

**The Semantics of Self-Killing in Old English Language, Literature  
and Culture, c. 750–1150**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the semantic field of, and rhetoric around, suicide in Old English (OE) and early medieval England c. 700–1150. It identifies a relative wealth of linguistic evidence concerning self-killing in the period.

The thesis uses a mixed methods approach grounded in historical linguistics to unearth perceptions about self-killing from literary and linguistic data. Special attention is paid to self-killings in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, glosses to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, Orosius' Latin *History Against the Pagans* and the OE *History of the World* based on it, the *Legend of St. Margaret*, and several of Ælfric's homilies (in particular, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, *The Life of St. Martin*, and *The Feast of St. Stephen*). By analysing case-studies, the thesis reconstructs perceptions of and attitudes towards self-killers and self-killing. It also explores x-phemistic language for SELF-KILLING and proposes several underlying conceptual metaphors such as DEATH IS A JOURNEY, SELF-KILLING IS A JOURNEY TO HELL, DEATH IS LOSS (to person/world), and SELF-KILLERS ARE CRIMINALS.

Ultimately, this thesis shows that there was an ongoing debate about where and when self-killing was acceptable. While Ælfric of Eynsham is certainly against it, the anonymous OE *History* compiler and Wulfstan II of York are not such clear cases. This thesis even uncovers some situations and instances where self-killing was considered preferred, or even honourable.

The evidence is compiled in an appendix which lists every instance of self-killing in Old English, as well as two similar self-killing corpora in Latin and Ancient Greek based on Anton Van Hoof's seminal work, which can be used for further comparative studies on the linguistics and semantics of suicide, or negative mental states.

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## List of Abbreviations

### Languages

Du. Dutch  
 ELfd. Elfdalian, Övdalian  
 EME. Early Modern English (c. 1400–1750)  
 Far. Faroese  
 Go. Gothic (c. 200–900)  
 Lat. Latin  
 MidE. Middle English (c. 1150–1400)  
 ModE. Modern English (c. 1750–1900)  
 OCS. Old Church Slavonic (c. 800–1000)  
 OE. Old English (c. 700–1150)  
 OHG. Old High German (c. 750–1050)  
 ON. Old Norse (c. 600–1400)  
 OS. Old Saxon (c. 700–1100)  
 PDE, Present-Day English (c. 1900–now)  
 PG. Proto-Germanic (c. 500–100 BC)  
 PIE. Proto-Indo-European (4500–2500 BC)  
 WFri. West Frisian

### Other Abbreviations

Acc. Accusative case  
 Dat. Dative case  
 DOE. Dictionary of Old English  
 DOEWC. Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus  
 Instr. Instrumental case  
 Masc. Masculine gender  
 MED. Middle English Dictionary  
 MME. Metaphor Map of English  
 MMOE. Metaphor Map of Old English  
 NSM. Natural Semantic Metalanguage

Nom. Nominative case

OED. Oxford English Dictionary

## Conventions

Old English texts are cited as (title, DOE short title, Cameron Number), e.g., *Legend of St. Eustace* (LS 8 (Eust) B3.3.8))

## Old English Short Titles

**ÆAbus (Mor) B1.6.2.1** *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*

**ÆAbus (Warn) B1.6.2.2**

*De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*

**ÆCHom I, 5 B1.1.6** *Nativity of the Innocents*

**ÆCHom II, 2 B1.2.3** *The Feast of St. Stephen*

**ÆCHom II, 4 B1.2.5** *The Second Sunday After the Lord's Epiphany*

**ÆCHom II, 37 B1.2.40.1.EM** *Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem*

**ÆCHom II, 11 B1.2.12** *Life of Saint Benedict*

**ÆCHom II, 14.1 B1.2.16** *Palm Sunday*

**ÆCHom II, 39.1 B1.2.42** *Ælfric's Catholic Homily for Martinmas; The Life of Saint Martin*

**ÆCHom 30 B1.4.30** *Saul and the Witch of Endor*

**ÆLet 2 (Wulfstan 1 – CCCC 190) B1.8.2** *OE Pastoral Letter for Wulfstan*

**ÆLS (Maur) B1.3.7** *Life of Saint Maur*

**ÆLS (Forty Soldiers) B1.3.12** *The Forty Soldiers*

**ÆLS (Auguries) B1.3.18** *De Auguriis*

**ÆLS (Alban) B1.3.20** *The Passion of Saint Alban*

**ÆLS (Martin) B1.3.30** *Life of St. Martin*

**ÆLS (Chrysanthus) B1.3.33** *The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria*

**Alc 26 B9.7.3** *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* (London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius A.III)

