the vernacular gloss wædla in the DOEC glosses.

![Figure 21: Latin equivalents of OE wædla in DOEC glosses (in percent)\textsuperscript{201}](image)

The chart illustrates that egenus and inops figure most frequently as the Latin equivalents of wædla. Mendicus is rather marginally implied in the glosses, while evidence for Latin egens, indigens and pauper is even more scarce. An interesting translation or scribal error, not represented in the chart, is attested in the Vitellius Psalter (Rosier 1962, Psalm 36, verse 16) and is worth mentioning in this context. In this Psalter version, OE wædlan glosses Latin diuitias which actually denotes the opposite, i.e. ‘wealth’. The glossator must have confused wædle with wela in this verse, as the Junius Psalter (Brenner 1908) reads “weolan”, for example.\textsuperscript{202} The match in the Vitellius Psalter has to be classified as a scribal error as Latin divitiae is translated correctly in the other instances in the Vitellius Psalter.

The adjective wædla and related forms occur most frequently in glosses and a fair number of matches are attested in homilies and saints’ lives in particular. Isolated examples can be found in further prose texts, such as adaptations of biblical texts (e.g., Leviticus, the gospels and the prose Paris Psalters), King Alfred’s translation of Gregory’s Pastoral Care and Alfred’s translation of Boethius, the OE Orosius, and Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, but also in the monastic rule of Chrodegang de

\textsuperscript{201} Percentages relate to all occurrences of wædla and related forms included in my quantitative account in the DOEC glosses. The scribal error in the Salisbury Psalter (Sisam and Sisam 1959) glossing egeno et pupillo in Psalm 81 verse 3 as “ealpeodgum & wædlan” has been included under ‘egenus’ in Figure 21. The scribe must have confused the vernacular glosses, as proven by other Psalter versions of the same Psalm (see e.g., Roeder 1904, Rosier 1962 and Kimmens 1979).

\textsuperscript{202} See also further OE Psalter versions for Psalm 36, verse 16.
The subsequent figure shows the distribution of *wædla* in the three text categories gloss, prose and verse.

![Figure 22: *wædla* in different text types in the DOEC (in percent)](image)

OE *wædla* and its related forms occur in the Psalter Glosses in particular. The word is typical of religious and monastic writings, only marginal evidence of *wædla* is provided in poetic texts such as *Christ*, for example, while the metrical *Paris Psalters* figure most prominently in this text category. Legal texts are not represented at all; only the noun *wædle* ‘poverty’ is attested in isolated examples in this text type, while homiletic texts reveal the word in coupled with various other concepts such as nakedness (see *Blickling Homily* on the First Sunday in Lent, Morris 1874-80, line 193ff) and illness (see Ælfric’s ‘Saint Life of Saint Thomas’ Skeat 1881-1900, line 192f), for example. Furthermore, the adjective is used to refer to Lazarus in Ælfric’s *Catholic Homily* for Second Sunday after Pentecost (Clemoes 1997: 365, lines 6). The subsequent chart shows the proportional frequencies of *wædla* in the DOEC and the quotations database of the MED.

![Figure 23: *wædla* in the DOEC and the MED quotations database](image)

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203 Only a selection of texts is given here for illustration.
The figure shows a drastic drop in the frequency of the word in Middle English, even though the word was rather frequent in Old English. The MED attests two adjectives: *wedle* (< OE *wædla*) and *wedli* (< OE *wædlig*), also used nominally, which are defined as “poor, needy” (see the corresponding MED entries). Similar to ME *hen*, the adjective *wedle* is mainly preserved in early ME texts.

These minor occurrences of *wedle* in early Middle English underline the fact that the word was archaic as early as the 12th century. A plausible reason for this infrequency can be related to the fact that more than half of all OE matches occur in glosses, which also suggests that *wædla* predominantly was used in highly specific learned monastic contexts. The complete texts of the Ormulum and the Caligula version of Layamon’s *Brut* provided in the CME archive also reveal only isolated occurrences. The ultimate obsolescence of *wædla* can be correlated to French and Latin influence in the ME period, as well as to semantic changes. *Inops*, for example, is mainly translated as *nedy* in ME (see section 4.4.5), while Latin *pauper* comes to be expressed by the French loan *poor*. But another new loan word, *beggar* ‘mendicant, pauper’, replaces the native word *wædla* at least in the sense of ‘beggar’ in the course of the later ME period, as for example shown in Psalm 39, verse 18 in the early ME version of the Wycliffite Bible (Forshall and Madden 1850). Similarly, Psalm 39, verse 23 of the Midland Prose Psalter (Bübring 1891) uses the newly borrowed words *beg* and *poor*, while the Northern Prose Psalter (Bübring 1891) reveals the verb *thiggen* and the French adjective *poor* for Latin *mendicus* (see MED for the verb *thiggen* and the gerund *thigginge*; see also OED, *thig*, v.). Although most occurrences of *beggar* in the MED quotations database are attested in the 14th and 15th centuries, marginal evidence in texts such as the Ancrene Wisse (early 13th century) reflects early stages of lexical change. Further evidence from 15th-century glossaries exemplifies the differences in the interpretation of Latin lemmata as well as lexical change. The Catholicon Anglicum supplies the adjective “[d]efauty” for Latin *mendicus* among others (Heritage 1881: 93; see MED, *defauti*, adj.).

The loan word *beggar* is of unknown origin according to the OED. The dictionary suggests Old French *begart* as the most probable origin (cf. OED, *beg*, v., sense 7, note). The source states furthermore that the “Beghards” or “Beguins” were a lay mendicant order that was spread over Western Europe in the 13th century (cf. OED, *beg*, v., sense 7, note). Greimas (2001: 61), however, defines both *begart* and *beguin* as ‘heretic, hypocrite, fool’. The inference of these latter attributes via subjectification thus seems to have influenced the ultimate use and meaning of English *beggar* which generally denotes a person asking for alms (cf. OED, *beggar*, n.). The proportional frequency of the noun *beggar* in the MED quotations database is shown in Figure 24 below.

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204 The present participle *wedliende* has been included in the subsequent analyses. Nominal uses denoting ‘poverty, mendicancy’ as well as the verb *wædlan* are excluded. Mercian variants *weðla* and *wedle* are included. Regarding MW forms, both adjectives *wedle* and *wedli* have been considered.

205 See 12th-century homilies, Layamon’s *Brut* (Brook and Leslie 1963, lines 2989, 250), the 13th century Worcester Ælfric glosses (see Worcester Ælfric Glossary, Butler 1981: 540, 10) and the Ormulum (Holt 1878, line 5638).
The development of mendicant orders during the 13th century can be correlated to the increasing use of beggar in Middle English. As wedle was largely used in glosses in Old English and traditional early ME religious writings, the developments of clerical groupings reveal the need for new and specialised terms such as beggar or the Latinate term mendicaunt. Only a few isolated examples of Latinate mendicaunt are attested in the MED quotations database though.

As expected, the OED only supplies marginal evidence of wædle (for definitions see OED, wædle, a. and n.), generally confirming the results provided by the MED and the CME. Thus, the word must have been considered archaic in the 12th century and ultimately became obsolescent in the course of the early 13th century. But the OED reveals prolific evidence for various terms denoting ‘beggar’ in post-1500 texts. The noun thigger in the sense of ‘beggar’ is attested for 1424 and marked as Scottish. The OED furthermore shows that slang is very creative and productive regarding terms for beggar, especially as documented in post-medieval periods. A search of the OED online provided post-1500 lexical evidence such as clapperdudgeon (1567), gablerlunzie (1508), maunder (1609), moocher (1857), mumping (a2, 1709), plinger (1904) and peg-legger (1937) and shake-rag (1571), for example. Even the sir name of the British philanthropist Thomas John Barnado serves as an attribute for “homeless children”, who are raised in homes which were founded by him (see OED, Barnado).

These examples show how diverse the results of the lexico-semantic development turn out to be. Especially slang is very productive when it comes to ‘new’ word creations motivated by a variety of factors such as metonymic shifts, pragmatic inferences and emotional language (e.g., clapperdudgeon and peg-legger), as well as socio-cultural factors (e.g., Barnado). Unfortunately, the historical linguist is deprived of this spoken data with regard to the medieval period. But the processes and factors involved can be observed both in written and spoken registers.

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206 See for example explicit mentioning of ‘orders of beggars’ in Pecock’s Repressor (Babington 1869, 483), Trevisa’s ME version of Higden’s Polychronicon (Babington and Lumby 1865-86, 8.259) or the prose Brut for 1377 (Brie 1908: 331, 18). For general accounts on religious poverty see Little (1978) and Flood (1975).

207 As of 09/10/06.
4.4.4 *wretch*: from exile to misery

The *OED* states that the semantic development of English *wretch* reveals considerable differences to German (see *OED*, *wretch*, a. and n., etymology section). OHG *reccheo* had the meaning ‘exile, adventurer, knight, errant’ and *recke* practically has the same meaning in MHG and Modern German (‘warrior, hero’; see *OED*, *wretch*, a. and n.), while English *wretch* developed a completely different meaning. The original sense ‘exile’ (*OED*, *wretch*, a. and n., A.1.) became obsolescent and various new senses developed, caused by metonymic processes based on pragmatic inferences. In contrast to German, the modern English noun *wretch* denotes a person “sunk in deep distress”, “a poor or hapless being” (for further detail see *OED*, *wretch*, a. and n., A.2.). The different meanings of the adjective *wretch* referring to persons (see *OED*, *wretch*, a. and n., B.1.) became obsolescent and this form of the adjective was ultimately replaced by *wretched*. Although a number of words such as *wretcheddom*, *wretchedhede* and *wretchful* have disappeared from the lexical inventory, the words were productive and used frequently according to the *OED*. The *MED* quotations database confirms this highly frequent use of *wretch* and its derivational forms.

The *TOE* does not list *wrecca* among the terms expressing poverty, although the word semantically develops senses referring to misery and poverty in the course of the late OE period (see Schreuder 1929: 82ff, Hall 1960: 421; see also Bosworth and Toller 1954: 1273). Evidence from OE-Latin glosses illustrates the different meanings of *wrecca*. In the *Cleopatra Glosses*, for example, *wrecca* translates various Latin lemmata referring to exile (see e.g., Stryker 1951, gloss numbers 2079, 2269 and 2307). But *wrecca* also glosses Latin *incola* in Psalm 38, verse 13 of *Eadwine’s Canterbury Psalter* (Harsley 1889), for example (for further evidence see the various Psalter versions). By using *wrecca* the glossators reveal their inferences and the connotations they had in mind: humans are exiles, foreigners, and temporary guests on earth. These senses, in particular, are for example revealed in Psalm 68, verse 9 and Psalm 93, verse 6 of the *Lambeth Psalter* (Lindelöf 1909a), where the vernacular word translates Latin *peregrinus* and Latin *advenam* ‘foreigner’ respectively (see also further Psalter glosses). Yet further senses can be detected in the different Psalter glosses which demonstrate that the lexeme is polysemous in later Old English (10th and 11th century). The *Stowe Psalter* (Kimmens 1979, Psalm 68, verse 30) reveals *wrecca* for Latin *dolens*,208 while the *Lambeth Psalter* (Lindelöf 1909a) reveals *wrecca* as the vernacular translation of Latin *pauperem* in Psalm 9, verse 30. Furthermore, in Psalm 34, verse 10 of the same Psalter version Latin *egenum* is translated as “wreccan”; Psalm 37, verse 7 exemplifies the sense ‘miserable’ of the OE word (Latin *miser*). Finally, the glosses to the Epistle of Jerome to Damasus (Skeat 1871-87, sentence no. 3 assigned by *DOE*) reveal “Godes wracco” as the vernacular equivalent of Latin *sacrilegum*.

The ultimate semantic change of *wretch* is similar to *gesælig* (silly), i.e. subjective attitudes based on pragmatic inferences are involved, resulting in the development of new senses such as

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208 Compare the translation of Latin *dolens* as *sarig(ende)* in Psalm 68, verse 30 in the *Vespasian Psalter* (Kuhn 1965) among others, for example.
'miserable, poor'. According to Schreuder (1929: 82) the direction of the meaning change is already indicated in the OE period, as shown in the polysemy of the noun *wrecc* ‘exile, misery’ and occasional uses of *wrecca* in the sense ‘wretched person’ in Old English (Schreuder 1929: 83). The close link between the two conceptions is revealed in OE texts where exiles are usually described as miserable creatures. As already pointed out by Schreuder (1929: 83), both objective and subjective meaning do play an important role in the ultimate semantic development of *wretch*. As Schreuder (1929: 84) has shown “‘wretch’ […] passed into another sphere of meaning and came morally to imply worthlessness.” This means that the nature or qualities attributed to a *wrecca* strongly imply misery, as well as further negative aspects coupled with ‘poverty’ and underline the process of subjectification – i.e. in form of emotive language – as the major change to be observed. The development of a moral sense and the implication of pity are regarded as the final stage in the meaning change by Schreuder and this “process was already completed before Chaucer” according to Schreuder (1929: 84). As has been shown, the word had already developed various different senses in Old English and the MED definitions reveal ‘ethical’ senses relating to misfortune, hardship, poverty and contempt (see below).

The semantic development is predictable to some extent and this can be observed in various passages in the OE texts. The ‘old’ sense ‘hero’ is only attested in early heroic texts, such as in *Beowulf* (Dobbie 1953, line 898) and the *Battle of Finnsburh* (Dobbie 1942: 3, line 25) for example, and is still semantically close to its German cognate ‘Recke’. But the components of exile and solitude are clearly indicated in early texts, such as the OE poems *Wife’s Lament* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 210, line 10), *Resignation* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 218, line 91), *Beowulf* (Dobbie 1953, line 2612) and the *Descent into Hell* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 220, line 62f). Furthermore, in the Anglo-Saxon *Will of Mantat* (Hart 1966, line 1 [Sawyer 1968]), “Godes wræcca” is used figuratively to refer to a kind of ‘social exclusion’ and ‘spiritual exile’ of a hermit. This figurative use is also attested in the OE poem *Genesis* (Krapp 1931: 4, line 39ff) for example, referring to the angels driven out of Heaven. Further moral implications can be clearly observed in passages where the devil or other evil spirits are described as *wrecca* or *earm* (cf. section 4.4.6), while misfortune and unhappiness are clearly implied in the OE *Boethius* (Sedgefield 1899: 124, chapter 39, line 24). Wickedness is implied in the OE *Juliana*, for example, where the ‘fiend’ is described as a faithless, vile creature (see Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 123, line 351). Depending on topic, context and text type the word has developed a panoply of senses based on invited pragmatic inferences in the OE period.

In late Old English, the adjective *wrecc* is used in combination with *soul* and *life* and continues to be used frequently in the ME data. I would assume therefore that the moral implications and the specifically religious contexts have contributed to the ultimate change of meaning. The word very often relates to the banishment of Adam and Eve, the sufferings caused by the torments of hell or any other punishments, be they human or divine. The sense relating to contempt can therefore be inferred. An exile or an outcast person, as well as people, who suffer punishment and pain, arouse pity.

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209 Spelling used in the entry in Bosworth and Toller (1954).
Consequently, the word generalises its meaning to refer to contemptible, miserable or poor persons. The subsequent figure shows the proportional frequency of *wretch* (both as noun and adjective) in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database.

![Figure 25: wretch in the DOEC and the MED quotations database](chart)

The chart reveals that the frequency of *wretch* practically doubled in the ME period. The *MED* defines the adjective *wrecche* as “[s]ubjected to hardship […] miserable […]” (*MED, wrecche*, adj., sense 1.a.) and “poor, indigent; also low in social and *economic* status, […] humble” (*MED, wrecche*, adj., sense 1.c., emphasis added). This latter sense is sometimes “difficult to distinguish from [sense 1., B.K.] a” according to the *MED*, while the ‘old’ sense ‘exile’ is no longer attested. The former OE senses ‘outcast, expelled’ can in turn also be expressed by the rare Latinate word *abject* (see *MED, abject*, sense 1) or the noun *exil* in late Middle English (see *MED, exil*, n. (2)). Furthermore, *wretch* can be used to refer to a ‘contemptible person’ (see *MED, wrecche*, adj., sense 2.a.). In addition, the economic aspect – which is also closely related to sin – is reflected in the sense “miserly” and “miser” (*MED, wrecche*, adj., sense 2.a. and *wrecche*, n., sense 2.b. respectively).

As mentioned in one of the previous paragraphs, moral inferences largely contributed to the semantic development of the word *wretch*. This, for example, is also reflected in the use of the adjective *wretched* in specific text types in the *MED* data. In wills, the authors usually describe themselves as ‘wretched souls’ and refer to their ‘wretched body’ (see Page-Turner 1914: 16). The wills represented in the *MED* and the *CME* show the writer’s humbleness regarding the last judgement. The writers usually long for the divine Paradise and wish to be taken ‘out of this wretched world’ (see Furnivall 1882: 57, 2). But not only in these 15th-century wills can this specific use be observed. The ME texts generally reveal the adjective as a modifier for both human body and soul. In addition, life and the world often carry the attribute ‘wretched’, which has already been observed in late OE texts as well. The noun *wretch* is therefore frequently used with premodifying adjectives

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210 The quantitative account as well as the qualitative analysis of the ME data comprises the adjectives *wretch* and *wretched*, and the noun *wretch*, denoting a person, while the noun *wretch* (OE *wraec*) ‘misery, exile, pain, punishment, vengeance’ has been excluded in the following chart.
which refer to negative issues such as *unworthy* (Lumiansky and Mills 1974: 253, 52), *woful* (Horstmann 1895: 303), *false* (Westlake 1913: 8, 1), and *cursed* (Skeat 1873, 11.219) just to mention a few. But also near-synonyms are used together with *wretch* such as in the *Ormulum* (see Holt 1878, line 5638) for example.\(^{211}\) Furthermore, ‘wretched’ is used for morally despicable (abstract) notions such as lechery (see Wycliffe, *Lantern of Light*, Swinburn 1917: 45, 12), usury (see *Orcherd of Syon*, Hodgson and Liegey 1966: 282, 10) and covetous behaviour (see *Syth in thys world*, MacCracken 1913, line 67), for example. With regard to economic connotations *wretch* is used in the sense of ‘miser’ in Chaucer’s *Tale of Melibee*, for example (see Benson 1988: 233, B.2793). This meaning can be explained by the fact that misers are considered contemptible persons and avarice is regarded as one of the seven deadly sins. But the adjective *wretch(ed)* is not used for humans exclusively. The word can also be used with things to denote shabbiness and meanness (see e.g., Irvine 2004, annal 1128, line 15). Evidence from the *CME* suggests that the word is even more frequent in Middle English. The token *wrecche* is attested in 517 matches in the archive.\(^{212}\)

The senses relating to contempt, misery and pity are the prototypical meanings of the word by the ME period. The implication of economic status is first attested in the ME period and persists beyond that period as shown in the following, while the original OE senses ‘wanderer, exile, hero’ are no longer implied in Middle English. The *OED* quotations database is instructive regarding various occurrences of *wretch* in post-1500 data.\(^{213}\) Concerning the sense ‘miser, niggard’ especially, evidence from dictionaries shows that this meaning is still implied in the 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) centuries. The phrase “rich wretch” (1611, translation *Treasure of Tranquility*, 98; see *OED* entries near, a. (and n.) and †niggardish, a.)\(^{214}\) exemplifies that the sense ‘miser’ is used here (see also “covetous Chuff penny wretch” (cf. *OED*, chuff-) attested for 1603).\(^{215}\) According to the *OED*, the sense of ‘miser’ is chiefly Scottish in later usage (cf. *OED*, wretch, a. and n., sense 4). Further examples from the 18\(^{th}\) century include: *gripe* (“an old Covetous Wretch”, a1700, *A New Dictionary of the terms ancient and modern of the Canting Crew, OED*), *hunks*, a “base, covetous wretch” (1706, *The New World of English words, or a general dictionary, OED*).\(^{216}\) Furthermore, *stockjobber* (18\(^{th}\) century) and *wire-drawer* (19\(^{th}\) century) are defined as ‘low or covetous wretches’ respectively (see *OED*, stock-jobber, wire-

\(^{211}\) The adjective *unsel* is defined as “wretched, miserable, lowly” among others in the *MED*. The word is of ON origin, and its use in the *Ormulum* is not surprising as Orm is associated with Lincolnshire. Consequently, a number of Scandinavian elements can be observed in this text.

\(^{212}\) *Wrec*\(^{\text{c}}\) has been checked in the archive.

\(^{213}\) The discussion is based on the data provided by the *OED* online as of 23/08/2006.


drawer); these lexemes all reveal economic implications. This shows that avarice and usury can be considered timeless ‘sins’, as they were already described extensively in medieval texts. But despite this universality, the linguistic expressions are different, which has to be related to the changing sociocultural framework and to different interpretations of the speakers and writers due to changing historical circumstances. Creative and figurative uses can be particularly observed in slang, as searches for wretch in the OED quotations database yield further lexemes which are used to express wretchedness (see e.g., snidey (1890) and stubberdegullion (1616) in the OED). As the scope is limited the lexemes are merely enumerated to simply show the ‘wealth’ of lexical means to denote wretchedness.

Ultimately, the noun wretch and the adjective wretched have generalised their meanings and are used to denote miserable persons or things. The semantic change of wretch shows that both pragmatic inferences and psychologically motivated, emotive language are responsible for the ultimate development. In early Old English the word was semantically close to its Germanic cognate, while the Psalter glosses and late OE homilies reveal change in the semantic structure of the word. The ME data shows the extensive use of wretch and wretched in diverse text types showing that the original senses referring to exile among others are no longer implied and that – in addition to economic connotations – the more subjective, i.e. moral and pitiful, senses have gained ground.