**AldV 13.1 (Nap) C31.13.1** *Old English Glosses*

**ChronA (Bately) B17.1** *The Parker Chronicle*

**ChronB (Taylor)** *London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius A.VI*

**ChronC (O'Brien O'Keeffe) B17.7** *London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B.I*

**ChronD (Cubbin) B17.8** *London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B.IV*

**ChronE (Irvine) B17.9** *Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 636*

**ChronF (Baker) B17.3** *London, British Library, MS. Cotton Domitian A.VIII*

**Ch 1497 (Whitelock-Ker) B15.6.15** *Will of Æthelgifu*

**CIGI 3 (Quinn) D8.3** *The Minor Latin-Old English Glossaries in MS. Cotton Cleopatra A.III*

**Conf 4 (Fowler) B11.4.2** *OE Penitentials*

**Fort A3.12** *The Fortunes of Men*

**HomS 3 (ScraggVerc 8) B3.2.3** *Vercelli homily*

**HomS 16 (Ass 12) B3.2.16** *Fifth Sunday in Lent*

**HomS 22 (CenDom 1) B3.2.22** *In Cena Domini*

**Jul A3.5** *Juliana*

**LawAfEl B14.4.3** *Alfred's Introduction to Laws*

**LibSc C15** *Liber Scintillarum*

**Lch II (1 Head) B21.2.1.1.1** *Bald's Leechbook*

**Lch II (1) B21.2.1.1.2** *Bald's Leechbook*

**Lch II (2 Head) B21.2.1.2.1** *Bald's Leechbook*

**Lch II (2) B21.2.1.2.2** *Bald's Leechbook*

**Lch II (3 Head) B21.2.1.3.1** *Bald's Leechbook*

**Lch II (3) B21.2.1.3.2** *Bald's Leechbook*

**LS 8 (Eust) B3.3.8** *Legend of St. Eustace*

**LS 9 (Giles) B3.3.9** *The Life of St. Giles*

**LS14 (MargaretCCCC 303) B3.3.14** *Life of Saint Margaret*

**LS16 (MargaretCot.Tib.A.iii) B.3.3.16** *Life of Saint Margaret*

**LS 17.1 (MartinMor) B3.3.17.2** *Homily for Martinmas*

**LS 29 (Nicholas) B3.3.29** *The Life of St. Nicholas*

**Mald A9** *The Battle of Maldon*

**Mart 1 (Herzfeld-Kotzor) B19.1** *An Old English Martyrology: 28 December – Nativity of Innocents*

**Mart 2.1 (Herzfeld-Kotzor) B19.2.1** *25 June: Luceia and Auceia*

**Mart 5 (Kotzor) B19.5** *August: Theodota and Her Three Sons*

**Mart 5 (Kotzor) B19.5** *21st of September*

**Mart 5 (Kotzor) B19.5** *7 July: Marina*

**Mart 5 (Kotzor) B19.5** *16 September Eufemia*

**MSol A13** *Solomon and Saturn*

**Or 1 B9.2.2** *The Old English Orosius*

**Or 2 B9.2.3** *The Old English Orosius*

**Or 3 B9.2.4** *The Old English Orosius*

**Or 4 B9.2.5** *The Old English Orosius*

**Or 5 B9.2.6** *The Old English Orosius*

**Or 6 B9.2.7** *The Old English Orosius*

**OrHead B9.2.1** *The Old English Orosius*

**Prov 1 (Cox) B7.1** *The Old English Dicts of Cato*

**PrudT 1 C26.1** *Psychomachia CCC Ms 23*

**PrudT 2 C26.2** *Psychomachia British Library Cotton MS Cleopatra C VIII*

**Whom 20.3 B2.4.2.C** *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*

## Typographic Conventions

Conceptual Metaphor, e.g., DEATH IS LOSS: capitals

Lexeme, e.g., *bana*: italics

ModE translation, e.g., ‘self-killing’: single quotation marks

Concept, e.g., DEATH: small caps

Reconstructed form, e.g., *\*kwelan-*: italics with asterisk

This follows the typical typographic conventions in related scholarship.

## Introduction

In the second century, a man named Placidus converts to Christianity and changes his name to Eustace. When, after his baptism, Eustace hears a voice which tells him of future trials and temptations that await him and his family, he cannot begin to imagine the extent of despair that will shortly consume him.<sup>1</sup> Soon after he hears the voice, his household staff die of a mysterious disease, evil men rob his house, and all their possessions are lost. Eustace decides to take his wife and two children to Egypt. They board a ship and set sail. The master of the ship sees Eustace's wife's beauty and suddenly demands payment for the passage from Eustace. Having no money or possessions, Eustace is unable to pay the fare. The master of the ship demands Eustace's wife as payment and orders his men to toss Eustace and his two children out when they near the shore. Bemoaning his fate, Eustace takes the children before they can be thrown off the ship. After some wandering, Eustace and the children come across a heavy flowing stream, where he is forced to take one child over the water at a time. When he has safely taken one child across the river, Eustace looks back to see a lion snatching the child he had left behind on the bank. In horror, Eustace races across the water to this child, leaving the other safely on the bank, only to watch from the middle of the stream as the child is taken off into the woods by the lion. Eustace turns to go back to the child on the other bank in time to see him snatched up by a wolf.

In the middle of the river, his children and wife torn from him, Eustace despairs, 'þæt þa tær he his loccas heofende and wolde hine sylfne adrencan on þa wætres ac hine seo uplice arfæstnyss gestapelode mid geþylde þæt he þæt ne dyde' (so that he, lamenting, tore out his locks

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<sup>1</sup> The *Passio Sancti Eustachii Martyris Sociorumque Eius*, an Old English translation of the *Legend of St Eustace* extant in London, BL, Cotton Vitellius E. vii. by Ælfric of Eynsham, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints: Being A Set of Sermons on Saints' Days formerly observed by the English Church*, ed. by Walter William Skeat, 2 vols (London, 1881), pp. 190–219.

and wished to drown himself in the waters, but the high grace strengthened him with patience).<sup>2</sup> The tale of St. Eustace is based on a long-standing tradition, which was translated from Latin into the English vernacular for the first time c. 990.<sup>3</sup> This is the earliest translation of the *Legend of St. Eustace* (LS 8 (Eust) B3.3.8)) into Old English (OE), and it defies much of the existing opinion scholars and readers hold about suicide in early medieval England for two reasons: a saint contemplates suicide, and suicide is mentioned at all.

Here, Eustace does not kill himself, but he was tempted as God said he would be. His despair at losing his family causes him to self-harm by tearing out his hair and contemplate ending his life. Eustace's deliberation of suicide is brief, but it prompts many questions: how was suicide conceived in early medieval England when this was translated? Who wrote about suicide? Who (in written evidence) killed themselves? And most importantly, what language was used to convey suicides in OE? Was this language made up of calques, borrowings, or terms in the vernacular?

This thesis aims to answer these questions, and more, while paying special attention to the issue of translation. Much of our contemporary understanding of negative mental states and mental health is informed by the languages and stories used to describe them. The language that we use, and the associations that we make because of that language have been formed by a long literary tradition which shapes our cultural understanding of these negative mental states. This thesis opens discussions about longstanding biases embedded in the English language which

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<sup>2</sup> All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, Skeat, II 200–3. For the manuscript page, see f. 173<sup>v</sup>: British Library, Cotton MS Julius E VII, ff. 169<sup>v</sup>–179<sup>v</sup> <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_julius\\_e\\_vii\\_fs001ar](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_julius_e_vii_fs001ar)> [accessed 10 August 2021].

<sup>3</sup> For more on the many variations of the *Legend of St. Eustace*, see: James McIntosh, 'Performance v. Providence: Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of Salvation and the Legend of Saint Eustace' *Quaestio*, 19 (2020); James McIntosh, *The Appeal and Reception of the Legend of Saint Eustace in Early Medieval England and Medieval Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2020) <<https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.54727>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

inform discourses on suicide by investigating some of the earliest terms and tales surrounding suicide from the language, literature, and culture of early medieval England, c. 700–1150.

This thesis does not look at any first-hand accounts of suicide or suicide bereavement and only occasionally mentions any real person who died. Most of the suicide actors in this thesis are history's famous villains or tragic heroes: Herod, Judas, Antony, and Cleopatra to name a few. Any reader therefore worried about the negative effect of reading this thesis should be thus calmed. While this thesis obviously focuses on suicide, it does so from a distance. With the evidence remaining from the period, it would be near impossible to reconstruct the feelings of the suicide actor. Unlike in the modern day, there is little to no evidence of personal accounts of suicidal thoughts, feelings, or actions leading up to or following a suicide attempt. Therefore, this thesis reconstructs the perceptions of the suicide(s) from the perspectives of early medieval writers through the extant language and literature.

### **What is Suicide?**

It is impractical to begin a study on suicide in OE without first commenting on the ways in which speakers of Present Day English (PDE) frame SUICIDE (the concept) in our phrasing, if not in our minds, as criminally loaded. This is important because scholarship on SUICIDE in medieval studies still uses the term *suicide* to label, conceptualise, and categorise instances and references to deaths which were voluntarily orchestrated by the individual to be done to themselves. Thus, modern scholarship on early medieval WILFUL DEATH is lexically loaded with prejudgments based on the usage of the anachronistic term, *suicide*. It is therefore necessary to inquire about the etymology of the PDE *suicide* before any progress can be made.

The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines *suicide* (noun) as ‘the action or an act of taking one’s own life’.<sup>4</sup> According to the *OED*, the term *suicide* is first attested in 1643. It is a modern Latin construction made up of *sui* ‘oneself’ + *-cidium* ‘cutting’ or commonly, ‘killing’ (metaphorically). Furthermore, the mid-seventeenth-century employment of *suicide* is conceptually different from more recent usages. For example, the verb phrase *to commit suicide* begins to be found in the early eighteenth century. This eighteenth-century construction has stayed through to PDE: though first attested in 1818, the verb *to suicide* is rare; one *commits suicide* in PDE the way one commits a crime. Thus, the common PDE collocation *to commit suicide* is even further abstracted from the eighth- to twelfth-century incarnations of SUICIDE which will be investigated in this study. Therefore, while SUICIDE may no longer be illegal in present-day England, any use of the PDE construction *to commit suicide* to reference suicides before c. 1150 is anachronistic and conceptually loaded with the unlawfulness of the act.

As such, this thesis usually uses *self-killing* instead of *suicide* to refer to pre-modern WILFUL DEATHS. It defines *self-killing* as any death which was:

1. Intentional
2. Own-handed

This definition excludes martyrdom, which is intentional, but not carried out by the martyrs themselves. Martyrdom is considered categorically different from self-killing by the rhetoric and culture of early medieval England and is not rhetorically considered in the same way as other self-killings despite typically being an intentional death. However, the extant material which considers self-killing is mostly Christian, and therefore the separation of MARTYRDOM from SELF-KILLING is not surprising. Where the grey area appears is in relation to pagans who

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Suicide, n.1.’ *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, July 2018), <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/193692>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

intentionally cause themselves to die in battle. These pagan deaths are also categorically excluded by this definition which stipulates own-handedness; however, these deaths are included in Murray's definition of suicide even though he excludes Christian martyrdom.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is important to note that this thesis excludes death by provocation (whether via martyrdom or intentional death in battle) unless the OE text refers to it by the same terms as other self-killings, or where there are differing literary traditions.<sup>6</sup> This definition of self-killing also excludes own-handed deaths that are in no way intentional, though they are typically to some degree informed. This includes slow deaths like fasting or overconsumption, which is known to be a killer and own-handed, but not typically intentional.<sup>7</sup>