4.4.5 þearfa and ‘needy’

No trace is left of the adjective and noun þearfa denoting a poor person in the OED and the ME data shows that the word must already have become obsolescent by the ME period.217 The dictionary only attests the obsolete noun thoraf ‘need, necessity’ and the corresponding verb (see OED, thoraf, n. and thoraf, v.).218 Although the noun thoraf is still attested as late as the 14th century according to the MED, the adjective occurs only very rarely in Middle English. Instead, other adjectives such as needy and poor, for example, are used in Middle English, replacing the archaic word þearfa.

In Old English, the noun þearf is used in prepositional phrases to denote need and necessity among others and it also can express lack or want of something (see Hall 1960: 356). The MED attests the noun thoraf ‘need’ as well as a number of ‘set’ phrases (see MED, thoraf, n.).219 The meaning “poverty, indigence” (MED, thoraf, n., sense a) is only implied in one occurrence from the Winteney version of the Benedictine Rule (Schröer 1888: 99, chapter 48, line 7).

Apart from a few exceptions, þearfa occurs mainly as the vernacular equivalent of Latin pauper in the DOEC. Only OE earm and wædla are attested in isolated examples translating Latin pauper. Pearfa is extremely frequent in Old English (see Figure 26 below) and it is the prototypical

217 For definitions of the OE adjective and noun þearfa see Hall (1960: 356). Furthermore, related forms such as þearfend(e), þearfigend, þearfendlic, beþearfende and beþearfod are defined similarly (cf. Hall 1960: 46).
218 See Wood (1905: 102-104) on German dürfen and its cognates.
219 However, the OE noun þearf in the sense ‘need’ is excluded from the quantitative account, as the noun denoting the person who has need and the corresponding quality ‘needy’ are of major interest here.
word denoting the concept ‘poor’ (Latin *pauper*) in the OE written data. The table below shows the proportional frequencies of *þearfa in Old and Middle English as represented in the databases.

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**Figure 26: *þearfa* / *tharf* in the DOEC and the MED quotations database**

The OE data reveals extensive use of the word *þearfa in glosses, but also in legal texts and monastic rules, as well as homilies. More than half of the occurrences, however, are attested in glosses. The antonymic pair *welig – þearfa* translating *dives – pauper* is restricted to the Psalter glosses, while legal usage reveals different oppositional pairs. Nevertheless, similar to the legal formulas, *welig – þearfa* also refers to the totality of the people, i.e. ‘all, everybody’. Especially the appeal to charity and religious poverty is reflected, for example, in Gregory’s *Dialogues*, in chapter 9 on Boniface (see Hecht 1900-07; see also *A Rule for Canons*, Bethurum 1957, line 21; *Institutes of Polity*, Jost 1959, section 7 on instructions for the clergy). As illustrated by the glosses and the selective examples mentioned above, *þearfa* is generally used in Old English referring to ‘poor, needy’ people and thus can be considered the prototypical adjective denoting the concept ‘poor’.

The *MED* defines the adjective *tharf* as “[i]n need, indigent, poor […] meek, humble”. The dictionary merely attests the adjective and the nominal use in early 13th-century glosses (see Butler 1981: 540, 9). Another example shows *þearflic* glossed as *neodlic* in the Worcester glosses to OE manuscripts (Crawford 1928: 22) suggesting that *þearflic* was considered archaic and was ‘in need’ of a definition. Apart from these 13th-century glossaries and the 13th-century versions of the *Benedictine Rule* (Winteney version, Schröer 1888), ME *tharf* is only attested in 12th-century copies of OE homiletic texts in isolated examples. Therefore, as no further textual evidence has been found in the *MED* quotations database, the word was already considered archaic in the 12th and 13th centuries and language use at the time of copying differed considerably from the conservative use in these texts.

It is striking that this word, which was very frequent in Old English, became obsolescent so rapidly. But OE *þearfa* is typical of monastic and religious contexts, in particular in OE-Latin glosses. Also, the semantic development of *wretch* and *needy*, as well as the French loan word *poor* seem to be

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220 Spelling variants or errors for OE *þearfa* such as *dearfa, þeafan or færfa* are not included in the chart.
crucial factors for the ultimate disappearance of þearfa. Middle English thus recurs to further lexical alternatives to express poverty and need. Interestingly, the adjective needy does not exist as such in Old English. The OE noun nied refers to necessity and hardship (cf. Hall 1960: 249). Hall does not explicitly list the sense ‘poverty’, and only compounds such as niedbehofe, niedful ‘needful’ and nied(be)þearf ‘necessary’ are attested as adjectives in Hall (1960: 249). The only reference to poverty is supplied by the noun niedwædla in Hall’s dictionary (Hall 1960: 249). According to the OED, needy is first attested in the 12th century and is defined as “[p]oor, indigent, necessitous” (OED, needy, a., sense 1). The corresponding noun expresses “want” in Old English already, especially in the phrase have need (cf. OED, need, n., sense 8); it also denotes distress and trouble (see OED, need, n., sense 9.a.). The phrase have need is marked as rare or even obsolete in the OED. In addition, in the ME period Latin egenus and the corresponding noun are interpreted as ‘needy’ in contrast to OE næfig or wædla (see e.g., the ME version of Guy de Chauliac’s Grande Chirurgie (31b/a) and the Pauline Epistles, Powell 1916, 2 Corinthians 8.9).\footnote{Version 1 of Guy de Chauliac’s Grande Chirurgie: MS New York Academy of Medecine 12, Microfilm print, in possession of MED. This of course relates to the Latin data provided in annotations of the ME databases consulted. See also the 15th-century Promptorium Parvulorum (Way 1843-65: 409) for Latin-ME glosses.}

The subsequent table shows the proportional frequencies of needy and poor as compared to OE and ME tharf.

![Figure 27: OE þearf, ME tharf and semantic variants in ME\footnote{Based on DOEC and MED quotations database. The variant “node” for nedi as found in the Homily on the Pater Noster in Lambeth MS 487 (Morris 1868, 69/269) is not included in the chart.}]

In the MED quotations database needy exclusively denotes poor people. The earliest occurrence in the database is dated to 1225 in the Homilies in Lambeth MS 487 (Morris 1868, 135). This date refers to the date of the copy of a presumably OE homily, as the OED dates the same text source to 1175, which in turn refers to the date of composition. Apart from the early example attested for the 12th or 13th century, the adjective is mainly used in 13th- and 14th-century texts.

The core meaning of the noun need has not changed as such and the corresponding adjective is first attested in the ME period. The noun reflects the main semantic components of ‘need’ and
‘distress’ and the adjective ultimately developed according to these core senses. It is also remarkable to note that the German cognate *nötig* exclusively preserves the sense ‘needy’ referring to what is necessary, rather than being used in the proper sense of ‘poor’ (see German *bedürftig*).

**4.4.6 earm, arm**

OE *earm* ‘poor’ can be derived from Germanic *arma* and cognates are found in all modern Germanic languages today, except in Present-day English (cf. Weisweiler 1923: 304; Wirth 1966: 92; cf. *OED*, *arm*, a., and arming n., both obsolete now). Weisweiler (1923) and Schücking (1915) have provided analyses of this adjective. Schücking (1915: 32f) restricted his discussion of *earm* to OE poetry, however. He exemplified different semantic nuances, but according to him the ‘core’ meaning is ‘isolated, abandoned, solitary’ (cf. Schücking 1915: 32). According to different contexts, the word stresses different components such as desolation or loneliness and material need (see Schücking 1915: 32f). The subsequent analysis accomplishes Schücking’s sketchy and highly restricted observations by taking into account the DOEC in order to supply a quantitative distribution of the senses and uses provided by the data.

First, the glosses reveal the Latin equivalents of Anglo-Saxon *earm* as illustrated in the table below. As Wirth (1966: 95) already pointed out *earm* is often the vernacular equivalent of Latin *miser*. The quantitative account of the Latin lemmata and the vernacular equivalents is revealed in the subsequent distribution in the DOEC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin lemma</th>
<th>percent(^{223})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>miser</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pauper</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calamitus</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egens</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inopis</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misellis</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ignobili</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>70 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OE earm and Latin equivalents in the DOEC glosses\(^{224}\)**

As revealed in the table above ‘miserable’ is the core sense of OE *earm*, followed by ‘poor’. According to Weisweiler (1923: 318 and see reference in Wirth 1966: 95), the sense ‘poor’ is particularly observed in word pairs such as *eadig – earm* or *rice – earm* (see also sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.1 respectively).

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\(^{223}\) Percentages relative of all occurrences in the glosses.

\(^{224}\) Legal texts have been included based on the Latin versions provided in Liebermann (1960a [1903-16]). *Pauper* includes the lemma *paupercula* and the double gloss *pauper et mediocris*.
Relating to the original sense ‘solitary’, Weisweiler (1923: 306) has referred to a ‘special use’ of *earm* in combination with *wrecca*: ‘poor in company’ (see Weisweiler 1923: 311, also quoted in Wirth 1966: 93) is the more specialised sense of *earm* in this context. In a number of OE texts the adjective is used as a characterisation of *wrecca* ‘wanderer, exile’ (see Weisweiler 1923: 306f for examples which are not included in Schücking’s discussion). The question arises whether the old sense ‘lonely’ proposed by Schücking and Weisweiler is implied in these examples or whether different meanings such as ‘miserable’ can be observed. As already referred to in Wirth (1966) and Weisweiler (1923), the old sense ‘exile, solitary’ is underlined by further attributes such as *wineleas* (*Maxims* I, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 162, line 173) and *anhaga* ‘wretched solitary’ (*Beowulf*, Dobbie 1953, line 2368; see also *Maxims* II, Dobbie 1942: 56, line 19; *Wanderer*, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 135, line 40).

The special sense of ‘in want of God’ (see Weisweiler 1923: 311, cf. Wirth 1966: 93) can be observed in connection with the devil and evil spirits in Old Germanic dialects. As Wirth already pointed out *earm* is often used as a characteristic attribute of the devil (cf. Wirth 1966: 93). But not only the devil was considered to be *earm*, evil and wicked persons or things in general were also considered to be *earm*, especially relating to criminal intent (Weisweiler 1923: 309). Therefore, as pointed out by Weisweiler (1923: 309), *earm* is used as an attribute for the devil, in combination with *æglaca* (e.g., *Christ and Satan*, Krapp 1931: 137, line 73), *gast* (*Guthlac*, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 58 and 62, lines 297 and 437, for example), *andsaca* (*Guthlac*, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 55, line 210) and *heap* (*Christ and Satan*, Krapp 1931: 138, line 87), for example. Further adjectives such as *hean* and *unlæd* (e.g., *Juliana*, *Christ and Satan*) and *earmsceapen* (*Andreas*) referring to Satan are found (see Weisweiler 1923: 309). Although Weisweiler (1923: 309) disagrees with Schücking’s (1915) claim that the sense ‘miserable’ also implies the sense ‘evil’ in these contexts, I think that this meaning seems plausible. Weisweiler, however, thinks that the sense ‘evil’ is too far-fetched as he believes that first indications of an ‘ethical meaning’ can be observed in these examples (cf. Weisweiler 1923: 309). This ethical meaning is closely linked to the socio-cultural context, in particular Christianisation. The devil was considered a faithless and godless fellow and similar descriptions are consequently observed for heathens (*Phoenix*) for example, for damned persons (*Exodus*) or for sinners and poor souls (cf. Weisweiler 1923: 309, see “Tuesday in Rogationtide”, Bazire and Cross 1982, line 89ff). In addition, the OE data provides numerous examples of ethical senses, especially in co-occurrences of *earm* and near-synonyms (see *Ælfric Catholic Homily* “Circumcision”, Clemoes 1997: 230, line 186; Bede, Book 3, Miller 1890-98: 222, chapter 15, line 22; *Boethius*, Sedgefield 1899: 60, chapter 26, line 2 and *Vercelli Homily* no. 22 Scragg 1992, line 190), for example). The implication of evil and

225 The DOEC reveals even further examples which are not included in any of these previous studies (see *Exodus*, Krapp 1931: 106, line 533, the *Saint Life of Nicholas*, Treharne 1997, line 293ff and the *Benedictine Rule*, Schröer 1888: 23, chapter 4 line 18).
226 See Weisweiler (1923: 309; see also in Wirth 1966: 93) for further detail on Satan in Old Germanic thought.
227 The juxtaposition of *eadig* ‘blessed’ used for saints and *earm* used for the devil has been pointed out by Wirth (1966: 96).
wretchedness is also observable in the use of *earm* as an epithet for the Jews in the OE data (e.g., Ælfric’s homily “Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost”, Clemoes 1997: 411, line 38).

According to Weisweiler (1923: 311) these two semantic components – exile, loneliness and faithlessness – are the basis of the further development of *earm*, as the Christianised ethical senses reveal that the perspective of the speaker/hearer towards people who are *earm* is important, i.e. an essential aspect relates to what position is taken with regard to the poor (see Weisweiler 1923: 311). Emotive discourse therefore figures as an important factor in the communication strategies in religious texts.

The adjective furthermore develops the sense ‘poor’, common in West Germanic in general (cf. Wirth 1966: 95). The reference to material need is present in Anglo-Saxon laws, in particular in word pairs such as *ge earm ge eadig* (Latin *pauper et dives; sive locuples sive egens*) (cf. Weisweiler 1923: 318, Wirth 1966: 95f). As Liebermann (1960b [1903-16]: 288) points out ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ are one of the main differences in society and therefore refer to the totality of people. In other cases however, the phrase emphasises the differences between social ranks (see Liebermann 1960a [1904-16]: 288, also quoted in Wirth 1966: 95). Furthermore, examples from the OE *Boethius* (Sedgefield 1899: 66, chapter 9, line 11 and Sedgefield 1899: 21, chapter 11, line 3) revealing *earm* in co-occurrence with *unmihtige* and *unæþele* point to this socio-political dimension, while the co-occurrence of *earm* and *ungesælig* (Sedgefield 1899: 62, chapter 27, line 14) refers to the psychological realm of unhappiness. Although Wirth (1966: 96) classified such antonymic phrases as ‘Germanic legal formulae’, such oppositional pairs are used in other text genres as well and the overall frequency in the legal texts is even lower (8) than in homilies and other religious texts (14). In poetry, the ‘traditional’ phrase is also motivated for alliterative reasons. Furthermore, evidence from medieval prognostics has been neglected in previous studies. In such medieval prophecies based on the phases of the moon (Förster 1912b) the prediction for the 28th day reads *earm ne welig* in the OE versions (Förster 1912b: 26), while the Latin version for this day of the month reads *neglegens erit* (Förster 1912b: 20), which in turn is translated in an interlinear gloss as *gimeleas he bið* (Förster 1912b: 20; ‘careless, negligent’). The Latin version is not translated literally in the OE texts. In lunar 28 *earm* refers to material need as it is used in opposition to *welig*. The Latin version for the 18th day reads *non diu uiuet*, accompanied by the vernacular interlinear gloss rendering the Latin as “na lan[gie] he ne leofað” (Förster 1912b: 19). The OE version W (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, No. 391) of the lunar reads “*earm* & *geswingful*”, while versions C (Caligula A. XV. fol. 132a) and T (Tiberius A.III fol. 41a-b) use the attribute *gesælig* (Förster 1912b: 24). In this OE version of the prophecy *earm* more likely refers to misery as implied by *geswingful* ‘troubled’. The discrepancy between both the Latin version and the different OE versions is striking; furthermore, an 18th-century translation of the lunar

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228 See also Leisi (1952: 269) on the identification of material possession (i.e. wealth) and social rank. He points out that *eadig* and *earm* refer to the social rank in the Latin translation (*nobili, ignobili* in Æthelred VI, ca. 1008), while the *Quadripartitus* (1114, Cnut) reads Latin *dives* and *pauper* revealing a more economic perspective (Leisi 1952: 269).
printed in Förster (1912b: 26ff) provides yet a different ‘interpretation’. As pointed out in earlier sections, this text type is subject to strong individual and thus invited inferences.

In Ælfric’s homilies the adjective *earm* is very frequently used, also in the traditional formulas such as *eadig – earm* and *rice – earm*, for example. It is difficult, however, to distinguish between the sense ‘miserable’ in general and the material misery, i.e. in the sense of ‘poor’, as both senses are implied. Most frequently, the adjective is used to refer to humans.\(^2^{29}\) In addition, misery and pity are evoked in the following occurrences: *earm* often characterises disfigured, sick, foolish, poor and socially low persons, for example. Textual evidence from Old English thus supplies ‘one crippled by fire’ (*Guthlac*, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 75, line 912), a fool (“Saint Maur”, Skeat 1881-90, line 203), and sick (Pope 1967-8, addition to *Catholic Homily*, second series, no. 36, line 97), for example. Furthermore, the sense of unhappiness and misery is exemplified in co-occurrences with *ungesælig* (see *Meters of Boethius*, Krapp 1932b: 177, metre 19, line 41; *De duodecim abusivis*, Morris 1968, line 208) and *unhydig* ‘foolish’ (*Boethius*, Sedgefield 1899: 59, chapter 26, line 3) as well as *þrealic* ‘calamitous’ (*Seasons for Fasting*, Dobbie 1942: 98, line 20).

Other collocations of *earm* are attested for the human body, soul and earthly life, in particular relating to Judgement Day and death in general. In such passages the human ephemeral body is considered wicked and wretched compared to the soul’s eternal spiritual life, but also the ‘poor’ soul (used metonymically to refer to the human being as well) is often described as *earm*, as for example in the *Apocalypse of Thomas* (Förster 1955, line 2). The adjective is also used to characterise voice (see Second Sunday after Pentecost, Clemoes 1997: 365, line 12) and places or buildings (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, see O’Brien O’Keeffe 2001, annal 1011, 28).

The adjective is used in Old English in a variety of different senses: from the earliest senses denoting loneliness, as well as faithlessness, the sense ‘poor’ referring to both material deprivation, moral poverty and pity ultimately develops. It becomes obvious that pragmatic inferences, based on emotional and subjective associations lead to this semantic change of *earm*. The figure below shows the proportional frequencies of *earm* in the *DOEC* and the *MED* quotations database.

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\(^{29}\) See Weisweiler (1923: 305) on the popular combination of ‘poor, widows and orphans’ in West Germanic ecclesiastical and legal language.
As shown in the chart above, *earm* is used very frequently in Old English, while the adjective is only attested in a very small number of occurrences in Middle English. The ME texts in which the adjective *arm* is mainly used are dated to the 12th and 13th centuries. The latest match can be dated to the late 13th century (Caligula manuscript of Brut), while the 1300 Otho manuscript of Brut no longer attests the use of *earm* in the MED quotations database. A search in the CME for the complete texts of these two versions reveals that the Otho version does indeed no longer use the adjective *arm*, but other lexical alternatives such as the French loan *povre*. In one case “neod-fol” (Brook and Leslie 1978, line 10971) is attested in the Otho version instead of ‘archaic’ *ærmenn* as used in the Caligula version (Brook and Leslie 1978, line 11849, see MED, ned(e)ful, adj.). In addition, the Otho version describes Arviragus as “narwe bi-pronge” (Brook and Leslie 1963, line 4490; cf. OE *nearu*), while the Caligula version uses *ærmliche* instead (Brook and Leslie 1963, line 4705).

Furthermore, the traditional formulas such as the antonymic use in the word pair *edi* and *arme* in the sense ‘rich and poor’ are only found in the Poema Morale (Morris 1967-68, 227) and the Proverbs of Alfred (Arngart 1955: 70, 47). In the Caligula and Jesus College versions of the Owl and Nightingale *arm* is used with near-synonyms such as *ho[g]fule* (Atkins 1922, line 537) and *sori* (Atkins 1922, line 1162). *Arm* seems to be motivated by the rhyming scheme in this poem as the ‘new’ loan word *povre* is used in the two 13th-century manuscript versions as well (line 482). The date of the original poem suggested ranges from about 1189-1216, while later dates have also been proposed (Treharne 2004: 370). The survival of *arm* in these texts reveals several aspects: possible knowledge of traditional literature, alliterative rhyming schemes, as well as oral traditions reflected in poems and proverbs. The ‘set formulas’ are more likely to survive even if words might have been considered archaic.

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230 The archaic character of the Caligula version in contrast to the shorter Otho version has been repeatedly pointed out in previous sections.

231 Compare also the alternative uses of *narwe* and *pore* in Chaucer’s Nun’s Priest Tale (Rickert and Manly 1940, B.4012, variant *pore* added in an annotation by MED). For ME *narwe*, see MED, sense 2.b.
Thus, in the remaining texts the adjective *arm* is used in its traditional function, specifically characterising persons and places\(^{232}\) in the sense “[p]oor, poverty-stricken” (*MED, arm, adj., sense a*) or in the sense “miserable, [...] unhappy” (*MED, arm, adj., sense b; see also sense c*).\(^{233}\) As has been exemplified before, the adjectives *wretch* and *wretched* develop the sense ‘miserable’ and thus take over the semantic role of *arm*. In sum, the adjective *arm* is attested in the ME data in 12\(^{th}\)- and 13\(^{th}\)-century texts. The word does not occur beyond this time limit and it preserves mainly collocations and uses attested in Old English due to fact that many text sources are based on OE originals. Consequently, it is very likely that the word was archaic at the time of copying, as the dates of composition are generally dated to the end of the 12\(^{th}\) century and the early 13\(^{th}\)-century (circa 1175 and around 1225 respectively). Those text sources not based on OE originals still reveal the use of *arm*, but the matches are highly infrequent, though.

The *OED* provides similar examples for the adjective *arm* in terms of dates and definitions. The dates indicated in the *OED*, however, refer to the date of composition only, while the date provided for the *Peterborough Chronicle* specifies the annal 1104. Whether the year of the annal is to be considered equally as the date of the actual written production, is problematic, though.