### **Why Self-Killing and Not Suicide?**

The choice of using SELF-KILLING instead of SELF-MURDER, SELF-SLAYING, or SELF-INFLICTED-DEATH was based on two factors. The semantic field of SELF-KILLING/MURDER/SLAYING was chosen over SELF-INFLICTED-DEATH because SELF-KILLING/MURDER/SLAYING is one of the oldest versions of SUICIDE constructions. Daube explains this in detail. He suggests that there are two groups of suicide terms: one from 'to die' and the other 'to kill'.<sup>8</sup> He argues thoughtfully that the 'to kill' group is an older and more widespread expression, whereas the 'to die' group is less common and modelled specifically from Ancient Greek. The Greeks, he explains, produced the model behind the 'to die' group ('to die by one's own hand' and 'self-inflicted death') at a

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<sup>5</sup> Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages: The Violent Against Themselves*, I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 38–40.

<sup>6</sup> This would be the case with Saul, who only kills himself in some versions. For more on Saul, see Chapter Five.

<sup>7</sup> *The Fortunes of Men* describes those who die from overconsumption of alcohol as *selfcwale* (self-killers). The dating of the poem is complex and questionable, as it is near impossible to pin down whether it was written with the rest of the contents of the Exeter book sometime during the Benedictine Reform. See: Lindy Brady, 'Death and the Landscape of The Fortunes of Men', *Neophilologus*, 98 (2014), 325–336 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11061-013-9375-z>> (p. 326).

<sup>8</sup> David Daube, 'Linguistics of Suicide', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 1 (1972), pp. 390–94.



‘unique confluence at a certain moment in Athens of two lines of progress: an enhanced sophistication of mind and an improved technique for doing away with oneself’.<sup>9</sup> Given that SELF-INFLICTED-DEATH is modelled on Greek, whereas SELF-KILLING is an earlier, more widespread model, this thesis chose the second group.<sup>10</sup> Though SELF-KILLING is a hyponym of the broader DYING, the emphasis on *self-killing* is on the active, wilful death aspect. This could certainly be covered by the longer SELF-WILFUL-DEATH. However, SELF-WILFUL-DEATH or WILFUL-DEATH could more widely encompass martyrdom and other death acts like EUTHANASIA/ASSISTED DEATH that would not be considered a SELF-KILLING by most other definitions. Self-killings, martyrdom and death acts are considered categorically different in the OE literature, as martyrdom is seen as a death act brought on by the actions of an unbeliever, not by the martyr to themselves. The martyrs are depicted to die by God’s will, not their own, and as such they are not considered self-killers, though they do put themselves in a position where death is certain.<sup>11</sup> The same can be said for ASSISTED DEATH which is currently the topic of much debate.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, SELF-KILLING was chosen over SELF-INFLICTED-DEATH.

The active mode of dying is inherent in the choice of KILL terms, though more specialised terms create some ambiguity. Therefore, *kill* was chosen instead of *murder*, *slaying*, or some other more specialised term like *homicide*.<sup>13</sup> Most taxonomies of DEATH feature CAUSE OF

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<sup>9</sup> Daube, ‘Linguistics of Suicide’, p. 394.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> This is of course the topic of much debate even in the early church. Augustine suggests that voluntary martyrdom is the same as self-killing and explains that it should not be emulated in book one, chapter twenty-six of the *City of God*. See Augustine, *City of God*, I, trans. by George E. McCracken, *Loeb Classical Library*, 411 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 109–112. For more on voluntary martyrdom vs suicide in the early medieval Christian church, see Arthur Droge and James Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1992), 133.

<sup>12</sup> The debate(s) and discourses surrounding ASSISTED SUICIDE/ASSISTED DYING highlight how blurry our own conceptions of SUICIDE are. For more on this topic, see ‘The Right to Die and Assisted Suicide’ *UK Parliament*, 2015, <<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/key-issues-parliament-2015/social-change/debating-assisted-suicide/>> [accessed 22 October 2021].

<sup>13</sup> *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2018); *Historical Thesaurus of the OED*, ed. English Language Department of the University of Glasgow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

DEATH, and then KILLING before narrowing downwards to specifics like *murder*, *slaughter*, *homicide*, etc. In this fashion, it was decided that *self-killing*/ SELF-KILLING would be the best choice for referencing what we would call *suicide* during the period c. 700–1150.

## Purpose of the Research

Although the connection between the stigma attached to mental health and the language a culture uses to describe negative mental states is widely acknowledged, surprisingly little scholarship has investigated perceptions of mental health conditions from a linguistic or literary perspective specific to a pre-modern culture or language.<sup>14</sup> The scholarship that exists on suicide in early medieval England, which is discussed in detail shortly, does not focus on linguistic evidence, and most of it falls prey to the assumption that there is little, if any, evidence of suicide in early medieval sources.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, while early medieval scholars such as Antonina Harbus and Leslie Lockett have investigated early medieval cognition, relatively little work has been done on negative mental states in early medieval England.<sup>16</sup> Scholars such as Daria Izdebska have made

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<sup>14</sup> For example, see: Mary Garrison, 'The Study of Emotions in Early Medieval History: Some Starting Points', *Early Medieval Europe*, 10.2 (2003), 243–50; S. Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* (New York: Greenwood, 1990); Jennifer C. Vaught, *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2016); Charles M. Radding, 'Evolution of Medieval Mentalities: A Cognitive-Structural Approach', *The American Historical Review*, 83.3 (1978), 577; Yvonne Stolk, Lena Aandary, and Steven Klimidis, *Assessing Mental Health Across Cultures* (Bowen Hills: Australian Academic Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> The literature review which will begin shortly discusses the two seminal works on suicide in early medieval England: Murray's two volume studies *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, and Clayton's article 'Suicide in the Works of Ælfric'.

<sup>16</sup> Such scholarship tends to lean towards the cognitive poetics/ literary study side of things, blending neurolinguistics with cognitive anthropology: *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture*, ed. by Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox, *Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Antonina Harbus, 'The Medieval Concept of the Self in Anglo-Saxon England', *Self and Identity*, 1.1 (2002), 77–97; Malcolm Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 271–98; R. H. Bremmer, 'Looking Back at Anger: Wrath in Anglo-Saxon England', *The Review of English Studies*, 66.275 (2015), 423–48; Antonina Harbus, 'Cognitive Studies of Anglo-Saxon Mentalities', *Parergon*, 27.1 (2010), 13–26; Britt Mize, 'The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 35 (2006), 57; Antonina Harbus, *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012); Antonina Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry*, Costerus New Series, 143 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002).

steps towards lexical studies on negative mental states, but do not attempt to differentiate between an everyday ‘sad’ feeling, and what we would refer to now as clinically distinct negative mental states; whether such a thing existed at the time or not.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis originally set out to fill this gap in scholarship on negative mental states, with a specific focus on the language and rhetoric surrounding them, as without distinguishing between the terms used for different types of sadness, we cannot begin to theorise what mental health looked like during this period. This study began with an overview of the semantics of SUICIDE because it was the most concrete example, and it was assumed that there would not be much to go on due to the lack of attention and detail around the language of suicide in OE in the current scholarship.<sup>18</sup> This, of course, was not the case. After discovering a plethora of examples of suicide in OE, this thesis adapted to the evidence and became entirely about self-killing in OE. The study therefore compiled and analysed instances of self-killing written in OE and uses this data to illustrate and argue for heterogenous perceptions of self-killing in early medieval England.

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<sup>17</sup> Daria Izdebska, ‘Semantic Field of ANGER in Old English’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015); Daria Izdebska, ‘The Curious Case of TORN: The Importance of Lexical–Semantic Approaches to the Study of Emotions in Old English’, in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature, and Culture*, ed. by Alice Jorgensen and others, Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 36–53; Soon Ai Low, ‘Pride, Courage, and Anger: The Polysemousness of Old English *Mōd*’, in *Verbal Encounters*, ed. by Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Soon-Ai Low, ‘Approaches to the Old English Vocabulary for “Mind”’, *Studia Neophilologica*, 73.1 (2001), 11–22.

<sup>18</sup> By ‘concrete’, I mean that mentions of self-killing acts are easy to search for and recognise, because the outcome is the death of an individual caused by their own hand. Suicide was even clearly labelled in dictionaries, translations, and secondary sources.

## State of the Scholarship

Studies on pre-modern suicide tend to focus on the ancient Greeks and Romans, and many skip over early medieval England due to an assumed lack of workable evidence.<sup>19</sup> Rebecca McNamara and Juanita Feros Ruys' article 'Unlocking the Silences of the Self-Murdered' addresses reading perceptions of suicide in post-Conquest England, and suggests that it is nearly impossible to say anything about the emotions leading up to suicide in early medieval England because of a lack of historical sources.<sup>20</sup> This assumes that certain types of evidence are more fruitful than others, and that linguistic and literary evidence cannot tell us as much about emotions, mental states, or perceived emotions and mental states, as annalistic, legal, or documentary evidence. Moreover, it supposes that pre-Conquest England had very little if anything to say on the subject, which this thesis proves otherwise.

### *Alexander Murray: Suicide in the Middle Ages*

Murray's two volume study on *Suicide in The Middle Ages* from the late 1990s is still the most in-depth study on medieval suicide to this day, and this research would not exist without it. Murray's first book, *The Violent Against Themselves* explores what suicide is, what suicide looked like, as well as how we can, as historians, reconstruct suicide through different records

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<sup>19</sup> To name a few: Arezina Asomatou, and others, 'The Act of Suicide in Greek Mythology', *Encephalos*, 53 (2016), 65–75; F.S., Naiden, 'The Sword Did It: A Greek Explanation for Suicide', *Classical Quarterly*, 65.1 (2015), 85–95; Miriam Griffin, 'Philosophy, Cato, and Roman Suicide: II', *Greece and Rome*, 33.2 (1986), 192–202; Elise P. Garrison, 'Attitudes toward Suicide in Ancient Greece', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 121 (1991), 1–34; Andreas Michalopoulos, 'Lucius' Suicide Attempts in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *The Classical Quarterly*, 52.2 (2002), 538–548; Pridmore Saxby, Jamshid Ahmadi, and Zainab Abd Majeed, 'Suicide in Old Norse and Finnish Folk Stories', *Australasian Psychiatry*, 19.4 (2011), 321–24; A.J.L. Hoof, *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> Rebecca F. McNamara and Juanita Feros Ruys, 'Unlocking the Silences of the Self-Murdered: Textual Approaches to Suicidal Emotions in the Middle Ages', *Exemplaria*, 26.1 (2014), 58–80; She also has a second article on suicide and infirmity in early medieval England: Rebecca F. McNamara, 'The Sorrow of Soreness: Infirmity and Suicide in Medieval England', *Parergon*, 31.2 (2014), 11–34.