In contrast to German, English no longer uses the adjective *arm*. Therefore, homonymic clash does not serve as a very good argument for the ultimate loss of *arm* in English, as the word is still used in modern German (see German *Arm* ‘arm’ and *arm* ‘poor’). The above analysis has shown that semantic and lexical change largely contributed to the obsolescence of *earm* in English, as revealed by lexemes such as *wretch* and *poor* – among others – which ultimately replace Anglo-Saxon *earm*. The adjective *earm* develops a number of different senses in the OE period as pointed out in discussions by Schücking (1915), Weisweiler (1923) and Wirth (1966, mainly quotes from Weisweiler 1923). The word originally was associated with loneliness, before the sense ‘miserable’ in general developed as described in the above paragraphs on Old English. The sense ‘poor’, referring to socio-economic status, is a later development and can be observed in very specific contexts, as for example in OE legal texts. In Middle English, the two senses ‘miserable’ and ‘poor’ are still present, but only in specific texts up to the 13\(^{th}\) century at the latest and largely in traditional genres (homilies, chronicle). External factors – French influence leading to lexical restructuring and language-internal shifts – coupled with semantic changes, contributed to the disappearance of the Germanic word from the lexical scene.

\(^{232}\) Only attested in the *Peterborough Chronicle* in the *MED* quotations database: “ærm stede” (Irvine 2001, annal 1013, line 40 Laud version).

\(^{233}\) Similar to Old English, it is often difficult to distinguish between senses (a) and (b) in Middle English, however, in specific contexts the emphasis of material need is clear-cut. This is the case in antonymic pairs, relics of the formula identified in Old English, such as “arme and edi” (*Proverbs of Alfred*, Arngart 1955, 39), for example, and in the copy of the OE homily “De duodecim abusive” where the phrase “earm for wurld” (Warner 1917: 14, 10) is used. Despite some clear-cut examples, the noun phrase “þam earmæn Lazare” (Belfour 1909: 68, line 27f) illustrates that both senses can be implied in Old English.
4.4.7 The growth of money – external changes and lexical change

As Hughes (2000: 62) has pointed out “words are the signs and markers of cultural dominance in the process of social change.” Economic changes are to some extent reflected in several lexical expressions. But also Romance and Latin loanwords reflect the growing importance of money (see section 4.4.7.1 below). Furthermore, a number of Scandinavian, French and Latinate loan words expressing the concept of poverty have entered the English vocabulary in the course of its history (see section 4.4.7.2). As the French loanword poor reveals an important case of a Romance word used as a common word for the concept ‘poor’, it will be discussed in a separate section (see 4.4.7.3).

4.4.7.1 From cattle to money: left without a penny

The OE lexeme feohleas is defined as “without money” by Hall (1960: 115). But the term ‘money’ can be understood in two senses (see section 4.2, footnote 85): the “real money” (Wood 2002: 78) and the so-called “ghost money” (Wood 2002: 70) as a measure of value. Consequently, the noun feoh itself (compare German Vieh) can mean ‘cattle, (moveable) property, money, riches’ (see Hall 1960: 114). The semantic change from the original sense of ‘cattle’ to later monetary implications can be described by a metonymic shift, i.e. the cattle had a certain value and this value ultimately develops as the core sense in terms of monetary value. The adjective feohleas as used in Beowulf (Dobbie 1953, line 2441, see reference in Hall 1960: 115, refers to (material) compensation and reward in general, but without specific reference to money as such. The reward relates to a ‘measure of value’ and thus it can refer to any material objects such as rings, or other valuable treasures. Further evidence for the adjective is provided by three matches of feohleas in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (see Bately 1986, O’Brien O’Keeffe 2001 and Cubbin 1996, annal 896). The adjective is restricted to the OE data, no evidence is provided by the MED or the CME.

The OED, however, attests an adjective feeless, but only in isolated examples from the 18th to the 19th century, in the sense “[w]ithout a fee or fees […]” (OED, feeless, a.). The noun fee in this compound is derived from OF fie according to the OED, which in turn seems to be an adoption of Germanic fehu in the special sense of “wages, payment for service” (see OED, fee, n.², etymology section). The etymology is highly complicated and the histories of both feohleas and feeless are highly obscure and a solution to the etymological problem has to be left open at this stage. What can be observed in any case is a kind of ‘lexical revival’ of Germanic fee in a specialised monetary sense. Even though the “‘take-off” into a monetary economy” (Wood 2002: 79) is considered to have started in the mid-10th century according to Wood (2002: 79), the Anglo-Saxon term feohleas very likely did not imply our modern monetary sense and thus, definitions such as ‘without money’ in dictionaries or thesauri are strongly influenced by modern interpretations.

234 See also Fehr (1909: 8ff) on this so-called ‘ring-money’. 
The lexeme *penniless* is a further option to express poverty, and it can be considered a witness of the developing importance of money in the late Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{235} The word explicitly implies economic poverty as associated with the lack of money in contrast to the ‘old’ association of rank or other kinds of wealth, such as inherited land or moveable possessions, for example. No evidence of the word is found in Old English, thus the word can be related to socio-economic change in the late Middle Ages. According to the *MED*, *peniles* is defined as “poverty-stricken, destitute, penniless” in reference to persons or a country (*MED*, *peniles*, adj., sense a, see also senses b to e; see also *OED*, *penniless*, a. and n.). Only 24 occurrences of the adjective *peniles* are attested in the *MED* quotations database,\textsuperscript{236} mainly in 14\textsuperscript{th}- and 15\textsuperscript{th}-century quotations. First, it most frequently refers to the ‘financial’ condition of persons; second, to ‘empty’ purses – or used metonymically to refer to persons with empty purses (see *MED*, *peniles*, adj., sense b) – and third, to ‘poor’ countries. In some examples the adjective is used together with the adjective *poor*, where *penniless* explicitly emphasises the financial, material ‘poverty’ in contrast to the more general sense of *poor* (see for example *Piers Plowman*, Skeat 1873, Passus 13.27 and *Wynnere and Wastoure*, Trigg 1990, line 393).\textsuperscript{237}

The *OED* data also shows that the adjective is not very frequent in terms of absolute numbers in the pre-1500 periods. Regarding absolute frequencies, the word is prolific in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. In addition, 20\textsuperscript{th}-century quotations (1901-2000) reveal a number of interesting slang terms for ‘penniless’ such as “On the Rory” (see *OED*, *Rory O’More*, sense a) or “boracic” (see *OED*, *boracic*, a., sense 2). These two terms are examples of Rhyming Slang and represent a modern disguise mechanism which obscures the taboo of ‘pennilessness’, i.e. poverty.

Contact-linguistic influence and socio-economic change are reflected in the French loan word *money* which figures in another adjective relating to ‘poverty’ (cf. section 4.3.6.2 on *moneyed*). The *MED* attests the adjective *moneiles* which is restricted, however, to different versions of *Piers Plowman* (see Kane 1960, Passus 8.129 and Skeat 1873, Passus 10.110 and 19.73) and to the ME paraphrase of Vegetius’ *De Rei Militari* (Dyboski and Arend 1935, line 1121). Further textual evidence is needed, though, beyond the dictionary quotations database to determine whether the word was indeed restricted to the above mentioned texts or whether it was even more frequent in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. The *CME* confirms the almost exclusive use in Langland’s dream vision.

The *OED* quotations database confirms the temporal and textual restriction described in the previous paragraph, while isolated quotations are attested for the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries. A few more examples can be found for the 18\textsuperscript{th}, 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, but the adjective is not very frequent in general. Despite its infrequency the word reflects socio-cultural and economic changes, showing the increasing importance of money. But more important is the fact that due to the infrequency of the

\textsuperscript{235} On the growing importance of money see also Classen 2000 on the role of money in late medieval German literature.

\textsuperscript{236} The quantitative account includes the tokens *peniles, penyles(e), penylees, pennyles* and *penneles*.

\textsuperscript{237} With regard to the subject matter of *Wynnere and Wastoure* and the social critique in *Piers Plowman*, these two texts also show that the poets were concerned with the socio-economic developments in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century.
word poverty or ‘moneylessness’ is seen as a taboo area. The adjective *poundless* is attested in three quotations in the *OED* (18th, 19th and 20th centuries, see *OED, poundless*, adj.).

The Latinate word *impecunious* is first attested in the 16th century according to the *OED* and is defined as “[h]aving no money, penniless; in want of money”. The quotations database only reveals evidence for the 16th and mostly for the 19th century, as well as some 20th-century quotations of *impecunious* and derivational forms. The adjective *impecuniary* is only attested in the 19th century. The positive, *pecunious*, is marked as rare in modern use, and although the *OED* states that the opposite “is much more used”, the word does not appear to be very frequent in general modern use based on the evidence of the *OED* data.

4.4.7.2 The mixed lexicon – loanwords continued

*Destitute* originally denotes solitude and ‘social’ poverty (see e.g., the OE interlinear gloss in Kornexl 1993, chapter 2, line 15ff). The word is borrowed in late Middle English and the *MED* attests the following senses: first, the original sense referring to solitude (see *MED, destitute*, adj., sense 1 for further detail); second, the sense of being deprived of something (see *MED, destitute*, adj., sense 2.a.), but it can also refer to ‘lost wealth’ (see *MED, destitute*, adj., sense 2.b.). A third sense refers to lack or need (for more details see *MED, destitute*, adj., sense 3). The first and second sense are now obsolete (see *OED, destitute*, a. (and n.), sense 1 and 2.a.). The major PDE meaning refers to “absolute want” and the need of resources (*OED, destitute*, a. (and n.), sense 3). The semantic change implied here can be explained by a metonymic shift based on pragmatic inferences, similar to the one observed in *wretch* (cf. section 4.4.4). The social deprivation in turn can result in want and need of (material) resources. In the *MED*, the adjective *destitute* is attested in 59 occurrences. The phrase *destitute of* is most frequently attested with abstract concepts such as joy, comfort, help and friendship among others. Apart from one reference to wealth in the *Wycliffite Bible*, the word shows the prototypical senses ‘desolate, deserted’ in the ME data as illustrated by various examples (see e.g., *Tale of Beryn*, Furnivall 1909, line 1095 and Brut 1436, Brie 1908: 543, line 12).

The first *OED* quotation, in which *destitute* can be attested, is dated to the late 14th century. Reference to material wealth is given in a 15th- and 16th-century quotation (see *OED, destitute a.* (and n.), quotation for 1491-2 and quotation for 1584, see *OED entry sometimes*, adv.). Sense 2.b. in the *OED* – referring to deprivation, without special reference to material wealth – is mainly illustrated

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238 Only one quotation is attested in the *OED* for this noun for 1930 (see *OED entry warlessness*, as of 18/12/06).
239 As of 18/12/06, draft revision December 2006. Earlier searches of the *OED* online only yielded one 19th-century quotation.
240 While *FLOB* and *FROWN* each attest one occurrence of *impecunious* (no occurrence for *pecunious*), a search in Google (as of 28/09/06) yielded roughly 15,000 results for *impecunious* on pages ending in .uk, 112,000 results were attested for pages ending in .com. Its opposite, *pecunious*, figured in 377 examples of .com pages, while only 19 matches were attested for pages ending in .uk.
241 Spelling variations have been taken into account as indicated in the *MED* entry (*destitut(e), destituit, destitute, destitut, disposit and destitu*). Furthermore, I checked all these forms with the orthographic variant <y> instead of <i>. Manuscript variants have also been included, i.e. different forms occurring in the ‘same’ text, but in different manuscript versions.
by quotations from various 16th and 17th dictionaries such as Palsgrave’s *Lesclarcissement de la langue française* 1530 (1852, 310/1),242 or *A new general English dictionary* (1740) by Dyche and Pardon243 and Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English language* (1755), for example.244 The word occurs most frequently in 19th-century quotations (1801-1900) and these text sources reveal the word mainly in the phrase *destitute of* in specialised, scientific discourses, but also the plain use of the adjective *destitute* in the sense of ‘poor’. 20th-century quotations show the same trend, but the word is less frequently used according to the *OED* quotations database. Consequently, the adjective reveals restrictive use in specialised, sophisticated and technical discourses, as demonstrated by the last quotation dated to 2000 in a technical discourse, i.e. in a botanical, scientific context in particular (Bot-Rev. Nexis 1 Apr. 155, see *OED*, *placentiferous*, adj.). According to the ME data, the word is not frequent, but it is a mark of formal language use in specific socio-political and medical discourse in late medieval English.

The semantic change of *destitute* is comparable to the development of *wretch*, as it shows that solitude and forsakenness are similar to exile and social exclusion. The inferences which can be drawn therefore motivate the development of senses relating to material resources: exclusion from the social organisation usually results in material hardship.

As illustrated in various preceding sections Latin *inops* is translated by various different the vernacular lexemes in the *DOEC*. In contrast to Old English, the groundbreaking change of the lexical character of the English language in the course of the ME period can be observed in a number of different vernacular translations of the Latin word *inops* in the *MED*, for example, ‘needful’ in the 15th-century Medulla glosses (34a(2)/b)245 and ‘needy’ in Chaucer’s 14th-century ME version of Boethius’ *Consolatio* (Benson 1988, Book 2 pr.5.37 and pr.7.98). The *Midland Prose Psalter* (Bülbbring 1891, Psalm 13 verse 10) reveals “mesais” for the Latin lemma and the *Northern Verse Psalter* (Horstmann 1896), for example, reads “helples” (Psalm 108, verse 15). With regard to the ME *inopie* ‘poverty’, no corresponding adjective is attested and the noun itself is merely attested in one example in the *MED* quotations database (*Pauline Epistles*, Powell 1916, 2 Corinthians 8.9).246 The word *inopie* was not common at all and represents an idiosyncratic use of a highly ‘learned’ word (see also *OED*, *inopy*, n. and *inopious*, a.).

Latin *indigent* and its variant forms are glossed in the OE vernacular most frequently by verbal *behofian* “to have need of” (Hall 1960: 39; see e.g., Kornexl 1993, 26.644) and *beþearfan* (see e.g.,

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245 *Medulla Grammatice*, blueprint of Stonyhurst College, Lancashire A.1.10., in possession of *MED* (see *MED* entry *ned(e)ful*, adj.).
246 Similarly, the ME noun *egeste* – defined as “[w]ant, poverty” in the *MED* – is attested only in one example, the *Pauline Epistles* (Powell 1916, 2 Corinthians 8.13).246 Apart from the *Epistles*, the vernacular texts make use of different ‘native’ English and borrowed French lexemes, which is also confirmed by the *CME*. 

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In Middle English, the adjective *indigent* (see *MED, indigent*, adj. for definitions) and its corresponding noun entered the English language via Old French according to the *MED*. The use of these two words might have been influenced by both Latin and French, however. Latin *indigens* and Latin *indigentia* are usually translated as *nedy* and *nedynesse* respectively (e.g., Benson 1988, Boece, Book 3 pr.3 59; and Forshall and Madden 1850, Amos 4.6. respectively) in the ME data. Two further synonyms, which can be used in the sense of ‘poverty’, are attested in the *Promptorium Parvulorum* (Way 1843-65: 340 and 49), glossing “indigencia”: the nouns *mister* and *brest*. The former word is of French origin and carries a number of different senses relating to occupation and handicraft (see *MED, mister*, n. and *OED, mister*, n.¹). The latter lexeme, *brest*, is derived from ON *brestr* ‘burst, want’ (see *OED, brest*, n.) and the *MED* illustrates the senses ‘want’ and ‘need’ in Middle English (see *MED, brest*, n. (2), sense 2.c.). Another important common word should be mentioned in this context: *want* which was also borrowed from Old Norse in the early 13th century, as a result of the English-Norse contact situation.

The earliest use of *indigent* can be dated to 1390 according to the *MED*, specifically in Chaucer’s prologue to the “Man of Law’s Tale” (Benson 1988: 88, B104). The word, irrespective of part of speech, is thus attested from the late 14th century throughout the 15th century in the ME data. Most of the occurrences of this lexeme are found in works by John Lydgate (roughly 44%), followed by Hoccleve (16.9%), while Chaucer and Gower show minor frequencies. The use of this word might have been influenced strongly by the original French and Latin versions. A comparison of the French and Latin originals and their translations is beyond the scope of this study. An interesting aspect, however, is that Lydgate’s works are of high style and therefore the word is also used in a number of allegorical poems. Furthermore, the Romance-Latinate word is a distinctive feature of formal written register, such as in scientific, medical discourse (e.g., Guy de Chauliac), but also in letters and registers.²⁴⁷ This explicit crystallisation of differences in formality is reinforced by the use in the prologue to the “Man of Law’s Tale” (Benson 1988, line 104), revealing the high style and formal register of a learned person. Although the Man of Law claims to tell the story plainly in the introduction to his Tale, the lexical choice is sophisticated compared to other tales. According to the *OED* quotations database, the word was relatively frequent from the 15th to the 18th century. The adjectival use of *indigent* is no longer attested in PDE usage according to the *OED* data, while the nominal use referring to a poor and needy person is still attested in PDE quotations. As for the noun, senses 1 and 3 denoting ‘want’ or ‘need’ in general are obsolete, while sense 2 specifically denoting want and poverty (see *OED, indigence*, n.) is the most frequent sense in the medieval data and prevails in modern usage. Therefore, the meaning of both the noun and the adjective narrowed to refer to (material) poverty specifically, in contrast to the more general meaning of ‘lack, want, need’.

In Old English, Latin *penuria* (type) is glossed by different Anglo-Saxon words such as “henþum l unspoedum” (*Rushworth Gospel of Mark*, Skeat 1871-87, chapter 12, verse 44) and

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²⁴⁷ The term register refers to the text genre here (see *OED, register*, n.¹, sense 1.i.a.)
“wædle” (Durham Proverbs, Arngart 1965, proverb 5), for example. In ME glosses, Latin penuria and egestas are translated as “poverte and nede” in the 15th-century Promptorium Parvulorum (Way 1843-65: 411). The MED furthermore shows Latin penuria translated as penurite ‘scarcity’ and scarste (Hahn 1979, line 418), as well as scarsnes(se) (Exodus 17.3), nedynesse (Deuteronomy 8.9 and 8.3.), mischief (Exodus 17.3) or miseste (Mark 12.44) in the early and late Wycliffite Bible versions (Forshall and Madden 1850), for example. Interestingly, Trevisa translates Latin penuria in his 14th-century version of Higden’s Polychronicon as “greet povert and meschief” (Babington and Lumby 1865-86, 5.51), while the 15th-century anonymous translation of the Polychronicon reveals “pennury” instead. In the course of the ME period, Latin penuria (see also late OF penurie, cf. MED, penurie, n.) entered the lexical inventory of English (see MED, penurie, n. for definitions). 18 matches of the noun have been counted in the MED quotations database, of which 12 examples are used in the sense of ‘poverty’, while 6 examples are attested in the phrase ‘penury of’ in the more general sense (see MED, penurie, n. senses a and b respectively). It is only in post-1500 quotations that adjectival Latin loans derived from post-classical Latin penuriosus (< classical Latin penuria) ‘needy, poor’ are attested in the OED quotations database (see OED, penurous, a). First, the adjective penurous (sense 1.a.) refers to a poor person. Second, the adjective penurious is “rare before [the] 20th cent[ury]” and originally carried the sense “lacking, wanting” (OED, penurous, a.) and later acquires the same sense as penurious. Third, the obsolete and rare word penured is listed in the OED. The word is not frequent at all, and it was most frequently used in the 17th century, while the word still seems to be relatively frequent in the 18th century. The climax during the 17th century can be explained by the general trend of lexical expansion by borrowing from classical languages in this period as a “the result of the intellectual enquiry of the Renaissance” (Hughes 2000: 151). The relatively frequent use in the 18th century as attested by the OED quotations database can be linked to the fact that this period reflects formal and classical lexis in various registers using highly intellectual terms (see Hughes 2000: 228).

ME mischief often denotes ‘need, want and poverty’ (see also MED, mischief, n., sense 2; see OED, mischief, n., sense 1.a., now obsolete; see also sense 9.a.) and the noun is used very frequently in various senses in ME (see MED, mischief, n., senses 1 to 4). The prototypical sense, however, refers to affliction, misery, suffering (sense 1.a.), military hardship (sense 1.b.) and calamity (sense 1.c.). Sense 2 in particular relates to poverty, penury and neediness and according to the OED, this sense is quite often attested in Middle English, which is confirmed by the MED quotations. The core sense of both the noun and adjective, however, is related to harm and malice, and consequently, senses related to these semantic components have survived into Modern English. I have counted 345 matches of the noun mischief in the MED quotations database and indeed a considerable number of examples reflect the ‘old’ sense relating to poverty (see Seymour 1975: 1248, line 13 and Macaulay 1900-1, 3.2387, for example). The French loan word is attested in the MED data mainly in late 14th- and 15th-century
quotations. The corresponding adjective *mischievous* can be used of a person (*OED, mischievous*, a. (and n.), sense 1, obsolete) in the sense of “miserable, needy, poverty-stricken”, but only occasionally according to the *OED*. I have found 42 tokens of the adjective in the *MED* quotations database. The dictionary defines the adjective as “miserable, wretched” (sense a); “the suffering” (as a noun, sense a); “calamitous” (sense b) and “evil” (sense c) among others (see *MED, mischevous*, adj.). But the senses relate to wickedness and calamity, i.e. to a kind of moral and psychological poverty rather than to material poverty. One example, however, clearly reveals the sense ‘poverty-stricken, needy’ as is reinforced by the near-synonyms in the passage from the Wycliffite tract “The Clergy May Not Hold Property” (Matthew 1880, 389).

The relation to poverty as observed in the noun *misease* (see *OED, misease*, n. 1, sense 1) is marked as archaic. The corresponding adjective *misease* (*OED, †misease*, a. and n.) in the sense “[d]istressed, miserable; in want” is no longer used. According to the *OED*, “[t]he special sense ‘poverty, need, want’ appears to be an English development” (*OED, misease*, n. 1, etymology section), although the obsolete adjective *miseasy* defined as “miserable, wretched” in the *OED* and derived from OF *meseisié* meaning “unfortunate, wretched” (late 12th century), reveals the sense ‘poverty-stricken’ also in Anglo-Norman (late 13th century) (see *OED, †miseasy*, a., etymology section). The *MED* attests both the noun *misease* and the corresponding adjective (see *MED, misease*, adj., sense a) and the earliest occurrences are attested in 13th-century versions of the *Ancrene Wisse*, while the adjective is mainly attested in quotations from the 14th century onwards in the *MED* quotations database. The latest occurrence in the *MED* is attested in a 16th-century version of the *Conquest of Ireland* (Furnivall 1896). In total, I have counted 39 tokens of the adjective *misease* in the *MED* quotations database.250 The adjective is used in the phrase *povre and misease* (cf. *MED, misease*, adj., sense b) and further uses of *misease* and near-synonyms are for example attested in the *Conquest of Ireland* (Furnivall 1896: 114, 23) and St. Brendan (Wright 1844: 24) among others.