and attempt to construct statistics surrounding the act and actors in medieval Europe. It helpfully defines suicide through the ages, and the commonalities drawn from this aspect of Murray's study were the basis for the onomasiological approach to reach the term *self-killing*. The second volume, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, deals with medieval law, religious attitudes, and the historic conventions surrounding self-killing. His study focuses on documentary sources, chronicles, and judicial records, as well as religious literature from England, France, Germany, and Italy mainly c. 1100–1500, though some pages are devoted to earlier periods. Thus, Alexander Murray's two volumes on *Suicide in the Middle Ages* treat the Middle Ages as running from c. 500 to 1500, with a wide geographic range of Europe throughout that wide chronological period. Murray's aims are thus broad, and a study with a specific focus on early medieval England and the vernacular material is therefore necessary to fill the gaps that a broad approach leaves behind.

While he briefly addresses early medieval England and OE, Murray does so only while surveying literary suicides through time, or in reference to early Germanic suicide practices or early Christian burial practices in law codes.<sup>21</sup> This is consistent with his books' aims to produce a history of all 'medieval' Europe with broad brush-strokes. Murray's studies on suicide are supposed to culminate in a third book, yet to be released, which is meant to focus specifically on the mind(s) of suicide victims; this volume may pay more attention to the language of emotional states.<sup>22</sup> In the two published volumes, Murray investigates representations of the suicide of Judas and Herod across time and space, mentioning the OE accounts of their deaths. His readings and commentary here are insightful and provide a springboard for readings of Judas in this thesis. Murray sporadically covers other mentions of self-killing in OE but, unlike this thesis,

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<sup>21</sup> See: Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages: The Violent Against Themselves*, I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages: The Curse on Self-Murder*, II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> As Dr. Murray is now nearly ninety, it seems likely that this will not come to fruition.

does not provide a comprehensive survey of instances or a deep analysis of their language and intertextual relations, though he does provide a survey of recorded suicidal incidents in chronicles, legal, and religious sources in an appendix to his first volume, a handful of which fall into the period of written OE.<sup>23</sup> The groundbreaking work he did do on SELF-KILLING in the medieval period in general, however, provided the conceptual foundation for this thesis of what SELF-KILLING looked like in pre-modern periods.

Where Murray does look to early medieval England, he pays little notice to the language used to describe SELF-KILLING. For example, when discussing Edwin's death in the Peterborough Chronicle (ChronE (Irvine) B17.9), Murray gives a translation of the OE but does not give us the OE as a point of comparison or in his footnote.<sup>24</sup> Instead, he merely says:

the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that: 'in this year prince (or Atheling) Edwin was drowned at sea'. There is no reason to doubt that. A Worcester version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, revised after 1042 and preserved only by an author calling himself Simeon of Durham, writing c.1129, goes a step further. For the same year it says: 'King Athelstan commanded that his brother Edwin be drowned at sea.'<sup>25</sup>

In neither place does Murray give the original texts which would underpin his argument. Moreover, in his footnotes for both versions, Murray does not cite an original source, suggesting that they were not investigated for his book. This is troubling, especially as there could be confusion from calling the Simeon of Durham manuscript a Worcester version, given that there

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<sup>23</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, p. 423-69.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

is a chronicle dubbed the Worcester Chronicle (ChronD (Cubbin) B17.8) by early medieval chronicle specialists.<sup>26</sup>

Murray goes on to discuss yet another version of this death in William of Malmesbury in c. 1125, where William states that Edwin killed himself of his own will. However, Murray again does not disclose the Latin to us, nor does he point us to where we could find it if we want to check the translation.<sup>27</sup> While Murray rightfully explains that this divided tradition points to an uneasiness with the earliest account of an implicitly accidental drowning, his summary of events and analysis of the texts are swayed by the translations he has chosen. It is, of course, understandable to do so when working with the sheer number of texts and languages that Murray has chosen for his study of the entirety of early medieval Europe. The main thrust of my study, by contrast, is to emphasise language choices and their rhetorical significance. My thesis therefore fills this gap in critical analysis for the study of early medieval self-killing in OE.

Lastly, and certainly not the least important, there is a lack of criticality in Murray's regard to the act and actors of self-killing in general. In his first book, he opens by framing self-killing as an 'extreme'.<sup>28</sup> Murray explains that 'even in modern countries with high rates of suicide those who commit it remain a small percentage of all deaths'.<sup>29</sup> Murray does not

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<sup>26</sup> Confusingly, when Murray says a Worcester chronicle he means something different to ASC specialists. Here, Murray means the material often called the Northumbrian Annals, which is in Latin. There is another chronicle, called the Worcester Chronicle (ChronE (Irvine) B17.9)) which says the exact same thing as the Peterborough Chronicle (ChronD (Cubbin) B17.8): *Her adranc Ædwine æðeling on sæ* (Here drowned Prince Edwin in the sea). For the OE manuscripts, see: ChronE, Oxford Bodleian Library MS. Laud Misc. 636, f. 35<sup>v</sup> <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/6272311c-058d-417a-8e21-05e463b4f1f9/surfaces/4491e25c-fc29-46eb-82a5-396341bb7635/>> [accessed 16 August 2021]; London, British Library, MS. Tiberius B IV, f. 48<sup>v</sup> <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_tiberius\\_b\\_iv\\_f003r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_tiberius_b_iv_f003r)>; Simeon of Durham's manuscript says: *Anno dcccc.xxxiiij Rex Ethelstanus jussit eadwinum fratrem suum submergi in mare*. (In the year 933, King Æthelstan ordered Edwin, his own brother, to be submerged in the sea.) in Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 139 f. 75<sup>v</sup> <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/qj220gv8417>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>27</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

accompany this with a percentage, which is likely due to the hurdles provided by accessing this material pre-internet. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) had, however, been recording and presenting statistics on suicides since 1981. The rate of suicide for all people in the United Kingdom per 100,000 people in 1998 when Murray's first book was published, was 12.4.<sup>30</sup> While Murray correctly explains that it is a small percentage of deaths, 1.3%, he fails to acknowledge that this is still extremely high, ranking consistently in the top 20 global causes of death.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the way in which we categorise and calculate these numbers has changed over time and is still highly dependent on a compelling 'suicide narrative'.<sup>32</sup> When someone dies suddenly, their death is investigated to establish 'a cause of death'. In England, this is established by a coroner, through what is called an *inquest*. To rule the cause of death a suicide, the coroner needs 'the balance of probabilities' to point in this direction. When there is not enough evidence, coroners can issue a 'narrative conclusion' where they give a description of the circumstances surrounding the death, but the death is not classed as a suicide or accidental death. The problem is that 'the process for reaching a decision about the cause of death is subjective, so suicide may be inconsistent and underreported because one coroner/Procurator Fiscal might take a different approach to another'.<sup>33</sup> Some methods lend themselves more to determining a death a suicide than others. Thus, the charity Samaritans explains that 'suicides are sometimes misclassified,

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<sup>30</sup> WHO, 'Suicide Data' *WHO*, 2021 <<https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/suicide-data>> [accessed 16 August 2021]. Murray does not accompany this with a percentage. For the percentage of suicides in 1998 when Murray was writing, see: Office for National Statistics, *Suicides in the UK: 2018 Registrations* (2019) <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2018registrations>> [accessed 7 December 2020].

<sup>31</sup> WHO, 'Suicide Data': 'suicide accounted for 1.3% of all deaths worldwide, making it the 17th leading cause of death in 2019'.

<sup>32</sup> See: Samaritans, *Suicide Statistics Report: Latest Statistics for the UK and Republic of Ireland* (Surrey, Samaritans, 2018), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> A *Procurator Fiscal* is the Scottish equivalent of a *coroner*. *Ibid.*



which can lead to under-reporting since deaths are being recorded as something other than a suicide'.<sup>34</sup> Typical reasons for misclassifications are that suicides appear to be accidental, and so they are classed as an 'accidental death'; if there are cultural or religious taboos surrounding suicide, especially for children, then suicide verdicts are less likely to be given; and any 'hard-to-code' narrative conclusions are classed by statisticians and agencies as accidental deaths.<sup>35</sup> While these are the typical modern reasons why suicides are not counted or in the data, similar misclassification or erasures are present in the evidence presented in this thesis.

This is to say that Murray's first argument about suicide being 'extreme' because he finds it to have been rare is misleading. Additionally, Murray posits that

A wish to die can only result from the strongest negative impulses from life: loss, incapacity, failure, and pain. The mind of the suicide, while he still physically has one, is at the opposite pole of experience from rapture. Suicide, then, marks an extremity.<sup>36</sup>

Murray characterises suicide victims as people who wanted to die for various 'extreme' reasons. While that is what suicide looks like to an outsider, it is a harmful, if common, myth. This myth is not Murray's fault: it is a result of mental-health-adjacent fields being studied, and the mental-health sector itself being dominated, by those without lived experience, looking at suicide and suicidal ideation through their own eyes, as outsiders.<sup>37</sup> Samaritans explains that while it may seem counterintuitive:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 27, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Premila Trivedi, "'Nothing About Us, Without Us': A User/Survivor Perspective of Global Mental Health", *International Review of Psychiatry*, 26.5 (2014), 544–50 <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25343629/>> [accessed 13 October 2021].

The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die; they do not want to live the life they have. The distinction may seem small but is very important. It's why talking through other options at the right time is so vital.<sup>38</sup>

While, to an outsider, suicide can seem extreme, this view treats suicide in terms of a negative view of ill mental health at the outset. Moreover, in treating suicide in this way, Murray positions suicide as something both other and near homogenous. As Harmer, Lee and Duong explain, there is no typical 'suicide victim, there are no "typical" suicidal thoughts and ideations'.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, scholars in health and related fields, such as the medical humanities, often document *suicidal ideation* (a clinical term for thoughts of suicide) in the form of a yes/no, even though suicidal ideation ranges from 'fleeting wishes of falling asleep and never awakening to intensely disturbing preoccupations with self-annihilation fuelled by delusions'.<sup>40</sup> Murray's portrayal of suicide victims in his book do vary, but the consideration of them is homogenous. Either the act was a success, and therefore he considers it, or it was not, and the thought therefore does not appear in his work. While this thesis does not spend much time on suicidal ideation, for lack of space, there are a few mentions in OE of suicidal ideation or even near-suicides (self-killing acts that failed) which this thesis can and does analyse, including that of St. Eustace.