Further related obsolete words attested in the *OED* are the adjective *miseased* (*OED, †miseased*, a.), as well as the nouns *miseaseness* and *miseasety*, for example. I have the feeling that this French loan word (*misease*) could have functioned as a kind of euphemism, as the noun *ease* originally meant ‘opportunity, ability’ (see *OED, ease*, n., sense 1). Poverty is a taboo and in modern use, in particular, euphemisms such as the phrase *financially underprivileged* are used in this domain. The differentiation of spoken and written register becomes obvious and therefore written registers use rather sophisticated lexical items, while spoken language usually differs considerably from written usage, as especially observed in slang. The spoken register of medieval periods unfortunately cannot be unveiled and research has to restrict itself to the written data and draw conclusions from these surviving textual ‘witnesses’.

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250 Past participle forms of the type *mysesed* (Parson’s Tale, Manly-Rickert 1940, 806) have been included in this quantitative account. Variants indicated in *MED* annotations have not been considered.
4.4.7.3 The invasion of poor – the ‘new’ prototype

The French borrowing poor (from Anglo-Norman povers, pore and Central French povre, see MED, povre, adj.) replaces a large number of ‘old’ native Anglo-Saxon words and becomes the most frequent and therefore prototypical lexical item denoting poverty from the 13th century onwards. The word is defined by the MED primarily as “[l]acking money or material possessions, destitute; needy, indigent” and the word can also denote someone who is “less wealthy” as compared to another person (MED, povre, adj., sense 1.a.). The adjective is furthermore attested in antonymic and synonymic word pairs such as pore and nedi or riche and pore (see MED, povre, adj., sense 1.b.), showing the ultimate replacement of early native pairs such as riche and hene or earm and eadig in the sense “all, everybody” (MED, povre, adj., sense 3). In addition, the adjective can be used as a collective noun, denoting ‘the poor’. Furthermore, the word can be used figuratively to denote spiritual poverty as well as avaricious behaviour (see MED, povre, adj., sense 1.c.). In addition, a specialised meaning of voluntary religious poverty is attested (see MED, povre, adj., sense 1.d. for further details). Sense 2 in the MED illustrates different phrasal uses which will be discussed in a later paragraph. While senses 1 to 3 refer to humans, the adjective can also be used of things (see MED, povre, adj., sense 4), and another semantic nuance implies the aspect of insufficiency or low quality, for example (see MED, povre, adj., sense 1.d. for further details). The final sense 6 reveals the aspect of wretchedness, pity and humbleness. As the definitions show, the new loan word covers a wide range of semantic components which had formerly been expressed by various Anglo-Saxon words discussed in the previous sections (see OE glosses where Latin pauper is translated into the vernacular either as þearfa, wædla, earm, unrice or wræcca).

In contrast to Old English, ME glosses such as the Promptorium Parvulorum (Way 1843-65: 409) show the poor as the vernacular equivalents of Latin pauper. A crucial aspect is the fact that the very first sense listed in the MED refers to material wealth (especially money) and material possessions, while some of the native words do not explicitly imply this material component.

I have counted 3012 tokens of povre in the MED quotations database. This frequency speaks for itself compared to some of the other lexemes investigated. The proportional frequency of poor in the MED has already been shown in figure 27 in section 4.4.5. Roughly 91% of all occurrences are attested in collocations with humans. This use includes also references to Christ who is very often described as a ‘poor man’ in the MED quotations. The senses of the adjective referring to humans range from ‘poor’ as deprived of material possessions to ‘humble’ with regard to social status (see Paston Letters, Davis 1971-76, 4.68), but also as an expression of pity in the Otho version of Layamon’s Brut (Brook and Leslie 1968, line 7203) (see also OED, poor a. (n.), sense 6). Minor collocational uses are found for buildings and places (see Vinaver 1944-47: 618, 1) and clothes

251 Only one singular occurrence of vnweli for Latin pauper (type) is attested in the Northern Verse Psalter (cf. MED, unweli, adj. and OED, unwealy, a.).
252 I have made a great effort to attempt to exclude multiple quotations and to account for a number of orthographic variants, beyond the ones given in the MED entry (povre, adj.). Still, it is possible that multiple quotes might have slipped in or that quotes might have escaped my notice with regard to the large amount of data, which had to be sorted manually.
The adjective is also used with notions such as birth or estate (e.g., Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, Furnivall 1897, line 4388), and degree or human behaviour. Money-based uses are only attested in isolated examples, such as a purse which is ‘poor’ (two matches in Gower and Hoccleve, see below) or ‘poor’ revenues (Ellis 1827: 65). Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* gives evidence for *povre* referring to an empty purse, (see Macaulay 1900-01, 7.2071; see also Hoccleve *Male Règle*, Hammond 1927, 396). Apart from these minor collocational uses, the adjective prototypically occurs in collocations with humans, revealing the different semantic nuances mentioned in the beginning of this section. Either the adjective is used collectively as a noun to refer to ‘the poor’, i.e. low social ranks and underprivileged people in contrast to ruling ranks, or it predominantly modifies man, folk or people in a general way, drawing the dichotomy between high and low, rich and poor.

Official, legal texts – and thus formal writings – as well as wills, registers, letters and Parliamentary Rolls use the adjective *povre* very frequently, which is obviously a result of the post-Conquest diglossic situation and the differentiation of formal and informal registers. 266 matches, i.e. roughly 9% of all occurrences, are found in these text types. Most occurrences are attested in the late ME period (from the 14th century onwards). These text types mirror the ultimate re-establishment of English as official language. In these documents social hierarchy is reflected and the adjective *povre* is used as an epithet to express respect, obedience and humility. Therefore, numerous phrases can be found in the ME data such as in the *Rolls of Parliament* (4.386a and 5.31b, see MED quotations database, see *OED*, *poor*, a. (and n. 1), sense 5.d.). In ME wills the authors bestow possessions or money to poor people. This deed of charity is meant to buy a place in heaven, to save the soul from the purgatory and thus it is a kind of recompense for their sins.

Furthermore, a number of individual authors seem crucial as the use of this adjective is concerned. Wycliffite writings (translation of Bible excluded) roughly make up 7% of all occurrences (208 matches) in the MED quotations database. The CME reveals a total number of 581 occurrences for the token *pore* in the complete Wycliffite texts included in the archive. The early and later versions of the Wycliffite Bible translation (variant manuscript versions included) show an absolute frequency of 112 matches in the MED in contrast to 601 matches of *pore* in the complete text provided in the CME. The Wycliffite tracts and further texts attributed to Wycliffe and the Lollards reveal crucial subject matters such as the exploitation of poor people by covetous clergy and voluntary poverty in religious orders, for example. Poverty can be considered one of the major characteristics of Wycliffe’s doctrine and this is one explanation of the extremely frequent use of this adjective at the end of the 14th century.253 The Romance word also strongly reflects moral debates of the time: poverty and mendicant orders are central topics (see the special use *poor priests* and *poor preachers*, *OED*, *poor*, a. (and n. 1), S.3.); first indications of common welfare are supplied in official texts, while frequent juxtapositions such as high-low and rich-poor imply early democratic pre-stirrings (see Peasant’s

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253 Aston (1993: 107) maintains that “[a]postolic poverty” was a central and crucial matter for Wycliffe; for further detail see Aston (1993, chapter 4).
Revolt in 1381). Furthermore, the vernacular Bible translations in late Middle English (14th century) show that *povre* has completely replaced the ‘old’ Saxon words and is the standard lexeme in use. This is also confirmed by search results from the CME archive.

Lazarus is usually described as ‘pore’ in the ME data (see *Orcherd of Syon*, Hodgson and Liegey 1966: 373, 23, for example) in contrast to OE *earm* (see Belfour 1909: 68, line 27f, for example). Material reference is expressed in phrases of the type *poor of* relating to money (see Diekstra 1968: 35, 25), ‘worldly things’ (see Bramley 1884, Rolle Psalter 24.17) and ‘possession’ (see *Piers Plowman* B-Text, Skeat 1869, Passus 13.301). But the adjective is also used with abstract notions such as *wit* (see e.g., *po ihu Crist*, Morris 1872, 27) and spiritual poverty in the gospel of Matthew 5.3. (Paues 1904), revealing a universal semantic function of *poor*.

Interestingly, phrases such as *poor students* (see Chaucer’s “Miller’s Tale” and “Reeve’s Tale”, Benson 1989: 68, I A 3190 an 79, I A 4002 respectively) seem to be “formulaic” (Benson 1989: 843). Students or scholars without benefices were subject to the assumption to be poor (see Bennett 1974 as referred to in Benson 1989: 850).²⁵⁴

The ‘mixed’ character of the English language at this early stage after the re-establishment of English as official language can be explained by what Hughes (2000: 137) calls “semantic vacuums”. French borrowings were included into those areas of the English language where such vacuums developed due to the suppression of the native language by French. The subsequent figure summarises the proportional frequencies of *poor* in the *OED* quotations database per century.

![Figure 29: poor in the OED quotations database](image)

Unfortunately, the *OED* database does not allow a comparison with *þearfa* which was the prototypical word for Latin *pauper* in Old English. The latter word was only scarce in Middle English and no evidence of it can be found in the *OED* data as to provide a comparison of the conservative and the innovative lexeme.

²⁵⁴ The explanatory notes in Benson (1989) were actually written by Douglas Gray (Benson 1989: 848).
As was already shown for *riche*, there are also proverbial comparisons in terms of poverty such as “poor as Job” (e.g., Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Macaulay 1900-01, 5.2505) in the ME data. This idiom reflects the close relation to biblical traditions as well as possible analogy or a loan translation from French *pauvre comme Job*. No further evidence of other proverbial comparisons has been found. The comparison *poor as a churchmouse* (cf. German *arm wie eine Kirchenmaus*) is first attested in the 18\(^{th}\) century according to the *OED* and the idiomatic expression *poor as a Rat* is first accounted for in 19\(^{th}\)-century quotations in the *OED* data.

Only one example of the adjective *porful* is attested in the *MED* quotations database (*Leorne to loue*, Brown 1924, 8). The same quotation is included in the *OED* (see *OED*, †*poorful*, a.). Post-1500 data supplies a panoply of different words such as *poorable*, *poorality*, *poverance*, *poveretto*, *poor-book*, *poor-box* and the adjective *poverty-stricken* according to the *OED*.

*Pauper* is a post-1500 borrowing from Latin is first attested in the 16\(^{th}\) century according to the *OED* (*pauper*, n. and a.). In Middle English, only the original Latin term is used in glosses or as a proper name in texts such as the 15\(^{th}\) century *Dives et Pauper*, for example. Post-1500 uses in the *OED* show that *pauper* can also be used as a ‘technical term’, specifically used in legal and sociological discourse.

*Poor* is only one major example resulting from the post-Conquest contact situation in medieval England. In addition, the adjective is an important case of lexical borrowing, which was adopted and spread in the English language. The adjective as well as the corresponding noun are part of the basic vocabulary and exemplify a crucial difference to other Germanic languages.

### 4.5 Summary

Wealth is not conceived as a purely economic concept in Old English, but as one relating to further concepts such as power, luck, success and especially spiritual bliss. The lexemes still preserve these multiple connotations in the ME period and are polysemous to a large extent. Both old and new senses are still maintained, although shifts in the focus of each word can be observed in the ME period.

Section 4.2 provided a brief discussion of hapaxes and highly infrequent words. The lexemes under investigation were particularly found in glosses, poetry and in prose texts to a minor extent. The short examination revealed insights into the authors’ and scribes’ creativity and inferences. The discussion has shown that ‘historical accidents’ remain despite some general and more regular tendencies in the semantic field as a whole.

The most crucial mechanisms, which can be observed in the semantic shifts discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4, are metonymy and implications based on pragmatic inferences. Socio-cultural aspects also play a certain role, as these might function as a trigger for the ultimate choices of the writers and translators. Furthermore, the socio-cultural component is an important factor in the lexical changes which can be observed in the ME period. In the case of OE *riche* the senses ‘powerful’ and
'rich' are closely interwoven, and a distinction is often not possible (see rice and maga). The ultimate semantic change is based on a metonymic shift, while certain external socio-cultural changes also played a role. Rice, however, comes to be the prototypical lexeme denoting wealth in the course of the ME period, while Old English used a number of different lexemes for this specific concept. Welig as the prototypical word for ‘rich’ became obsolescent, as it was ultimately replaced by ME riche and wealthy and by a number of further loan words. Emotional language, which is also based on pragmatic inferences of the writers and speakers, has also led to the development of pejorative senses as in the case of OE sælig. While Biblical texts beatify underprivileged people, non-religious contexts show a de-Christianised sense of the word. The poor and sick who are blessed in the sight of God arouse pity and perhaps contempt among their contemporaries. OE spedig has lost the implication of wealth. The word relates to success and good fortune, and therefore ME senses such as ‘beneficial’ and ‘efficient’ developed on the basis of metonymy. This metonymical shift is even carried further, as success and efficiency result in ‘quickness’ or ‘promptness’. Originally secular words have developed Christianised senses, as in the case of eadig. So this lexeme shows socio-cultural influences, although the shift can also be considered a metonymic extension from social ‘nobility’ to a kind of spiritual ‘nobility’ or exaltedness. In addition, it has been pointed out that metaphorical extensions relating to the container metaphor and the ‘overflowing’ of a container are closely linked to the concepts of large quantity and wealth. This aspect is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

A number of Latinate and French loan words have replaced most of the native lexemes. This has led to a fundamental restructuring of the semantic field in terms of lexical and semantic variation and change. Early ME uses of the adjective moneyed and in particular post-medieval idioms and lexemes such as to have money to burn or opulent (17th century), for example, reflect socio-cultural developments which show that the concept of wealth has been ‘moneyed’ itself. Prototypically, wealth is defined in terms of money, which is at the heart of ‘modern’ economy and material conception (see for example affluent in chapter 5).

The lexical items denoting the concept of poverty were profoundly influenced by lexical change, as almost all the native Anglo-Saxon words have been replaced by various loan words, in particular by the overarching French loan poor. Hean, wretch, waedla, earm and pearf are the lexemes which occur most frequently in the OE data. It is only wretch which expands in frequency in the ME period, while all the other lexemes are merely attested marginally in early Middle English and have consequently become obsolescent by this early stage. Poor figures as the prototypical and most frequent lexeme in the ME data, while needy and penniless are relatively frequent, as well as the nouns beggar and mischief. All the other lexemes such as inopie, or egeste are rather infrequent, but they illustrate a general readiness to use and borrow words from French or Latin. Socio-cultural changes contributed to different attitudes and interpretations of the concept ‘poverty’ and ultimately new words are used which specifically refer to economic ‘poverty’ (e.g., moneyless, penniless) in late medieval English. Both lexical and semantic changes reflect the great socio-cultural changes and upheavals in
ME: the Norman Conquest, the re-establishment of English as official language, the development of mendicant orders, the pre-reformation associated with Wycliffe and his followers, but also changes in economic structures reveal the increasing role of a money-based society and economy from the 15th century onwards. Apart from the vast lexical changes, the chapter has shown that metonymy, pragmatic inferences and emotive discourse are the major processes involved in semantic change.

Expulsion and exile played an important role in medieval literature and words such as wretch and earm, as well as ME destitute originally relate to this kind of social and psychological deprivation. In addition, earm and destitute develop more general senses relating to material poverty as well. Social deprivation was of special interest in OE literature as shown by a number of Anglo-Saxon poetic words (e.g., feasceafa, fealog in section 4.2). The close relation between social power or rank and ‘poverty’ – which is also coupled with humility – is illustrated by OE hean, which also survives into early Middle English. During the ME a number of loan words particularly relating to the aspect of social standing and humility are for example low, humble, and meek, as well as the Latinate term abject in the sense of “humble, lowly” (MED, abject, ppl., sense 2.a.). The semantic components of ‘need’ and ‘begging’ as exemplified by OE pearf and weadle are typical of the OE literary tradition. These lexemes hardly survive in the early ME period, apart from copies of OE texts. The lexemes clearly mark the OE vocabulary as largely Germanic in character, which changes to a ‘mixed’ vocabulary in the course of the ME period. In addition, the loan word poor covers a wide range of semantic nuances, which leads to the replacement of the Anglo-Saxon words referring to ‘poverty’.

These changes show more or less ‘regular’ and similar mechanisms. The ultimate changes, however, show that cognitively and psychologically motivated trends in semantic change have been verified in numerous instances, whereas the impact in the socio-cultural context has manifested itself only selectively, ranging from the direct and obvious case of OE rice to near complete irrelevance in the case of silly. Nevertheless, the processes involved show that such an autosemantic domain is not completely ‘irregular’ or chaotic. The complexity in lexicosemantic changes has been compensated by taking into account both pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects, while the role of cognitive metaphor still needs to be discussed (see chapter 5).
5 Metaphorical expressions in Old and Middle English in the semantic field of wealth

5.1 Preliminary remarks

The importance of metaphor in semantic variation and change from a theoretical point of view has been discussed in chapter 2. Evidence from historical databases (cf. chapter 3) is used to reveal possible conceptualisations of wealth in a wider sense and to provide descriptions of the corresponding metaphorical expressions. The two exemplary conceptual metaphors will show the usefulness of an integrative approach to semantic variation and change (cf. chapter 3.5).

Since the advent of cognitive linguistics metaphor has played an important role and it has been recognised as one of the major cognitive processes in semantic change. Various scholars have investigated conceptual metaphors from a synchronic perspective (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Kövecses 2000a) to name just a few. But as pointed out correctly by Gevaert (2005: 198) only a small number of scholars have so far been interested in analysing conceptualisation in English from a diachronic perspective (see Gevaert 2005: 198). The subsequent analysis is therefore dedicated to a discussion of cognitive metaphor in semantic variation and change. The investigation seeks to show the interaction of cognitive metaphor and a number of other factors involved – pragmatic and socio-cultural ones, for example – in diachronic lexico-semantic developments. While liquid metaphors and the figurative use of muck within the semantic field of wealth serve as study examples in order to exemplify the usefulness of such an integrative approach, the importance of cultural aspects will be emphasised.

Conceptual metaphors as discussed in Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987) and Sweetser (1990), for example, are claimed to be based on human cognition and rooted in bodily experience. Although these studies usually mention socio-cultural aspects in passing “the subject’s cultural situatedness has hardly been modeled [sic, B.K.] by cognitive linguists” (Zinken 2003: 507). The same observation was made by Liebert (1992), showing that Lakoff’s theory of idealised cognitive schemes has to be expanded by integrating socio-cultural aspects (cf. Liebert 1992: 2). The subsequent diachronic analysis demonstrates that multiple factors and motivations have to be considered with regard to metaphorical mappings and conceptual metaphors on a diachronic level concerning their role in semantic variation and change.

255 See OED, wealth, n., especially senses 3 and 5.
256 On the monetary (liquid) metaphor “Money is Blood” (see Hundt 1995: 109).
5.2 “His wealth shall flow in fountains”\textsuperscript{257}: \textsc{Wealth is (an overflowing) liquid}

Apart from the “metaphors we live by” discussed in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and conceptual domains most prominently analysed in previous studies on metaphor (e.g. Kövecses 1986 on \textit{anger}, \textit{pride} and \textit{love} and Kövecses 2000a on emotion) what role does metaphor play for the present investigation of semantic variation and change in Old and Middle English? How can a metaphorical account be developed for the semantic field of wealth? Will the analysis of conceptual metaphors involved in this field yield any relevant general tendencies? How is the concept of wealth expressed metaphorically?

Metaphorical expressions reflect the operation “between domains” (Sweetser 1990: 19). This means that a transfer from a source domain to a target domain can be observed. Blank (1997: 175) extends Lakoff and Johnson’s ‘typology’ referring to Liebert (1992) who takes together conceptual metaphors resulting in so-called ‘domain metaphors’ (\textit{Bereichsmetaphern}, cf. Liebert 1992), such as \textit{Geld ist Wasser} (‘\textsc{Money is water}’) (Liebert 1992: 10; cf. also quoted in Blank 1997: 175).\textsuperscript{258} Monetary liquid metaphors are based on the conceptual metaphor \textsc{money is circulating liquid} or – more specifically – \textsc{money is blood}, based on the human organism and blood circulation (cf. Hundt 1995: 109). However, this specific metaphor occurs only in the (early) modern period.\textsuperscript{259} In the following the established conceptual metaphors are understood as such ‘domain metaphors’, i.e. the expression in one domain (wealth) in terms of another (liquid) and it will be argued in favour of their cultural specificity.

With regard to the first conceptual metaphor in question – \textsc{wealth is (an overflowing) liquid} – common PDE metaphorical expressions such as \textit{a sea of love}, \textit{floods of spam mail}, \textit{flow of words} or \textit{full to overflowing} among various others, show the omnipresence of the natural element water, or liquid more generally, in everyday (metaphorical) language. Especially the conceptualisation of great quantities and excess in terms of liquid metaphors seems to be very common in languages in general.\textsuperscript{260} The formulation of a conceptual metaphor such as \textsc{wealth is (an overflowing) liquid} illustrates merely \textit{one} possible way of how wealth\textsuperscript{261} can be conceptualised. As will be shown in the subsequent sections, a number of further metaphorical expressions and uses can be observed, based on conceptual metaphors such as \textsc{wealth is muck} (section 5.3), as well as various other conceptual metaphors (section 5.4).


\textsuperscript{258} Blank (1997: 175, footnote 46) assumes that such domain metaphors are culture-specific.

\textsuperscript{259} Rainer Franz has documented and discussed a large number of liquid money metaphors in Italian in a paper given in Berlin on the occasion of a conference of the German Italian Association (Deutscher Italianisten-Verband) in 1993 (cf. Blank 1997). Unfortunately, the manuscript was not available. In a personal e-mail Franz assumed that the liquid money metaphors were the result of modern developments and therefore have a different motivation as already exemplified above.

\textsuperscript{260} See metaphorical expressions and uses in other Germanic languages and Romance languages, for example.

\textsuperscript{261} Both material wealth and the wider, general sense of ‘abundance’ are implied here. See footnote 255. See also Kövecses (2000b) on the “scope of metaphor.”
In order to discuss the role of metaphor in semantic variation and change properly, the need arises to analyse the possible motivations for these conceptual metaphors and to investigate their linguistic realisation in the form of metaphorical expressions.

### 5.2.1 Wealth is (an overflowing) liquid: Motivations

Financial and economic discourse is strongly infused with liquid metaphors in Present-day English, such as currency, cash flow, to be liquid, liquidity or source of money, for example. These uses occur in post-1500 and mostly modern periods and are probably based on various motivational factors which might have been influenced to some extent by metaphors referring to wealth in general. As the present analysis focuses on wealth in general, it is left to future research to investigate the history of these specific economic metaphors in more detail. Figurative uses of large quantities in terms of liquid metaphors referring to both material entities and abstract notions are attested in medieval English. The subsequent paragraphs will provide motivations and examples illustrating this mapping from source (Liquid) to target (Wealth) domain.

A fundamental difference can be observed between Old, Middle English and modern English conceptualisation. While modern economy specifically sees ‘liquidity’ in terms of (blood) circulation, as already mentioned before, the idea of circulation does not exist in Old and Middle English. The component of circulation stands in opposition to the medieval conceptualisation of wealth as a ‘liquid’. The medieval idea implies aspects of accumulation and ultimate ‘overflowing’. The moral treatment of excessive life and hoarding are popular subject matters in religious-didactic texts which reveal critical tones and despise the deadly sins of avarice and covetousness. Although these general liquid metaphors are still used today, the different usages and expressions show variation due to different historical circumstances. The universality of conceptual metaphors can be observed, while the linguistic expressions differ according to the specific socio-cultural and historical background which plays a much more important role than has been attributed to in previous studies.

There is no denying the fact that liquids – especially water or blood – are considered the essential elements of life. Consequently, various human physical needs and bodily activities are particularly related to liquids (e.g., suck, thirst, drink). Liquid is the essential element in nourishment (e.g., new born sucking milk) and people can survive several days without eating, but not without drinking. Furthermore, thirst is a strong bodily desire, which can also be used figuratively, especially

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262 Previous versions of parts in the subsequent sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3.1 and 5.2.3.2 were presented on the occasion of ICEHL 13 in Vienna, August 2004.

263 The monetary sense of currency is attested for the 17th century according to the OED (cf. OED, currency, n., sense 3.), while cash flow originates in the 20th century (cf. OED, cash, n., sense 3.a.). Monetary senses of liquid are attested in the 17th and 19th century according to the OED (cf. liquid, adj., senses 4.b. and 6.), while sense 6 is the basis of the PDE monetary use. The economic sense of liquidity is attested for the 20th century according to the OED (cf. liquidity, n., sense d.). Source referring to material things (cf. OED, source, n., sense 4.d.) is dated to the 19th century.

264 According to Wood (2002: 50) rather aggressive attitudes – especially hostility towards wealth – can particularly be observed in the Bible. More neutral attitudes also existed in medieval times (see Augustine, for example (cf. Wood 2002: 50ff for further detail).
in connection with covetous desires both in Old and Middle English. A few selective examples from the historical corpora will briefly exemplify this physical motivation of the metaphorical uses of *thirst*, *drink* and *suck* with regard to wealth. Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1081) refer to both literal and figurative senses of the noun *þurst* and the adjective *þurstig* in Old English. The reference to wealth is attested in the OE version of Boethius’ *Consolation* (see Sedgefield 1899, chapter 7, line 4 and chapter 12, line 27), for example. In the *Vercelli Homily* no. 20 “Tuesday in Rogationtide” the bodily need of ‘thirst’ is compared to greediness (see Scragg 1992, line 91.A). The *MED* also reveals that *thirst* can be used figuratively in the sense of “[s]trong desire” in general (*MED, thirst, n.*, sense 2) and the noun is attested in usages with regard to avarice and covetousness (see *MED, thirst, n.*, sense 2; see also *OED thirst, n.*, sense 2), for example.265 A number of set phrases in Middle English also refer to greed specifically (see *MED, thirst, n.*, sense 2 for further detail).

In Old English, *drincan* is used only in its literal sense based on the definition in Bosworth and Toller (1954: 214) who refer to the Anglo-Saxon’s habit of ‘overdrinking’ as exemplified in Ælfric’s admonishing letter to Sigewead (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 214, sense II; see *DOEC*, Crawford 1922, lines 1262, 1266, 1268). The verb *drincan* seems to be closely associated with drunkenness and gluttonous misdemeanours in Old English.266 According to the *MED* the verb *drink* can only be used in connection to wealth in form of the past participle *drunken* in the sense of “to be saturated with” (*MED, drinnen, v.*, sense 4b fig).267 An example of this sense can be found in Chaucer’s “Tale of Melibee” (Manly and Rickert 1940, B.2600f; see also Benson 1988: 229, lines 1410f). This passage reveals close similarities between bodily saturation and the figurative use of *dronken* and the metaphorical phrase “hony of swete temporal richesses” (Benson 1988: 229, line 1411) implies the seductive nature of material wealth.

According to Bosworth and Toller (1954: 932) OE *sucan* is only used literally. The verb *suck* (*ME sukken*) has various figurative ‘economic’ meanings as attested in the *MED* (see *MED, sucken, v.*, senses a and b; see also *OED, suck, sense 4, now obsolete*). Two examples illustrating these figurative senses are found in *Wycliffite Sermons* (see Arnold 1879-71, vol.2, 2.187) and in the *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* (Warner 1926, 397-8). The figurative use of *suck* has negative connotations, as the aspects of emptying and rapacious taking are implied. The aforementioned examples also reveal the relevance of the socio-cultural background in which the texts are embedded. In the first example from a Wycliffite Sermon Lollard criticism of the clergy is expressed, while the example from the *Libelle* – i.e. little book – of *Englyshe Polycye* represents one of the earliest political poems revealing

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265 *Thirst* can also be used to refer to spiritual desire (see *MED, thirst, n.*, sense 2). In the *OED*, the corresponding adjective *thirsty* is also attested in figurative senses (see *OED, thirsty, sense 2*), while the sense relating to greed is not attested in the *MED* definition for the adjective; the figurative sense provided in *MED* is more general (see *MED, thirsti*, adj., sense f).

266 A detailed corpus-based search cannot be provided at this stage for *thirst, drink and suck*. The selections given here are merely intended as illustrations for the hypothesised motivations of the conceptual metaphor. The focus is laid on the semantic variation and change of the lexemes in section 5.2.3.

267 According to the *OED* the verb *drink* referring to the consumption of money is only attested in a 19th-century example (see *OED, drink, v.*, sense 8).
critical undertones. The examples exemplify the importance which bodily experience can have in the motivation of figurative expressions based on the conceptual metaphor WEALTH IS (AN OVERFLOWING) LIQUID. But the two previous examples have also shown that the political and religious background reveals important issues with regard to discourse purposes and communicative intentions, including certain didactic purposes reflecting moral debates. This in turn shows that cultural differences are an essential factor in the historical development of metaphorical expressions.

However, another cultural issue figures in the motivation of the conceptual metaphor in question. In the Middle Ages, the capricious Goddess Fortune was commonly referred to as a governing force guiding the fate of human kind. She was seen as responsible for instability and fluctuation in life (see Chaucer’s poem Fortune, Benson 1988: 652, line 1ff). This fluctuating and capricious nature is often compared to the tides (e.g., see Chaucer’s poem Fortune, Benson 1988: 653, line 61). The unsteady movement of the sea on a figurative level reflects this belief in the constant mutability of the world. Consequently, the fleeting nature of human fate figures in the instability of prosperity and the futility of worldly wealth. The figurative reference to wealth is illustrated in various examples. While flood refers to states of wealth (see Hoccleve’s Regement of Princes, Furnivall 1897, line 668), ebb is obviously associated with poverty as illustrated in Lydgate’s poem On the Mutability of Man’s Nature (MacCracken 1934, line 117). There are plenty of examples from ME literature exemplifying this worldview. A selection of poems from the 14th and 15th centuries in particular supplies evidence for this general belief.

Further concrete entities such as natural bodies of water (e.g., sea, river, etc.) and meteorological phenomena (e.g., rain, shower) are also often used figuratively in reference to wealth or large quantities. Well refers for example to “an abundant source” (MED, wel(le), n., sense 2.a.).

268 In this latter example the noun thrift is also used which denotes material wealth or prosperity in Middle English (cf. MED, thrift, n., sense a). See also ME thriftles “poor” (for further definitions see MED,thrifiles, adj.).

269 Fortune, however, is not an original medieval representation. Boethius already characterises Fortune as an unpredictable force which cannot be avoided. Boethius’ Consolation dates from the 5th century AD and Fortune is the dominant figure in the second book of the Consolation. The goddess Fortune emerged as one of the most important and prominent images in the Middle Ages (cf. Benson 1988: 395). In classical mythology Fortune – her Greek counterpart being Tyche (see Bellinger 2001: 153 and 505) – was the Goddess of Fate and several attributes characterised her, e.g. the wheel or the so-called cornu copiae, the horn of plenty (cf. Bellinger 2001: 153). Thus, the Goddess was considered the bearer of prosperity. The semantic change of ‘fortune’ cannot be discussed at this stage, but it is a case of metonymic transfer coupled with cultural changes, which led to the development the sense ‘wealth’ (fortune ‘giver of wealth’ > gifts provided by her > gifts or wealth in general).

270 See for example the poems The World is variable (Robbins 1959: 148) and “O þou fortune” (see Robbins 1954: 639-642) which exemplify this cultural belief. See also Brown (1967 [1939]: 259ff).

271 These matches refer to the categories ‘Middle English Lyrics and Ballads’ and ‘Other Middle English poetry’. See English poetry: the English poetry full-text database. CD-ROM edition. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1995. 5 CDs.

272 According to Bosworth and Toller (1954: 1228), OE wille can be used literally and figuratively. The word does not occur with regard to material wealth, but rather in a metaphorical expression such as lyfes wylle ‘well/spring of life’ (see St. Augustine’s Soliloquies, Endter 1922: 8, line 1; DOEC).
The movement of bodies of water such as *stream* can also be used figuratively in Middle English. The *OED* provides the figurative sense of *stream* in definition 6.a. which refers to words, discourse or time and wealth as continuously flowing entities. In reference to divine grace and thus ‘spiritual’ wealth, the noun *streme* is used in Trevisa’s ME translation of Bartholomew’s *De Proprietatibus Rerum* ‘On the properties of things’ (Seymour 1975: 66, 34). *River* can also be used metaphorically in the sense of “copious stream […] of (something)” (*OED, stream, n., sense 1.c.*). The *MED* specifies this figurative use more explicitly. In most cases, the copious stream is one of liquid substances (see *MED, strem, n., sense d*) as illustrated in Chaucer’s *Boece* (Benson 1988: 424, 3.m.3.2.), for example. Meteorological phenomena such as *shower* or *snow* reveal figurative senses relating to abundance (see *OED, shower, n., senses 3.a. and 3.b.; shower v., sense 3.a.*). The ME verbs *snouen* and *sneuen* are used figuratively in reference to abundance (see *MED, snouen, v., sense 2*), while the phrases *hit snoued of* and *hit sneued of* are mainly used in relation to food (see *MED, snouen, v., sense 2*). An example of the second phrase is attested in Chaucer’s “General Prologue” to the *Canterbury Tales* (Benson 1988: 29, line 345). The passage in question describes the Franklin as a feudal landowner (line 360) who likes to enjoy a plethora of dainties. Although the Franklin is described as a rather gluttonous fellow, the association with the Biblical *Manna* – divine food that rained down on earth – is somewhat implied in the example.

Large bodies of water like the ocean, for example, cannot be measured in terms of exact quantity. The criterion of immensity shows close similarities to the concept of opulence. Furthermore, in applying the *MORE IS UP* metaphor (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987) it becomes clear that a container filled with liquid can ‘overflow’ if more liquid is poured into it than it can actually hold. Therefore, the core similarity between wealth and liquid can be excess. Both entities can amount to large quantities and excess seems to serve as an image schema (Lakoff 1987).

From a cultural perspective, the concept of excess is strongly associated with vices and sins in medieval thought, and can particularly be observed in religious discourse, as in monastic rules or treatises on salvation, for example (see subsequent sections for a discussion of *toflowende* and *overflow*). Gluttony, greed and avarice, for instance, were capital sins and therefore material excess was considered bad and vicious. The ideal to be achieved was the mean, i.e. the balanced distribution of all goods, while the deadly sins of avarice and covetousness led to imbalance and social

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273 OE *stream* is only used in its literal sense in reference to liquid (see Bosworth and Toller 1954).
274 *Shower* is used both literally and metaphorically in Old English. The metaphorical uses are however related to weapons such as a shower of bows, for example. Furthermore, the figurative sense of a ‘mental shower’, i.e. trouble is listed (cf. Bosworth and Toller 1954).
275 OE *snaw* and the corresponding verb *sniwan* are only used in the literal sense (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 891f).
276 See also *full* (see *OED, full, a., n.*, and adv. sense 1.a., see also sense 2.a.). The image scheme of a full container serves as the basis for the metaphorical transfer to large quantities and wealth. Similarly, *stuffed* can be used metaphorically in the sense “prosperous, wealthy” (*MED, stuffed, sense 2.d.*) and is therefore closely related to this container metaphor (*full, plente*) and the figurative use relating to wealth (see also *OED, stuffed, senses 1.a., 1.b. and 1.c.*).
Any hoarding, in particular any illegitimate hoarding of worldly goods, was condemned, especially in Lollard writings, for example (see section 5.3).

As the discussion above has shown there are converging tendencies motivating the conceptual metaphor WEALTH IS (AN OVERFLOWING) LIQUID; embodiment and cultural elements, as well as discourse purposes play an important role. The combination of these different issues has provided more detailed insights into the metaphorical mapping under investigation than merely pure cognitively based abstractions. Obviously, considering these multiple factors the result is a more accurate description of metaphorical expressions and uses in semantic variation and change, based on the conceptual metaphor WEALTH IS (AN OVERFLOWING) LIQUID.

5.2.2 The concept of opulence: OE toflowende

The TOE lists toflowende under the concept ‘very rich, opulent’ (see Roberts and Kay 2000: 644). Consequently, evidence is expected in the OE corpus to prove the claim that liquid metaphors are closely linked to the concept of opulence in the sense of wealth (see OED, opulence, n., sense 1.a.).

Toflowende as such is no longer attested in the ME data, neither in the OED; the ME verb toflouen in the sense of “to flow away, come to nothing, to perish” (MED, toflouen, v.) is only preserved in a 12th-century version of the OE Apuleius Herbarium (de Vriend 1984: 169, 12). But lexicographic evidence from the MED suggests that flouen can be used in the figurative senses “to abound (in something)” (MED, flouen, v., sense 3c) and “of persons: to swim (in wealth, pleasure, etc.), be affluent” (MED, flouen, v., sense 5c), as illustrated in Capgrave’s St. Katherine (Horstmann 1893, 3.219). A further figurative sense (see MED, flouen, v., sense 4) is explicitly related to fortune. The form flouing, for example, is used in the sense of “[m]ultitude, abundance” (MED, flouing, ger., sense 5) and “instability” (MED, flouing, ger., sense 6).

According to Hall (1960: 344) the OE verb toflowan means “to flow down or apart, be split, melt […] flow away, ebb[,] flow to, pour in”. Hall (1960) does not list toflowende in particular, but Bosworth and Toller (1954: 997) list both toflowan and toflowende as separate entries. On the one hand, Bosworth and Toller define the verb toflowan as follows: first, referring to material objects, the word generally can refer to dispersion (see sense I.a.) and destruction (see sense I.b.); second, a variety of metaphorical senses are attested (see Bosworth and Toller 1954: 997, senses II.a. to II.e.).

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278 See Wood (2002: 12f).
279 The noun opulence itself is first attested in the 16th century, the corresponding adjective in a 17th-century quote according to the OED; no evidence is found in the MED. The etymology of the word furthermore suggests a close link between power and wealth, as Latin ops can mean both power and wealth. The Latin words ops and opes are glossed as sped in Ælfric’s Grammar (Zupitza 1880: 67, line 17), for example. The close link between the concepts power and wealth is furthermore reinforced by the semantic development of OE rice (see chapter 4).
280 Orthographic and morphological variants have been taken into account.
281 See also ME fleten (see MED, senses 5a and 5b), ME swimmen in (see MED, swimmen fig. a) and the verb wallow (see OED sense 3, sense 6.a and c.).
282 The OED entry for the verb flow reveals an early figurative use relating to wealth among others (see OED, flow, v., sense 13).
Toflowende, on the other hand, is defined as “affluent, confluent” (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 997). These two senses figure in only two occurrences in the DOEC: in the Cleopatra Glossary (Stryker 1951, gloss 1608) and in King Alfred’s Old English version of Gregory’s Pastoral Care (Sweet 1871: 391, chapter 50, line 9ff). In the former source, the Latin lemma confluentibus is translated into the vernacular as “toflowendum.” According to Stryker (1951) “toflowendum” represents a gloss of one of the numerous Aldhelm batches in the MS Cotton Cleopatra AIII. The source, on which the batch is based, is Aldhelm’s prose De Virginitate. The passage in question is about Pope Sylvester and the emperor Constantine and the context suggests a figurative use of confluentibus referring to the ‘stream’ of large masses of people (see Stryker 1951: 137 and Ehwald 1919: 258, line 19).283 This Aldhelm gloss is uniquely found in the MS Cotton Cleopatra AIII. It is interesting to note the differences in the modern translation by Lapidge (1979: 83) who uses yet another metaphor (‘flock’).

As for the latter source – Gregory’s Pastoral Care – the “toflowendan” premodifies “welan.”284 A similar use of flowende relating to wela ‘wealth, prosperity’ is furthermore found in the same source (see Sweet 1871: 55, chapter 8, line 7). Toflowende in the sense of ‘rich, opulent’ referring to wealth and prosperity only occurs in the Pastoral Care. The isolated use shows that the word in this specific sense was not common in Old English.

While the present participle is highly infrequent in Old English, the verb toflowan reveals a relative higher frequency in the DOEC. 38 verbal hits are attested. The results from the OE database confirm Macrae-Gibson’s observation that the verb toflowan is either used in relation to liquids or in metaphorical uses (see Macrae-Gibson 1987: 48). Vercelli Homily no. 22 (Scrugg 1992, line 45) for example, deals with “the parting of the soul and of the body” (MacArthur 1991: 147). The metaphor used refers to the human body which on “eorþan fulnessum tofloweþ” (Scragg 1992, line 45),285 Further metaphorical uses refer to abstract concepts such as sin (Pastoral Care, Sweet 1871: 123, chapter 17, line 15), language (Pastoral Care, Sweet 1871: 279, chapter 38 line 13) and the transience of worldly life as illustrated in the OE Boethius (Sedgefield 1899: 94, chapter 34, line 8f). In lines 46 to 47 of the Riming Poem (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 168) “brondhord”286 […] toflowen” is translated by Macrae-Gibson (1987: 33) as “riches […] melted away”, while the word riches is not here used in its literal ‘physical’ sense. The connotation, which is focused on in the poem, is “the internalising of this

283 See the Modern English translation “people were flocking in throngs to a synodal council” (Lapidge 1979: 83, emphasis added).
284 Having first consulted the Helsinki corpus of English texts (HCET, Diachronic part) in pilot studies, the form “toflowendan”, i.e. a different spelling, was found. So I was able to obtain the result in the DOEC, as a search for toflowend*, spelled in one word, did not yield any result in the OE corpus, where the word is spelled in two words.
285 “[I]n the earth flows away in foulness” (MacArthur 1991: 149). The ultimate source of this homily is Isidore’s Synonyma. The homily, however, presents more general admonitions in order to improve spiritually. The first part, from which the example above is taken, deals with the fate of the human soul after death. Within these first lines (1-66) a section is dedicated to the transience of worldly wealth and the warning to protect the soul from probable dangers (Scrugg 1992: 366).
286 The word is defined as “a treasure exciting ardent desire” by Hall (1960: 55)
physical treasure, the possessor’s grasping delight in it” (Macrae-Gibson 1987: 49) as the poet says that the treasure is ‘grown in the breast’ (see *Riming Poem*, Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 168, line 46).

In Psalm 61, verse 11, however, *toflowan* is used in connection with wealth (see Wildhagen, 1910).287 The different Psalter versions show variation in the translation of Latin *affluant* in the Psalm in question: “flowen” (Harsley 1889), “ætflowon” (Roeder 1904),288 while the Vitellius-Psalter translates the Latin word as “ætflugan” (Rosier 1962).289 The Lambeth Psalter renders the Latin original yet differently as “tobeflowan” (Lindelöf 1909a). *Ætflowan* is defined in Hall (1960: 11) as “flow together, accumulate”, while this form of the word is not included in Bosworth and Toller (1954), but *aflowan* ‘flow over’ (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 26); furthermore they list *a-fleon* ‘flee away’ and *beflowan* ‘overflow’ (Bosworth and Toller 1954: 77). The forms “ætflugan” and “ætflugon” seem to be mistranslations from the Latin version. The scribe or the translator probably confused the verbs *aflowan* and *afleon*. The verb *toflowan* referring to wealth is only attested in this specific psalm; other occurrences of the verb are mostly used in the sense of ‘destroy’ or ‘melt away’ as in Psalm 96, verse 5 in the *Vespasian Psalter* (Kuhn 1965), for example.

Evidence from ME versions of the Psalms shows similar translations of Psalm 61, verse 10. In the *Midland Prose Psalter* (Bülbring 1891) Latin *diuiciie si affluant* is rendered as “3yf riches flowe to you” (see MED and CME), while the Psalter attributed to Richard Rolle of Hampole (Bramley 1884, see CME) reads “if riches habounde”, and the prose work “Our Daily Work”290 (Horstmann 1895-96: 311, CME) attests “if reches to þe falle.”

With regard to the Latin lemmata of the corresponding vernacular glosses *toflowende* – *confluentibus* and *affluant* – an examination of the Latin words and their use in English seems interesting. The definitions of *confluent* and *confluence* given in the MED are as follows. While the noun also refers to a “flood of tears” (MED, *confluence*, n., sense a), it is mainly used of the flocking of people (see MED, *confluence*, n., sense b). In ME phrases such as *maken confluence* or *taken confluence* (MED, *confluence*, n., sense b) the streaming implies direction, i.e. the movement to a place. This latter sense is attested for the participle *confluent*.291 In ME *confluent*, however, is rare. While the adjective292 is only attested once in the MED quotations database (see *Coventry Leet Book*, Harris 1908: 387), the noun *confluence* occurs in six examples, first attested in the 15th century. One occurrence refers to tears, while the other 5 examples refer to the movement of people. The ME lexemes *affluent* and *affluence* are discussed in section 5.2.3.2.

In sum, it can be concluded that although *toflowende* and its corresponding verb are insignificant from a quantitative perspective, the verb was used metaphorically referring to wealth in

287 See also *Junius-Psalter* (Brenner 1908).
288 See also Kimmens (1979) and Sisam and Sisam (1959).
289 See also Campbell (1974) and Oess (1910).
291 The noun *confluent* is not attested for the ME period. See OED, *confluent*, n., senses 1 and 2 for further detail.
292 See Sense 5 “affluent or abounding in” (*OED, confluent*, a.) which is obsolete according to the OED and only attested in a 17th-century quotation referring to the abundance of people.
the OE version of the Pastoral Care and the Psalms, while the use in the Riming Poem refers to an internalised feeling relating to wealth. The word is therefore highly restricted in terms of text type, also regarding its reference to wealth. An investigation of further lexemes and metaphorical expressions – in particular the semantic development of affluence – is indispensable for further evidence of liquid metaphors in medieval English.

5.2.3 ‘More than enough’: semantic variation and change of selected lexemes in historical corpora

5.2.3.1 overflow

Compared to toflowende and toflowan, overflow shows a higher frequency in the OE data. In a number of different glosses the word translates the following Latin lemmata as listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>OE gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldhelm Glosses</td>
<td>superfluis</td>
<td>oferflowendlicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Goossens 1974, gloss 5095)</td>
<td>superflue</td>
<td>oferflowenlice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Goossens 1974, 5263)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin-Old English glossaries</td>
<td>Superstitio superflus</td>
<td>oferflowennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kindschi 1955, 133)</td>
<td>affluentia</td>
<td>oferflowendnys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kindschi 1955, 837)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Benedict of Aniane, Memoriale”</td>
<td>superfluo</td>
<td>oferflowendlicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Napier 1916: 121 line 37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liber Scintillarum</td>
<td>superfluum</td>
<td>oferflowende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Getty 1969, 7.58)</td>
<td>superflue, superflua</td>
<td>oferflowendlice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Getty 1969, 10.22; 10.44)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley Glossary</td>
<td>Fluxum i. superfluitas</td>
<td>oferflowennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Oliphant 1966, F 547)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularis Concordia</td>
<td>superfluitatem</td>
<td>oferflowednysse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kornexl 1993, 35.835)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of St. Benet</td>
<td>superfluitate</td>
<td>oferflowednesse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Logeman 1888: 67, ch.36 line11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Logeman 1888: 101, ch. 61 line12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Logeman 1888: 102, ch.61, line7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: ‘overflow’ in Latin-Old English glosses

Apart from the example in Kindschi (1955, 837), the vernacular word translates Latin superfluitas and other derived forms. First, the vernacular words will be examined according to their use and distribution in the OE data. According to Hall (1960: 255f) the following lexemes and meanings are listed:

a. the verb oferflowan ‘to flow over, run over, ‘overflow’

293 All parts of speech, i.e. noun, verb, adjective and adverb, are included here.
b. the noun forms *oferflowed*(lic)nes, *-flowen*(d)nes ‘excess, superfluity’; *oferflownes* ‘superfluity’
c. the adjectival forms *oferflowend*, *-flowe(n)dlic* ‘superfluous, excessive’ and the corresponding adverb *–lice*.

The following chart shows the proportional frequencies of the different parts of speech in the DOEC.

![Figure 1: overflow: different parts of speech in the DOEC](image)

Most frequently, the noun refers to excess in general, while explicit reference to excess in beverage and food is attested in isolated examples in the OE version of the *Poenitentiale pseudo-Egberti* (Raith 1933, Book 3 section 14) and in Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* (“Mid-Lent: Secunda sentential”, Godden 1979: 124, line 493). The latter example is about capital sins (see Godden 1979: 123, line 479) and provides descriptions of the different sins; “[g]ifernys” ‘gluttony, greediness, avarice’ is the vice which is castigated in the wider context (see Godden 1979: 124, line 493). *Oferflowendnys* is therefore associated with gluttony; a life of excess and immoderation is admonished in the majority of the examples counted in the OE data. In addition, the noun is used with explicit reference to material goods in three homilies which refer to the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 12, 16-21): Homily on the “Fifth Sunday after Epiphany” (*DOE* transcript, line 99-101),295 homily for “Tuesday in Rogationtide” (Napier 1883, lines 224-25) and *Vercelli Homily* no. 10 (Scrugg 1992, lines 187-89). The latter homiletic text shows the use of a liquid metaphor (“þine oferflownessa”) in relation with material goods (“þinra goda”) and worldly wealth or pride (“þinne wlenceo”).296 Similarly, *oferflowende* pre-modifies wela ‘wealth, prosperity’ in two cases, namely in the *Life of Saint Machutus* (Yerkes 1984, folio 19 verso, line 15) and the Old English version of Chrodegang of Metz’s *Regula Canonicorum* (Langefeld 2003, chapter 79, line 73).

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294 Proportional frequencies per 100,000 words.
296 In the other two homilies some variation is attested for this excerpt; significant here is the use of *welan* instead of *wlenceo* in the Vercelli homily. See also MacArthur (1991: 78) for a Modern English translation of the relevant passage.
In Middle English, both the verb *overflouen*, the noun *oferfloue(d)nesse* reveal the following distribution according to literal and figurative uses as attested in the *MED*:

![Figure 2: overflow in the MED quotations database](image)

The noun *oferfloue(d)nesse* meaning ‘excess, superfluity’ only occurs in the *Lambeth Homily on Vices, Virtues, and Abuses* (Morris 1867-68: 115) and the Winteney version of the *Benedictine Rule* (Schröer 1888: 81, 4 and 123, 20). The most frequent context, in which the word occurs, is its literal reference to liquids, while abstract concepts, such as *grace, joy* or *evil* are also represented. The ‘overflowing’ of physical substances is also attested in medical texts and the verb *overflouen* ‘superabound’ is for example attested in the gospel of Luke in the *Wycliffite Bible* (Forshall and Madden 1850, Luke 6.38).

A search in the *OED* quotations database supplies the distribution shown in the subsequent figure.

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297 The spellings used here are those of the entry in the *MED* online. Spelling variations have been taken into account in the corpus search.

298 One additional variant form has been found in the *CME*: the form *oferfloend* is attested in the Winteney-Version of the Benedictine Rule (Schröer 1888, chapter LV).

299 Another verb is used in ME in the sense of ‘flow abundantly, overflow’ is *redounden* (cf. PDE *redundant*). According to the definitions given in the *MED*, the word is not used in relation to wealth. The *OED*, however, provides a later and now obsolete meaning in connection with wealth (see *OED*, *redound*, v., sense 7.b.)

300 The figure includes all parts of speech as the focus of the analysis is on the semantic distribution.
Figure 3: *overflow* (all parts of speech) in the *OED* quotations database

The *OED* data reveals 12\textsuperscript{th}-century figurative uses exclusively in collocations with abstract nouns; while the noun *overflowingness* is exclusively used in the sense of ‘excess’ in the 13\textsuperscript{th}-century *OED* data. From the 16\textsuperscript{th} century onwards the word is used in reference to humans, showing the highest frequency of this use in the period from 1901 until the most recent quote.

The general conclusions, which can be drawn from the previous discussion, show interesting differences in semantic variation. While in OE *overflow* was mostly used in connection with beverage and food, and in the sense of excess, the ME data shows its use in collocations with the ‘literal’ reference to liquids predominantly. The *OED* data given for the medieval periods is somewhat hard to handle. There are various gaps in the 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} centuries, but the later periods in the *OED* are more significant for the interpretation of the results. While the literal and metaphorical uses persist across the centuries – with the literal meaning being more frequent however – the use in relation with humans only develops in the course of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century. The meaning of ‘excess’ can be attested for the 13\textsuperscript{th} century; merely isolated examples are attested for the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries in the quotations database. In terms of semantic variation, preferences in the metaphorical extension and uses in the course of time can be shown. Moral connotations regarding excess and abundance have disappeared to some extent. Computer science and probably demographic changes have influenced recent and early modern uses. Although there are isolated occurrences of *overflow* referring to concrete items, the word does not occur in relation to wealth as such in the *OED* data. By contrast, Modern English *affluence* and its corresponding adjective *affluent* are used in the sense ‘wealth’ and ‘wealthy’ respectively. As

\begin{itemize}
\item[301] As of 7/12/05. Spelling variations were taken into account. The category ‘literal’ comprises uses referring to liquids and ‘electricity’; ‘metaphor’ includes mainly collocations with both abstract and concrete notions, the sense ‘excessive’ is included as well as the figurative reference to large masses of people. 20\textsuperscript{th}-century quotes reveal special figurative uses within the computer domain. Three unclear cases, due to insufficient context and unavailability of original texts are excluded. The chart does not include several matches from Old English, as the *OED* online did not provide the dates for the texts, but simply marked the quotations as ‘OE’.
\end{itemize}
evidence from the historical corpora shows, the semantic change of *affluence* to denote of ‘wealth’ is a post-1500 development. This lexeme will be discussed in the following section.

### 5.2.3.2 affluence

Etymologically, *affluence* (Latin *affluere* ‘flowing towards’, cf. *OED*) is related to liquids and is used in the meaning of ‘excess, abundance’ in Middle English (see *MED, affluence*, n.). Isidore of Seville notes in his *Etymologies* that *affluentia* “is so named as if it were a ‘pouring out’ (effusion) of something overabundant, beyond what is enough, and there is no restraint” (Barney et al. 2006: 395). An investigation of syntagmatic relations in the *MED* and *OED* quotations databases reveals the meaning change from medieval ‘abundance’ (in general) to the more ‘capitalist’ or money-based meaning ‘wealth’ in (early) modern English. In Old English, Latin *affluentia* was translated as *oferflow(end)nys* in the vernacular glosses (see Table 1 in section 5.2.3.1 above). Both *affluence* and the adjective *affluent* are added to the English lexicon during the ME period due to language contact (French, Latin).

In Middle English, Latin *affluens* as well as the corresponding noun are translated as *full* and *plenty* in the *Catholicon Anglicum* (Herrtage 1881: 145 and 283), for example, while examples from the Wycliffite Bible reveal ME “plente” and “delicis flowen” for Latin *afflues* and *deliciis affluent* respectively (“Isaiah” 60.5 and “Ecclesiasticus” 2.25, Forshall and Madden 1850). In the ME data both *affluent* and *affluence* occur predominantly in collocations with abstract concepts such as *grace*, for example (e.g., in *Foundation of St. Bartholomew’s Church*, Moore 1923: 38, 33). Furthermore, both the noun and the adjective are used in combination with liquids of any kind such as water, tears, blood, among others. There are no examples of *affluent* or *affluence* used figuratively for people or moving crowds in Middle English; according to the *OED* data this figurative use is attested for 1600 (see *OED* Holland, Philemon’s translation *Livy’s Romance historie* XLV. vii. 1205d). In collocations with material things, only the noun is found in two instances, as illustrated in the late ME version of Petrach’s *De Remediis* (Diekstra 1968: 29, 14). The distribution of both *affluence* and *affluent* in the *MED* quotations database is shown in the subsequent figures.

![Figure 4a: *affluence* and *affluent* in the *MED* quotations database](image-url)
The highest frequency is attested for the category ‘abstract’, showing the figurative use in collocations with abstract items, for both parts of speech. Still, as the table reveals, the two words are rather infrequent in Middle English; only 12 instances are attested in the MED quotations database. As the examples from the Catholicon Anglicum and the Wycliffite Bible have shown (see above), words such as full and plenty, for example, were used much more frequently to express the concept of ‘abundance’. Reasons for the low frequency of affluence could be the fact that it is a recent borrowing during the 14th and 15th century. The word was not very common generally and the texts in which it was used were mostly translations.

The distribution of affluence and affluent across different text types reveals that collocations with abstract concepts are restricted to religious texts (two thirds of all occurrences), while the categories ‘concrete’ and ‘liquid’ mainly figure in secular texts (one third) such as medical texts, Trevisa’s ME version of Higden’s Polychronicon (Babington and Lumby 1865-86) and the ME translation of Petrarch’s De Remediis (Diekstra 1968). For comparative purposes affluence and affluent were added to the distribution of both the verb overflow and its corresponding noun in the MED as illustrated in Figure 5.

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302 Both noun and adjective included here; the absolute number of occurrences as mentioned before 12 matches.
The figure above reveals that the core sense or prototypical sense of the vernacular word *overflow* is related to liquids, while the ‘new’ loan words *affluent* and *affluence* most frequently relate to abstract notions. *Affluence* does not occur on its own, but only in the phrase *affluence of*. The sense ‘wealth(y)’ for *affluence* and *affluent* is not attested in Middle English. So-called elliptic uses of *affluence* only occur from the 17th century onwards according to the *OED*.

The results drawn from the *OED* quotations database reveal that the meaning of *affluence* and *affluent* ‘specialised’, i.e. the meaning changed from ‘abundance in general’ to a ‘specific abundance in material possessions’, which can be attested for the 17th and predominantly the 18th century. The subsequent figure shows the distribution of both *affluence* and *affluent* across centuries in the *OED*. The category ‘metaphor’ covers the words as used with abstract concepts. The category ‘concrete liquid’ contains all ‘literal’ uses of both noun and adjective referring to any kind of liquid and body humours; while the category ‘concrete’ refers to uses relating to concrete items other than liquid. The category ‘human’ refers to an abundance of people, while the last category exemplifies the modern uses of *affluence* (ellipsis) and *affluent* in the sense ‘wealth(y)’. Both noun and adjective show the same tendency; this is why the two parts of speech have been taken together in the examination of the collocations.
The development of the sense ‘wealth(y)’ occurs only after 1500 as evidence from the OED quotations database in the figure above has shown. In the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, metaphorical uses in relation with abstract notions were particularly more frequent, while this use declines in the subsequent periods and completely disappears in the 20\textsuperscript{th}-century data. First occurrences of the elliptical use are revealed in the early 17\textsuperscript{th} century, while the 18\textsuperscript{th} century shows the highest frequency of the sense ‘wealth(y)’, which figures as the dominant sense in this period and the following time spans (1701-1800, 1801-1900, 1901-).

The analysis of \textit{affluence} and its corresponding adjective has been based on cognitive metaphor which simply provided a useful framework in order to describe the collocational and metaphorical uses represented in the databases. But the semantic change of \textit{affluence} from the more general sense ‘abundance’ to the more specific sense of ‘wealth’ requires further explanations. A socio-cultural explanation as suggested by Hughes (1988), for example, would hypothesise a correlation between the meaning development of \textit{affluence} and the economic changes in the corresponding period. The late Middle Ages (mid-14\textsuperscript{th} century onwards) are marked by vast economic changes and drastic social upheavals. Hughes (1988: 67) claims that “the capitalist mode of economic

\begin{footnote}
As of 12/12/05. The noun \textit{affluent} is included in the chart in 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century quotations within the category ‘concrete liquid’. Furthermore, the only ‘concrete’ literal use of the adjective \textit{affluent} attested in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century data refers to colonies of ants, i.e. not in the sense of ‘material’ wealth.
\end{footnote}
life” can be reflected in the semantic change of words. If early capitalism is assumed for the 16th century (i.e. 1501-1600), no direct correlation is revealed in the case of affluence. It is only with a considerable time lag that first isolated occurrences are accounted for in the early 17th century. The ultimate development of the new sense must have occurred mainly in the 18th century. Furthermore, while the social and economic developments observed in England were similar – if not the same on the continent – in French, the word does not undergo the same semantic developments as it does in English. According to the Robert dictionary (Rey-Debove and Rey 1995: 39), the French noun affluence is used to refer to general abundance, affluent does not exist as an adjective; the form is used as a noun in the same sense as in English (see OED, affluent, n., for a definition). Consequently, external changes cannot be the sole catalyst for the meaning change. The new meaning could also have been triggered by the actual usage; phrases such as affluence of in most cases referred to material items. This cannot be attested by the OED data in terms of frequency but the speaker/writer and listener/reader must have inferred the sense of wealth with regard to the ultimate use in the phrases. Both general abundance and wealth co-exist until the 19th century, while it is only in the 20th century that the sense ‘wealth(y)’ prevails according to the OED data.

5.2.3.3 superfluity

In the DOEC Latin superfluitate is translated into the vernacular as oferflowednesse (see Table 1 in section 5.2.3.1.). In Middle English, superfluity occurs very frequently; 357 examples are attested in the MED quotations database. Superfluity is generally defined in the MED as “excess in number or quantity, overabundance” (MED, superfluite, n., sense 1.a). The ME data reveals the highest frequency of this lexeme in medical, surgical texts or in diverse treatises on medical, agricultural or herbal issues. Roughly 71% of the total number of matches are attested in such ‘scientific’ contexts. In the medical texts the word is used most frequently relating to body humours, bodily waste substances or swellings, as well as diseases caused by the overproduction of humours or liquid substances in the body (see MED, superfluite, n., senses 2, 3 and 4). Furthermore, the sense “abnormal outgrowth[s]” (MED, superfluite, sense 3.b) occurs very frequently in these medical contexts. A selection of these (con)texts includes for example the ME version of Bartholomew’s encyclopaedia De Proprietatibus Rerum (Seymour 1975), ME versions of Guy de Chauliac’s medical texts (Ogden 1971), as well various practical medical and surgical treatises by Lanfrank (Fleischhacker 1894) and John Arderne (Power 1910); further ‘scientific’ works are for example the herbal Agmus Castus (Brodin 1950) and John of Burgundy’s shorter book on the Plague (Sudhoff 1912).

304 Multiple quotations have been eliminated. Absolute certainty can, however, not be granted regarding the huge amount of data which had to be sorted manually.

305 This use shows the impact of the theory of the four humours in medieval medicine. But also non-medical texts refer to this theory from a moral perspective. Disharmony caused by an imbalance of the four humours often serves as an explanation to particular human misbehaviours.

306 This text source also treats veterinarian and agricultural issues.
The remaining matches occur in non-scientific texts; these mainly comprise literary and religious writings, where the noun is used both in reference to body humours (cf. footnote 305) and in the sense of general immoderation (see MED, *superfluite*, n., sense 1.c). Furthermore, specific uses with regard to worldly wealth and gluttony are attested less frequently in the quotations database of the MED. Also, the definitions given in the MED do not show any explicit reference to material wealth. Still, examples referring to wealth or possessions are attested in the ME data (see Trevisa’s ME translation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*, Babington and Lumby, 1865-86, 6.465; see Thomas Usk’s *Testament of Love*, Skeat 1897: 63, 71; Alain’s Chartier’s *Le Quadrilogue Invectif* (Blayney 1974: 135, 29 and see *Secreta Secretorum*, Steele and Henderson 1898: 52, 33). In 20 examples *superfluity* refers to excess or immoderation, in particular in relation to food, especially in religious texts, but also secular texts reveal moral implications. A minor number of abstract collocations also occur in the data, which are related to thought, sin and words among others. The noun, however, is prototypically used in medical contexts. All the other senses described in this section occur rather peripherally. This medical core meaning, however, becomes obsolete, which seems to be influenced by progress in medical sciences and changes in the perception of the human body.

A search in the CME confirms the specific medical or scientific use, although metaphorical uses, which refer to vanity and excess as morally abject notions, are also attested. The noun is attested in 59 matches in Lanfrank’s Surgery (Fleischhacker 1894), while Arderne’s *In Fistula* (Power 1910) yields only 13 matches of the adjective *superflu(e)* and 8 occurrences of the noun in a medical context. The ME translation of Higden’s *Polychronicon* also attests the noun in 11 occurrences in a rather scientific context, while Wycliffite texts and texts attributed to Wycliffe (*Apology* (Todd 1842), *Lanterne of light* (Swinburn 1917), the editions by Matthew (1880) and Arnold (1869), as well as the *Bible* (Forshall and Madden 1850) show the word in its metaphorical and thus moral sense.

The OED entry for *superfluity* does not show any reference to this specialised medical use attested in the ME data. This might undoubtedly be a result of the dictionary’s method of compilation, which means that medieval scientific texts were neglected in the process of selection by the voluntary readers. Literary texts have obviously been preferred. The general senses ‘excess’ and ‘superabundance (see OED, *superfluity*, n., senses 1, 2 and 3) are the prevailing modern senses of the word according to the OED.

### 5.2.4 Concluding discussion

The preceding data and analyses have shown that wealth in its wider sense can be expressed in terms of ‘liquid metaphors’ in medieval English. The texts very often implicitly reveal negative judgements and negative attitudes towards wealth and excess in general. Immoderation, excess and gluttony are despised in the traditional religious and spiritual literature. Thus, the worship of the *Mammon* (see MED, *mammon*, n. for a definition; see also MED, *maumetrie*, n., sense 1.b) – as exemplified in the gospels of Luke and Matthew – is regarded as a misdemeanour. It is particularly related to the deadly
sins of avarice and covetousness and the texts consequently use expressive metaphors to show the defile character of worldly delights and riches which distract people from the ‘more valuable’ spiritual wealth.

_Toflowende_ is insignificant in terms of (quantitative) frequency and it only relates to wealth in a few idiosyncratic uses. The word must have been a specific use of the translator of the OE _Pastoral Care_ (Sweet 1871) where the word is used in the sense of ‘affluent’. The word seems to show the closeness of the translator to the Latin original when translating the _Pastoral Care_ into the vernacular, which seems to be the most plausible motivation for the use of this word.

As far as _overflow_ is concerned, the word was mostly used in relation to excess in food and drink and immoderation in general, but also minor instances of excess in terms of worldly wealth were detected in the OE data. The OE examples show the dominance of one author, Ælfric in particular, who uses the lexeme relatively frequently. During Middle English, the word was predominantly used in its literal sense, figurative uses, however, are also attested. The _OED_ data revealed a shift in the metaphorical uses towards a human component, i.e. associations with excess in terms of food or wealth become less frequent in the course of time. Modern metaphorical uses are related to concrete items other than wealth and the word especially refers to large masses of people. The sense of excess in relation to beverage or food is obsolete in modern usage as attested by the _OED_ data. This latter meaning occurs specifically in the 13th century, while isolated examples occur in the 18th and 19th centuries. Otherwise, this sense is no longer attested.

_Affluence_ and its corresponding adjective are mainly used in connection with abstract concepts in the ME data. The semantic development of ‘wealth(y)’ is a post-medieval development. It is only in the 17th century according to the _OED_ data when so-called elliptical uses occur. With regard to the use of the phrase _affluence of_ there must have been a period in which the phrase was predominantly used with concrete items, leading to ‘invited’ inferences which result in elliptical uses of _affluence_, i.e. abundance of particular ‘material’ items, and which are interpreted as ‘material wealth’ in its PDE sense. An important aspect, however, is the observable shift in the collocational uses, from abstract notions to more concrete notions. I think that the meaning shift first occurred in the noun and that the adjective behaved similarly (analogy). Socio-cultural changes can be assumed to a certain extent, such as the secularisation of society, as well as the development of a money-based economy, for example.

_Superfluity_ showed a specialised use in ME medical, surgical, herbal and agricultural texts. The prominent authors or texts in terms of frequency are the ME version of Guy de Chauliac’s medical treatises and Trevisa’s translation of Bartholomew’s ‘encyclopaedia’ _De Proprietatibus Rerum_. These medical usages are obviously strongly influenced by the theory of the four body humours, where any imbalance leads to physical and psychological disharmonies and consequently to both physical and ‘emotional’ diseases. Only few, peripheral metaphorical uses are attested with regard to material wealth in the _MED_ quotations database. These mainly occur in religious texts or non-religious texts with moral implications. It can thus be concluded that the concept of opulence,
wealth, or abundance can be conceptualised by liquid metaphors. As such metaphorical expressions, based on the liquid metaphor, are still used in Present-day English; this metaphor reveals a universal nature. Cultural shifts, however, can be observed regarding the different conceptions of wealth in different collocational uses.

5.3 The root of all evil: evil riches and the semantic development of muck

The idea that wealth can be conceptualised in terms of ‘filth’ was inspired by a quote from Francis Bacon’s Essays quoted in the Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors (Wilkinson 1993: 171). The quote is taken from Bacon’s Essay XV “On Seditious and Troubles” in which the author claims that the equal distribution of money contributes to good policy of the state. Bacon uses the following comparison: “money is like muck, not good except it be spread.”

After having consulted the MED, a number of words unveiled metaphorical uses with regard to worldly wealth like muck, dirt and mull, for example (see MED for definitions). The procedure of the analysis will be the same as in the preceding sections on liquid metaphors. First, motivations for the conceptual metaphor WORLDLY WEALTH IS MUCK will be briefly described. Second, the historical corpora will provide linguistic evidence which will finally be embedded into an integrative discussion. It will be shown that both cultural and pragmatic issues play a central role regarding the semantic variation and change of muck.

5.3.1 WORLDLY WEALTH IS MUCK: Motivations

The meaning of (worldly) wealth was the only metaphorical use attested for muck in the ME data. As a result of the Viking raids, a number of Scandinavian borrowings have entered the English language, such as muck, which is a loan word from Norse (see MED and OED on this origin). The MED entry for muck lists the literal definition ‘excrement’ and the figurative definition relating to wealth (see MED, muck, n.). The OED dates the literal meaning of muck earlier than the metaphorical meaning (see OED, muck, n.). The MED, however, dates the first occurrence of both the literal and figurative sense to 1325, while an earlier metaphorical usage of a derivational form moker is attested for 1250.

If a later development of the metaphorical sense can be assumed, a number of questions arise concerning the motivation for the figurative meaning extension and the mapping from the source domain (muck) to the target domain (wealth). The “experientialist framework” (Zinken 2003: 507), the crucial factor in traditional cognitive metaphor theory, provides several similarities between the

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307 Parts of this section were presented on the occasion of HEL-LEX (Symposium on New Approaches in English Historical Lexis), held at the University of Helsinki, March 2005; a previous version of this section has been published in the conference proceedings (see Kossmann 2006). The heading alludes to 1 Timothy (6:10), where greed is regarded as “radix malorum” (see also Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale).


309 See also OED, muck, n.’, II, sense 4. Furthermore, see Coleman (2006: 31) on slang terms for money, exemplifying that “[m]any [terms, B.K.] imply that money is not important, […] by reference to refuse.”
two domains in question. The close link between waste materials or filth and immoral or sinful behaviour – as it was defined by the religious doctrine – becomes evident in the medieval data. Worldly wealth was regarded as one incorporation of evil; a variety of terms designating worthlessness and wickedness (e.g., muck, dirt, filth) are clearly related to the domain of evil. Waste materials ad refuse carry negative connotations such as offence and worthlessness. This is exploited in terms of language for its expressiveness and repulsiveness, but also for comic and satiric purposes. Scatology was very common in the Middle Ages, its popularity is reflected in arts and architecture as well. Moral and spiritual impurity caused by sinful behaviour are closely linked to the vocabulary of filth (see OE unclænnesse and ME unclenesse, cf. MED, unclenesse, n., sense 2). The medieval texts reveal a largely religious and spiritual context, but even in modern usage ‘dark deeds’ are often classified in a similar way with the help of such emotional terms.

However, I could not find any evidence for OE words denoting ‘muck’ revealing a metaphorical mapping between ‘filth’ and wealth. The OE words for muck are all used literally. The vocabulary of filth generally can refer to different types of sins. The reason for this might probably be the fact that debates on poverty among the clergy occurred in the 12th and 13th centuries. The crucial issue in OE religious texts is the juxtaposition of ephemeral worldly life and eternal spiritual life. Consequently, the adjective worldly is used to refer to material things such as woruldeht, woruldspeed(ig), woruldwela and woruldgitsere. The adjective implies negative connotations as the epithet woruld is used to show the defile nature of ‘earthly’ wealth as opposed to the true spiritual wealth. The MED quotations database provides evidence which shows that the use of muck as a metaphor for wealth expresses a very strong and negative moral judgement of worldly wealth in direct opposition to spiritual wealth.

As previously shown, the postulation of a bodily framework in cognitive metaphor theory is not sufficient when it comes to explaining these different motivational factors concerning the conceptual metaphor in question. As has been shown in the previous discussion of liquid metaphors, the approach merely helps in attesting and describing metaphorical expressions. Therefore, the physical aspect has to be modified by the socio-cultural component (see Gevaert 2005; Gibbs 1999; Deignan 2003; Zinken 2003). The transience of life and worldly wealth in particular is traditional and common subject matter in medieval literature (see ubi sunt motif) in general. The Middle Ages were characterised by this pessimistic world view (see LeGoff 1990: 11) as well as by an obsession with sin (see LeGoff 1990: 36). Therefore, expressive language is used in moral warnings and admonitions. Apart from this literary aspect, another socio-cultural issue seems to play a motivating role for the figurative uses of muck. The socio-economic structure of medieval society was largely agricultural. Thus, dung could be used as a fertiliser. In terms of metaphorical extension the similarities are obvious: fertilisers are used in order to increase production; the aspect of accumulation seems to be an important aspect which is linked to the concepts of avarice and covetousness.

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310 See the OE elegies The Wanderer and The Seafarer, for example. For Middle English, see Heuser (1965), for example.
Furthermore, the Middle English data reveals rare metaphorical uses of *muk-heping(e)* and the verb *mukken*\(^{311}\) referring to avarice and misers, while figurative uses of *muck-rake* and *muck-rakers* only occur in post-1500 data.\(^{312}\) The immoral character of avarice evokes associations closely linked to the lexeme under investigation.

Once more, the discussion has revealed converging tendencies motivating the conceptual metaphor **WORLDLY WEALTH IS MUCK**. The negative associations of physical substances are transferred to the abstract concept of wealth. Furthermore, this brief discussion illustrated the usefulness of combining both embodiment and culturally based aspects in the description of possible motivations. The socio-cultural context compensates for weaknesses and provides more sufficient insights into the moral perception of wealth than merely cognitively based abstractions.

### 5.3.2 Evidence from the databases

In section 5.3.1 different possible motivating factors of the conceptual metaphor **WORLDLY WEALTH IS MUCK** were outlined. A quantitative distribution of literal and metaphorical uses of *muck* in Middle English is provided in the figure 7 below.

![Figure 7: Muck in the MED quotations database](image)

As shown in the chart the figurative senses can be observed more frequently in the *MED* quotations database than the literal meaning. Furthermore, the distribution across text types – as provided by the *MED* quotations database – has shown that the metaphorical uses mainly occur in religious texts, while the literal uses can be clearly observed in secular texts (see Kossmann 2006: 89f). In particular,

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\(^{311}\) See *MED*, *mukken*, v., sense b; see also *mokeren*, v.

\(^{312}\) For definitions see *MED*, *muk*, n. and *mukken*, v. According to the *OED* maintains that the origin of the metaphorical use of *muck-rake* lies in Bunyan’s “[t]he source of the [post-1500] figurative use [of *muck-rake*] is Bunyan’s account of ‘the Man with the Muck-rake’, ‘which was intended as an emblem of absorption in the pursuit of worldly gain’ (*OED*, *muck-rake*, n.). Law (1942: 457), however, has argued that Arthur Dent used the term figuratively “more than eighty years before Bunyan”. It seems that Dent “suggested the idea to Bunyan” (Law 1942: 457).

\(^{313}\) Proportional frequencies per 100,000 words. All spelling variations as indicated in the *MED* and *OED* have been considered (*muk*, *muke*, *muke*, *muck(e)*, *mouke*, *mok(e)*, *mokke*, *moc*, *mock(e)*, *mwk*). The column metaphor includes two occurrences of a derivational form *moker* meaning ‘wealth, worldly possessions’. For examples of the different categories, see Kossmann (2006).
more than half of these figurative uses are attested in Wycliffite writings. Despite the rather awkward and problematic distinction between religious and secular texts as two distinct categories, general tendencies have been observed, which support the previously discussed processes of pragmatic inferences and emotional language in semantic change. Although a number of secular authors do contain figurative uses relating to religious and moral subject matters, I assume that this particular metaphorical use largely shows a religious motivation. These results are confirmed by the data of the CME. The forms checked in the CME archive[^314] yielded 73 absolute occurrences. 46.6% of these occurrences attest the metaphorical use in the sense of ‘wealth’ in Wycliffite writings and in 15.1% of the cases in Hoccleve’s Regiment of Princes. Isolated examples are found in various texts, which have already been attested in the MED. Consequently, the metaphorical use of muck in the sense of any form of worldly (material) wealth is particularly characteristic of religious writings, especially in Wycliffite writings.

The metaphorical use of muck is most frequently observed from the 13th to 15th centuries (see OED quotations database) and the frequency of the figurative sense ‘wealth’ decreases from the 15th century onwards. The reference to wealth is lost in Present-day English, although other figurative uses have developed. The noun is used in more general figurative senses in colloquial language to refer to bad or disgusting things (see OED, muck, n., sense 3.b.). Socio-cultural changes are reflected in post-medieval uses as represented in the OED quotations database. Specialised uses of muck and mucker in mining and sports in 19th and 20th century quotations (see OED, mucker, n.¹, senses 4 and 5) are attested and a certain correlation between semantic development and culture can be assumed. Consequently, changes in socio-cultural circumstances can also have an influence on the emergence of new meanings.

5.3.3 Language of filth continued

According to the ME data further figurative uses of words denoting worthless and dirty materials are attested (see MED, drit, n., sense 3 and mol(le), n. 2, sense b). In addition, things or persons can be described by words such as muddi, dong or roten, for example, referring to wickedness, corruption and evil behaviour (see MED for further detail on definitions and textual evidence).

The distribution of dirt as attested in the MED (see Kossmann 2006: 89 for quantitative accounts and examples) shows that almost all of the examples referring to wealth are attested in Wycliffe; thus it seems that this use was typical of Lollard writing. The data of the CME also confirms this particular metaphorical use in Wycliffite writings. 27 matches have been found in Wycliffite texts (see editions by Matthew 1880 and Arnold 1869, vol. 1). The basis of this use lies in the Pauline Epistle to the Philistines (chapter 3, verse 7-9) where dirt is directly compared to worldly wealth. Saint Paul thinks that all worldly possessions are ‘dirt’ as they represent an obstacle for the true love of God (see Matthew 1880: 220, Chapter 14 “How Religious Men Should Keep Certain Articles”, CME).

[^314] Muc, muk, mukke, mucke, mok, mokke, mock, moker. Last accessed 04/08/06; variant readings included.
Based on this biblical authoritative source Wycliffite writings exploit the use of this metaphorical expression. Although the figurative use of *dirt* is highly restricted in the ME data (see also ME *mol(le)* as discussed in Kossmann 2006: 89), it supports the religious motivation of the metaphorical extension. Furthermore, emotive and expressive language is used to underline moral judgements and disagreement. This creative process as involved in metaphorical extension can be observed generally. The immorality of wealth can also be observed in the two following PDE expressions: *filthy lucre* and *stinking rich*. *Filth* is defined according to the *MED* (*filth*, n., sense 3.a.) as “[a]nything that […] corrupts morally, gives offence, or furnishes occasion for sinful thoughts or actions.” *Filthy lucre* is defined as “dishonourable gain” in the *OED* (*filth*, n., sense 4.b.). *Lucre* has a more neutral sense (“money”, cf. *MED*, *lucre*, n., sense a), while its second sense “illicit gain” (*MED*, *lucre*, n., sense b) has negative connotations, in particular in the phrases *lucre of vileinie* and *worldli lucre* (see *MED*, *lucre*, n., sense b). These specific phrases are again attested exclusively in religious texts, in the case of Chaucer, a religious exemplum is provided within a work uniting diverse secular and religious genres.

The figurative use of the verb *stink* with regard to money is only attested in the 19th and 20th centuries according to the *OED* (see *stink*, v., sense 2.b.); *stinking rich* is only attested in the 20th century (see *OED*, *stinking*, ppl., a., sense 1.c.). This shows that the metaphorical expressions and the references change according to historical circumstances, but a more general underlying conceptual metaphor, e.g. of the type *BAD THINGS ARE FILTH*, is more or less universal. Faecal terms or words relating to filth and similar substances are still frequently used in colloquial PDE usage in order to express emotional and personal opinions more expressively. This in turn also points to the fact that ‘subjectification’ in the sense of emotive and expressive language plays an important role in the development of figurative senses.

### 5.3.4 Concluding discussion

As semantic change is not the simple emergence and loss of meanings and by no means a one-dimensional affair (cf. Blank 1997: 131), the necessity of multi-dimensional explanations of semantic variation and change as the result of multi-faceted diachronic semantic developments has been emphasised repeatedly. Similar to liquid metaphors, conceptual metaphors relating to waste material are mere starting-points and helpful tools for the analysis of particular metaphorical expressions. As pointed out previously, rhetorical as well as socio-cultural aspects are required in the interpretation of the data (see Ritchie 2003). Also, pragmatic, cognitive and socio-cultural issue are all involved in the process of metaphorical extension and need to be taken into account.

With regard to the semantic development of *muck* it has been once more shown that emotive language and pragmatic inference are important issues in metaphorical extension. Didactic intentions and specific discourse purposes reveal insights into the communicative strategies of the writer. Furthermore, the dynamic relationship between author and audience are crucial (see Traugott and
Dasher 2002: 5). Wycliffite prose in particular revealed the most frequent metaphorical use of muck, emphasising provocative criticism and the controversial debates at the time concerning the wealth illegitimately owned by the Church. The invective reflects the personal, ‘subjective’ judgement of this particular (political-) religious group. Muck is therefore another example of the semantic extension based on emotional and expressive language.

Furthermore, the inclusion of socio-cultural aspects has shown the importance of a socio-cultural approach as certain correlations between external history and the (linguistic) metaphorical expressions can be detected. According to Friedrich (1966: 159), external event are a predetermining factors in semantic change. Based on the textual material used in this study, the metaphorical uses of muck relating to wealth are largely culture-specific: Wycliffite (or Lollard) attacks regarding clerical wealth, as well as changes in the socio-economic structure and secularisation can be correlated to ultimate diachronic semantic change of the word. Furthermore, attitudes towards wealth have changed and the late medieval period was marked by great upheavals, both religiously and socio-economically.

The preceding analysis has shown the potential and usefulness of an integrative discussion of semantic variation and change by combining cognitive, pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects. The important but also restrictive role of cognitive metaphor in diachronic semantic variation and change has been exemplified by the metaphorical use of muck. The data provided by the quotations databases of the MED and the OED revealed that the figurative use is strongly influenced by pragmatic and cultural elements. It has been shown that the metaphorical use of the word is specifically attested in Lollard or Wycliffite writings, in which ill-gotten gain is refuted. The incarnation of a devil seducing mortals and leading them to covetousness exemplifies that greed is the “root of all evil” (cf. 1 Timotheus 6, 10) from a moral perspective.

5.4 And still more metaphors

Wealth and prosperity are often associated with comfort and physical as well as psychological well-being (cf. OED, health, 1.a. and 4. for this wider sense; see also OED, wealth, n., sense 1). OE sund ‘safe, healthy, prosperous’ and (ge)sundfulnes ‘health, prosperity’, for example, show the close link

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315 For Lollard ‘vocabulary’ see the phrase Caimes castle (see MED, Caim) which is used to refer to a friary and underlines the Lollards attacks. Caim is frequently used in medieval literature to refer to the incarnation of evil kind (cf. Grendel is said to be of Cain’s kind, see Beowulf, Dobbie 1953, line 102). See also Aston (1993, chapter 4) on “Caimite vocabulary” which “owed much to Wycliffe” (Aston 1993: 99). For further detail on the phrase Caimes castles see Aston (1993: 100ff).

316 A vast literature has been published on medieval socio-economic and religious matters. See e.g., Lopez (1971), Little (1978), Dyer (1989 and 2002), Bridbury (1992), Kaartinen (2002) and Wood (2002) This list of course is by no means exhaustive. It merely gives a selection of the extant amount of literature published on external historical topics such as poverty and economy among others.

317 See the phrases mammones moneie and mammones servauntes (MED, Mammon, n.); see also the gospels of Luke 16,13 and Matthew 6,24).
between the two domains. Furthermore OE wel and OE wela, but also OE welig fit into this mapping to some extent (cf. also OED, well, a., sense 3.a.; MED, well, adj., especially sense 2.a).

The OED attests the sense “in good condition, healthy” (OED, wealy, a., sense 2) for wealy, while the MED does not reveal any explicit reference to health for the adjective weli. The two examples given in the OED (as illustration of the entry wealy) are interpreted differently in the MED. While the OED refers to the component of health, the MED is more specific: ‘powerful’ (MED, weli, adj., sense 1.b.) and in reference to plants in the sense ‘vigorous’ is attested (MED, weli, adj., sense 2.a.). Further examples that underline this conceptualisation of wealth in terms of health are for example the modern uses well-to-do and well-off (cf. OED, well-to-do, adj. phr., sense 1 and well off, adv. and a., senses 1.b. and 1.c.).

The association with a comfortable situation if a person is ‘well-off’ is reflected also in the ME warmnes(se) which is defined in the MED as “a comfortable state; specifically prosperity, material wealth” (MED warmness(se), n., sense c). This sense is now obsolete (cf. OED, warmth, n., sense 2).318 The corresponding adjective warm (cf. MED, warm, adj., sense 5c) is used in the more general figurative sense “to be secure, prosperous, or in comfortable circumstances” and is first attested in 1425 according to the MED. The OED attests a later sense ‘wealthy’ in the 16th century (cf. OED, warm, a. and n.2, sense 8) and the word is considered chiefly colloquial in PDE.

These two last metaphors cannot be discussed in detail at this stage as the scope of the study is limited. The essential aim was to discuss the usefulness of the cognitive metaphor approach in an account of diachronic lexico-semantic developments. However, it is hoped that the examples and analyses have shown the potential and limits of such an approach in semantic variation and change.

5.5 Summary

A variety of conceptual metaphors can be found in the semantic field of wealth. The usefulness of the cognitive metaphor approach (cf. Lakoff 1987, Sweetser 1990) has been revealed in the previous sections of this chapter; however, the fact that the precise shape of the concrete metaphorical expressions have emerged in response to specific socio-cultural factors shows that the cognitive approach leaves the facts under-specified and is therefore in need of elaboration. Two concrete examples were analysed: the mapping of wealth in terms of liquids and with regard to language of filth (muck) were described, while conditions of wealth as strongly linked up to the concept of well-being in medieval English were discussed briefly to reveal further possible conceptualisations.

Both conceptual metaphors – liquid and muck – revealed converging tendencies, with strong cultural links. Although some of the metaphorical expressions and metaphorical uses of isolated lexemes are highly restricted in use, correlations regarding text genre, discourse purposes, pragmatic inferences and the socio-cultural background are crucial components within the semantic variation and change.

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318 The noun warmth is attested as a nonce-use in the OED (cf. OED, warmth, n. sense 6.).
change of the expressions. As far as the prototype approach is concerned, there are only peripheral
insights to be gained. There are prototypical uses in terms of frequency. However, as abstract concepts
are concerned, it is difficult to apply the prototype theory in the present case. The issue of wealth is
highly dependent on personal judgements and thus different attitudes towards wealth lead to different
conceptualisations and expressions. Still, liquid metaphors seem to be the prototypical candidate to
describe great quantities, i.e. abundance or wealth both in a material and spiritual sense.

Future research on metaphor in semantic change has to consider both cognition and culture as
complementary aspects in meaning change. It is hoped that the present study may encourage future
research in diachronic semantics to apply the two approaches in an integrative way to provide a wealth
of more detailed insights.
The previous analyses have shown that semantic change is a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon, i.e. a wide range of factors contributes to lexico-semantic variation and change. Despite this complexity, the processes, which are involved in the meaning changes, as discussed in the preceding chapters are more regularly attested than expected at first. It has been shown that metonymy is the major mechanism which in turn can be caused by a variety of factors. Repeatedly ‘subjectification’, particularly as evidenced in expressive and emotive discourse, is observed as a further predominant process, while metaphor also plays the expected role in semantic change.

In order to provide a comprehensive and maximally systematic account of the historical facts in Old and Middle English an integrative approach has been chosen. The present study has tested “existing influential but competing theories in order to see to what extent they can be integrated with each other” (Alm-Arvius 1999: 36) as there is a need for more comprehensive semantic descriptions (cf. Alm-Arvius 1999: 45). Although the different theories might appear incompatible at first sight, they may well complement each other (cf. Fischer 1997a: 68). The complexity of semantic change and of language in general “explains why it can be fruitful to try to interface aspects from different linguistic theories” (Alm-Arvius 1999: 45).

The approaches applied in this study have been adopted for several reasons. The word field approach, with its essentially structuralist foundations, was chosen to show that the vocabulary of any language is an interwoven web of words, in contrast to the representation of isolated entries in a dictionary or a thesaurus (cf. Crystal 2003: 411). Furthermore, the lexical items within a field show mutual influence and interaction. Although the lexemes are investigated individually with regard to their syntagmatic relations in chapter 4, the paradigmatic relationships unveil wide-ranging effects across semantic and conceptual fields. The concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ extend to different kinds of wealth and poverty: while some lexemes show senses implying spiritual and emotional wealth (e.g., eadig ‘blessed’, gesælig ‘happy’; unsælig), others imply social standing and (socio-political) power as one type of wealth and poverty (cf. rice, maga and hean) for example. Furthermore, the concepts ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ can also be coupled with aspects such as fortune or luck (e.g., spedig; unspedig). But there are also lexemes – such as welig, for example – which denote material wealth proper in Old English. Furthermore, various lexemes reveal that social deprivation and exile (see e.g., OE wæcca or ME destitute) are essential concepts linked to poverty. Such a flexible treatment of the field approach ‘across domains’ takes into account the polysemous structure of the lexemes and ultimately uncovers a weltbild which differs considerably from our contemporary view (cf. Leisi 1959: 309). The sense relations synonymy and antonymy are most suitable for adjectives in the semantic field of wealth.
Traugott and Dasher’s notion of ‘invited inference’ (2002) is seen as a major factor involved in semantic change. This ‘Neo-Gricean’ notion is one of the essential pragmatic aspects in meaning developments. In addition, it can be confirmed that a change from “less to more subjective” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 98) language seems to constitute a preferred trend in the languages of the world. Their approach also highlights the fact that both writer and reader play a central role in this interaction and negotiation of meaning. In this respect, pragmaphilological aspects such as discourse strategies, text type, the intention of the author, as well as the relationship between author and audience are essential issues in order to shed more light on the ultimate selection of words. The meaning can be determined with the help of such contextual criteria and conclusions can be drawn as to the point of view of the users and the choices which are made by them.

Prototype theory as applied to diachronic semantics is not a satisfactory ‘stand-alone model’. In the present study, prototypicality is simply understood as relating to which meaning is attested predominantly, i.e. which meaning can be described as the core sense of a lexeme, as far as this is possible to determine from the surviving written data. In the course of time, shifts from core to peripheral sense and vice versa can be observed. The prototype is seen as a largely ‘statistical’ notion and no claims about the writer’s or speaker’s psychological priorities are intended. However, what can be observed throughout the diachronic development of the words examined in this study is the fact that there are shifts in the most frequent uses and these most likely reflect a change in the underlying semantic prototype.

The role of cognitive semantics is important with respect to human mental activities and how they can be reflected and ultimately detected in diachronic semantic developments. Although the various theories and approaches within the cognitive branch are controversial as far as terminology and definitions are concerned (cf. chapter 2), cognitive metaphor theory can serve as a starting point for historical semantic descriptions, as shown in chapter 5 of this study. In general, research in metaphor is not an easy affair. In synchronic research, however, things seem to be simpler as preferences for metaphorical expressions and mappings can be studied by directly consulting the language users (see Jäkel 1999). In historical studies, it is more difficult to account for metaphors systematically and conclusions can only be drawn from usages as evidenced in the surviving data. The cognitive mechanisms discussed in chapter 2 merely serve as basic starting points for a description of diachronic semantic developments; it turns out that the interaction between culture and cognition is central to an attempt to describe and explain semantic variation and change.

The socio-cultural context or background is indispensable in any description of lexical and semantic change. The vocabulary of any language is one key indicator of the external history of the

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319 As pointed out in chapter 2, subjectification is not used in its strict technical sense as it was developed in Langacker (1990) or as it is used in Traugott and Dasher (2002) relating to grammaticalisation, but rather in terms of expressive language as exemplified in Lollard language use, for example. Invectives as well as moral discussions in religious prose and verse have a didactic function and at the same time they unfold the author’s attitudes, perspectives and ideologies. Subjective and emotionally charged textual rhetoric is thus revealed as a factor initiating and speeding up semantic change.
speech community (see Lass 1994: 178). Cognition is not independent of culture, as the interpretations and inferences of the language users are embedded into the cultural environment. If this link were denied, there would be a kind of vacuum; but no such vacuum exists as all language use is socially and culturally embedded (cf. Györi 2002: 148, referring to Anttila 1989: 152). According to Györi (2002: 148) human mental activities function as a kind of filter. Language reflects how reality is handled and therefore socio-cultural changes are ultimately a kind of pre-trigger to linguistic changes. Györi (2002: 155) maintains in his proposed symbiotic model that

[s]emantic change is mostly triggered by extralinguistic circumstances, which set the cognitive processes in operation which then produce a variation in contextual usage.

It is often not possible, however, to directly link specific social events or changes to specific semantic changes. In the case of OE *rice* the interplay between general pragmatic preferences and socio-cultural aspects is obvious. In addition, economic changes in the late Middle Ages foreshadow a certain ‘monetarisation’ of society: although only rudimentary in the very beginnings, post-1500 evidence in particular reveals that capitalism is on its way (see Hughes 1988, chapter 3, esp. page 72; see also uses such as *moneyless*, *pecunious*, *impecunious* and *moneyed*). Cognitive and socio-cultural effects have to be accomplished in ‘live’ communication, as pragmatic inferences and discourse strategies arise in particular contexts and can function as catalysts for particular semantic changes (especially inference).

Although Traugott and Dasher claim cross-linguistic universal trends in semantic change, cultural differences are crucial. Culture and cognition are closely interwoven; thus the development of social markers or politeness markers as described in Traugott and Dasher (2002, chapter 6) is not independent of society and culture. Although the authors admit that politeness is “intertwined with the ideologies of power” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 229) in a given society, the focus is not laid on societal shifts or social changes, but on shifts from content to deictic meaning (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 229f). While Traugott and Dasher (2002, chapter 6) have examined the development of social deixis in Japanese in order to reveal regular processes such as subjectification in semantic change (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 229f), the present study has attempted to show that socio-economic and cultural changes in medieval England are crucial issues in diachronic semantic developments, as these external factors can trigger and speed up further processes (e.g., inference, subjectification) involved in semantic change. While regular tendencies are attested in one language, differences can be observed in other related languages. Despite the supposed universality or regularity of the developments, locally differing socio-cultural norms bias the application of universal principles in one way or the other.

As to the results of the empirical analyses, the following major findings emerge in the present study. OE *rice* figures as a very good example of a metonymic shift which is caused by a general and widespread mechanism of pragmatic inferencing (Traugott and Dasher 2002), while changes in the socio-political and economic fabric additionally motivate and speed up the meaning change from originally ‘powerful’ to ‘wealthy’, specifically in late Old English. The ultimate loss of the socio-political component of *rice* (ME *riche*) is also reflected in the fact that the noun *riche* (compare German *Reich*) becomes obsolescent in English and is ultimately replaced by other words, such as
kingdom among others. The semantic change of rich also leads to the replacement of the prototypical lexeme in the sense of ‘wealthy’ in Old English: welig. The ‘new’ adjective wealthy is used to refer to material possessions replacing the former Anglo-Saxon word in the ME period.

A number of lexemes such as OE gesælig (ME (i)seli) and OE wrecce (ME wrecche), have revealed the importance of ‘subjectification’ in meaning change, as evidenced in emotive discourse and expressive language. The ‘invited inferences’ often relate to pity and compassion, and are reflected in these semantic developments. Both words show a pejorisation of meaning, which, however, remains specific to English and is not found in the German cognates selig and Recke. Thus, emotional language and subjective attitudes can lead to remarkable differences even in genetically related languages. With regard to conscious and rhetorically styled figurative uses, invectives play a role in medieval English, especially in Lollard language use. The metaphorical sense ‘wealth’ as attested for muck in Middle English shows the relevance of emotive discourse in semantic change. In the case of (ge)sælig and wrecce the subjectification process is brought about by pragmatic (invited) inferences, while the figurative use of muck is a metaphorical extension, largely based on cognitive factors and strongly coupled with socio-cultural components.

OE spedig (ME spedi) also demonstrates that wealth is not a purely economic concept, but that it is coupled with notions such as fortune, luck and success. The adjective is not at all associated with speed in Old English; this sense develops in the course of Middle English due to pragmatic (invited) inferences, which ultimately led to a metonymic shift. Success and efficiency ‘invite’ the inference of promptness, which finally develops as the core sense of MoE speedy. The semantic change of the adjective may also have been influenced by the corresponding noun and verb. The old sense relating to success and fortune is ultimately expressed in Middle English by French and Latinate loan words such as prosperous and fortunate, for example. Further Latinate and Romance loan words such as plenty, copious and abundant, as well as affluent are borrowed, referring to wealth in a wider sense.

Similarly, the panoply of Anglo-Saxon words for ‘poor’ is ultimately superseded by one single lexeme: the French loan word poor. Most of the OE lexemes expressing the concept ‘poor’ (see TOE) are used very restrictively: either they represent specific poetic uses (e.g., feasceait), gloss words (e.g., næftig) or they even occur only once as evidenced by the hapaxes fealog and medspelig, for example. But high-frequency words such as hærf also disappear very early due to the rapid rise of poor. The OE word wædla, on the other hand, is primarily replaced by French beggar in the course of the ME period. Furthermore, many of the Anglo-Saxon words are used in ‘fixed’ phrases, i.e. in pairs of antonyms, which reflect traditional Anglo-Saxon formulas. While Old English reveals a variety of different word pairs such as rice – hean, eadig – earm for example, these are replaced by rich – poor from the 13th century onwards. The traditional formulas still co-occur with the ‘new’ pair of antonyms in early texts (see e.g., Layamon’s Brut). The basic pairs of antonyms attested in the 11th and 12th centuries are the ‘old’, traditional Anglo-Saxon formulas, while the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries reveal the new pair of antonyms. The traditional Anglo-Saxon formulas were used in legal texts in Old
English, but also in religious texts, especially in poetry and in homilies in the sense ‘all, everybody’. The OE oral tradition can still be observed in a number of early ME texts and in copies of OE originals. 13th-century copies of OE homilies and glossaries – in particular from Worcestershire – show the restricted maintenance of OE literary traditions in writing. The crucial question, however, remains, to what extent the spoken language was ahead. It can definitely be assumed that the spoken language in the early ME period was more advanced and progressive with regard to the use of the ‘new’ loan word *poor*. Early ME texts or copies thus reveal a preservation of conservative semantic features in religious genres. Secular writings, in particular from the 13th century onwards, reveal innovative lexical choices, which were possibly influenced by French literary sources. The rapid rise of *poor* in the ME period can also be explained by the fact that Anglo-Saxon literary traditions were abandoned in the course of the 13th century. An additional factor is provided by the replacement of English monks by Norman clergy in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest and the introduction of a new aristocracy (see Baugh and Cable 1996: 109f). A more important issue, though, is the fact that intermarriages as one result of the Anglo-Norman contact situation had a considerable impact on the spoken language. Another consequence of the Norman Conquest can be seen in the differentiation of registers and styles as reflected in the use of ‘prestige’ Romance words and ‘everyday’ Saxon words. In written evidence high register is marked by the use of French and Latinate terms, and there is a special liberality of borrowing ‘foreign’ words in late Middle English. In particular translations and texts of high style reveal the increased use of Romance words. This is a typical characteristic of the so-called aureate style in later Middle English (see Hahn 1979: 111), where both translations and original vernacular texts reflect a “fondness” (Hahn 1979: 111) for Latinate terms. Late ME poets such as Lydgate, for example, reveal a large number of Romance and Latinate words, reflecting the *decorum* or ‘aureate’ diction of these high style texts (cf. Hughes 2000: 144). Often the characteristic use of doublets can be observed in ME vernacular translations, i.e. the use of a formal, Romance-Latinate word and a common Anglo-Saxon word.

The present study has exemplified one of the hallmarks of the English vocabulary, which was caused by lexical and semantic changes. The distinct differentiation of registers is a major characteristic of the English language. The lexical and semantic potential has been enlarged considerably by the influx of Romance and Latinate borrowings which were added to the surviving common Anglo-Saxon word-stock during the ME period. This vast meaning potential is revealed in specific, rare Latinate terms (*destitute, abject*, e.g.), as well as formal Romance words and the common, frequent Anglo-Saxon words (see Leisi and Mair 1999: 46). Due to the various foreign influences, the English lexicon may well be called a “hybrid conglomerate” (Hughes 2000: 9) which provides a wealth of synonyms.320 Although Romance words are usually found in formal, educated

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320 For the wealth of synonyms see Leisi and Mair (1999: 46ff). On the hybrid character of the English lexicon see also Leisi and Mair (1999, chapter 2 “Der gemischte Wortschatz”). See also the ultimate ‘dissociation’ of the English vocabulary (Leisi and Mair 1999: 51ff) due to Romance and Latinate borrowings.
and academic language use, the French loan word *poor* can be used in all places as preceding corpus-based evidence has shown in relative frequencies.

The hybrid character of the English vocabulary reflects various ‘foreign’ influences from Scandinavian, Norman French and Latin (see Leisi and Mair 1999, chapter 2). The contact situation with French is the most important and most influential one in the history of the English language: it contributed to a tremendous change of English during Middle English. The Norman invasion correlates to vast lexical invasions in particular with regard to lexemes denoting ‘poverty’.

Furthermore, a specific type of social poverty is denoted by a number of Anglo-Saxon and Romance-Latinate terms. *Wretch* – which has been mentioned before in relation with subjectification – reveals a close link between exile and misery; in addition, words like *destitute* and *abject* originally imply a kind of social poverty. Social status is also an important element of OE *hean*. The word refers to low status and humility and Scandinavian loans such as *low* and *meek* exemplify this dimension. Finally, moral and ethical poverty also figure in lexemes such as OE *earn* and OE *unlæde*. These various semantic components can be expressed by a minimal number of lexemes in PDE: *rich* and *poor* have become largely polysemous. The ultimate generalisation or widening of *rich* and *poor* also demonstrates efficient strategies in language change: one word develops a wide range of senses, which are chosen by the language user according to context.

The meaning potential as provided by both Anglo-Saxon and Romance-Latinate synonyms is realised differently in actual language use as revealed by the corpus-based data. This ‘meaning in use’ shows a kind of semantic hierarchy: low-frequency Latinate words (so-called *hard words*) such as *destitute* and *abject* are highly specific and sophisticated lexical choices in contrast to more frequent common Anglo-Saxon words. Such Latinate or Romance words can be characterised as formal or academic to some extent, in contrast to the Anglo-Saxon common vocabulary. This in turn seems to be part of a much wider trend. Generally, only a small amount of the vocabulary is actually used as revealed by corpus-evidence in contrast to a large number of rarely chosen options as listed in dictionaries (see Leisi and Mair 1999: 65). Thus, phrasal verbs such as *cast down*, *cast off* or *cast out*, for example, can be expected to be more commonly used than the rare, sophisticated word *abject* (see *OED* definitions of *abject*, ppl., a.). This means, for example, that phrasal verbs are normally preferred to Latinate synonyms in non-academic, everyday usage. Formal registers usually make use of more sophisticated Latinate and Romance terms, while informal registers particularly reveal the use of Anglo-Saxon equivalents.

Although a number of nonce-words attested in the databases seem to reflect some arbitrariness, the importance of studying hapax legomena can be maintained for various reasons. These nonce-words reveal insights into the translator’s or the scribe’s linguistic strategies and intentions. With regard to translations and glosses, the original texts show how the scribe(s) interpreted the text. In some cases, the lexical choice is not straightforward, as the translator is guided by inferences and words are translated by sense, or even literally. Regarding poetic hapaxes, the poet’s
creative strategies and imagination is the major driving-force for nonce-creations. Although such nonce-words or rare lexemes do not reveal tendencies relevant to semantic change, they demonstrate the ‘rich’ lexical variation in the historical data.

The cognitive metaphor approach has shown that historical circumstances and therefore socio-cultural elements are imminent as to the conceptualisation of wealth. Wealth was conceptualised in medieval English by liquid metaphors for example, however, in terms of accumulation and not in the sense of ‘circulating’ capitalist wealth (in terms of blood circulation). In general, great quantities and wealth in its wider sense are still expressed figuratively with the help of liquid metaphors in Present-day English. *Affluence* and its corresponding adjective were originally used to refer to ‘abundance’ in general. In Present-day English the two words refer to economic wealth exclusively, i.e. they specialised their meanings in terms of material wealth. French does not have a corresponding adjective in contrast to English and the French noun still preserves the more general sense ‘abundance’ (see Rey-Debove and Rey 1995). It can be assumed that specific collocations motivated the sense development of *affluence*, and additionally, elliptic uses seem to have led to the ultimate sense ‘wealth’ in English. In Middle English, wealth in the wider sense of ‘abundance’ is furthermore expressed by *superfluity*, which is predominantly used in medical texts or in relation to body humours. The word generalises its meaning and is no longer used in this specifically ‘scientific’ sense in Modern English. Both pragmatic inferences and socio-cultural changes can be regarded as responsible contributors to the semantic change of these two lexemes in English. Converging tendencies are involved in the possible motivations of the liquid metaphors as well as in the ultimate semantic change of *affluence*. As time and space were limited, only two exemplary conceptual metaphors relating to wealth – liquid metaphors and metaphors relating to waste materials – were discussed in depth in chapter 5. Future research may well elaborate on further conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions.

A glimpse beyond the medieval period has shown that the concepts wealth and poverty themselves are more stable than their lexical realisations. Wealth and poverty are prototypically associated with money and material wealth in modern usage, although figurative uses are also attested. The linguistic expressions simply adapt to the need of the historical situation and communicative strategies. The discussion of the lexemes denoting poverty has shown that concepts are usually not lost, but that their linguistic realisations, the actual words, often become obsolescent (cf. Mincoff 1933: 1), as they are replaced by other lexemes.

A number of isolated post-1500 modern examples have demonstrated the linguistic creativity of the speech community as evidenced in slang terms and metaphorical expressions (on slang terms for money see Coleman 2006). Such expressions emerge according to the communicative needs of the language users, as illustrated for example by euphemistic strategies using disguise mechanisms or a “code language” such as Cockney Rhyming Slang (cf. Hughes 2000: 47). Investigations in the areas of
slang and idiomatic expressions may prove productive as to the creative and cultural forces at work in the field of wealth and poverty from a diachronic perspective.

Future research may profit from further updates of the CME archive for more detailed analyses of the complete ME texts. Also, more thorough investigations with regard to conceptual metaphors may shed light on the different mappings and the semantic variation and change involved in metaphorical transfer, also beyond the medieval period. Furthermore, future comparative studies may go into more detail as far as cross-linguistic universality is concerned.

The lexemes discussed in the present study are the choice of the author; the ultimate selection of lexemes is always a subjective choice of the individual researcher. Future studies may add further lexical items or focus on different words and aspects. As Lass (1997: 377) has correctly pointed out “language is a population of variants moving through time and subject to selection.”

Historical semantics remains a challenge, as meaning is not a straightforward phenomenon. Studying the diachronic development of this complex and extremely flexible aspect of human language requires thorough investigations of the textual sources with the help of lexicographic tools such as thesauri and dictionaries. The present study hopes to have shown advances in theory building and language technology which make possible a deeper understanding of the facts of Old and Middle English – although some insights are bound to remain tentative and, inevitably, mysteries remain.
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