Although Murray acknowledges that the assumption that suicide is an extreme 'may be upside-down', he did not question the validity of his own assumptions. Thus, my thesis engages with the gaps in Murray's two books on *Suicide in the Middle Ages* by focusing on one language and region, with the specificity that it allows, as well as stemming from a place of lived

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<sup>38</sup> Samaritans, 'Myths About Suicide', *Samaritans*, 2021 <<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/myths-about-suicide/>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>39</sup> Bonnie Harmer, Sarah Lee, Truc H. Duong, and Abdolreza Saadabadi, 'Suicidal Ideation' *StatPearls* (2021), 1-117, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK565877/>> [accessed 16 August 2021] (p. 3).

<sup>40</sup> Harmer, et al., 'Suicidal Ideation', p. 3.

experience. While this certainly comes with its own pitfalls, it does fill a gap in the existing scholarship and the biases which colour it, making this thesis and the diverse thinking it brings, extremely necessary.

### **Mary Clayton**

The second most prominent and foundational piece on early medieval suicide is Mary Clayton's article 'Suicide in the Works of Ælfric' (c. 950–1020). Clayton widened the prior discussion on suicide in early medieval England and filled the gap in scholarship on the semantic field of suicide actors in early medieval England.<sup>41</sup> Her article divides the self-killings in Ælfric's works into three main themes: the wilful deaths of biblical characters, those in saints' lives, and the connection between self-killing and fasting in the *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*. Clayton's article highlights Ælfric's stance on self-killing through an analysis of the texts in which he condemns it. While the article is pioneering regarding the connections between Ælfric's work and that of his contemporaries, as well as listing some of the terms for suicide in the vernacular, it does not address verbs for or descriptions of self-killing, likely due to the length constraints of the piece. Although her article is brief, Clayton thoughtfully sets out the history of self-killing leading up to c. 950, as well as tracing the phenomenon and perceptions of it back in time.<sup>42</sup> She pays a lot of detailed attention to the history of suicide, going back as far as the fourth and fifth centuries. Clayton explains that 'early Christian sources generally condemn suicide but only in brief comment', which was developed in relation to late Roman Stoic ideas.<sup>43</sup> She rightly points to the views of Augustine, Aldhelm, and Jerome, even though we cannot be

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<sup>41</sup> Mary Clayton, 'Suicide in the Works of Aelfric', *The Review of English Studies* (2008), 339–70.

<sup>42</sup> Clayton, 'Suicide in the Works of Aelfric', pp. 339–50.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

certain with how much of these views Ælfric came into direct contact.<sup>44</sup> She argues that Augustine construed suicide as a grave sin, while Aldhelm and Jerome found cases where suicide was justified (see Chapter Two).<sup>45</sup>

Clayton's seminal analysis of the themes inherent in Ælfric's self-killing descriptions opens the door for the deeper research in this thesis. Specifically, though Clayton clearly argues for Ælfric's condemnation of the act, her focus on Ælfric limits her exploration of the cultural and societal implications which can be unearthed from close lexical, literary, rhetorical, and intertextual analysis of texts from the period. While she clearly explains that Ælfric found self-killing to be immoral and unchristian, the myriad ways and contexts in which self-killings occur in Ælfric's work point to differing ideas about what might make self-killing acceptable to an early medieval audience. While Ælfric gave reasons for why each of the contexts he brought up were immoral and unchristian to him, by working backwards from the need for this rhetoric, this thesis argues that he felt that some sections of the community needed convincing that self-killing is never a moral grey area.

While Murray and Clayton do begin the analysis of self-killing in the period, both regard linguistic evidence as secondary to the literary, instead of viewing these kinds of evidence as intertwined and equally important. Ultimately, while scholars touch on early medieval self-killing, the focus is not typically on language, which this thesis maintains is the most important available evidence. This thesis fills this gap in scholarship by compiling and analysing the vernacular evidence for self-killing in early medieval England. Moreover, both Murray and Clayton assume that there is little extant evidence for self-killing in the literature of the period. Clayton, in her discussion of Murray, states that:

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

The period about the sixth century to after the millennium is one in which evidence for suicide – both recorded suicides and discussion of the topic – is very sparse; only very rare comments appear in the works of Carolingian thinkers, for example, and it is really only in the thirteenth-century that extended discussions of suicide began again, after a hiatus since the time of the church fathers, Jerome and Augustine.<sup>46</sup>

Clayton is not the only one to assume that this is the case, as most of the mentions of self-killing in early medieval England reference either Ælfric or the lack of discussion of self-killings and need for ‘secrecy’.<sup>47</sup> However, this thesis shows that there is a wealth of evidence on self-killing in OE alone (not to mention Latin, which this thesis only includes when it relates to examples in the vernacular). There is clearly more work to be done to paint the full picture of self-killing in the period.

There are two seminal studies which this thesis relies on that are not interested in early medieval England: Daube’s article ‘Linguistics of Suicide’ and Hoof’s book *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity*.<sup>48</sup> Both pieces shape the way pre-modern studies on the language of suicide are perceived and constructed.

### **David Daube**

Daube strives to comment on the words for suicide in several Semitic and Indo-European languages, mainly Greek, Latin, Hebrew and English. Daube highlights and successfully disentangles the recent extensions of the term *suicide* and related concepts. He explains that the idea of heroically killing oneself ‘for the sake of an ideal you take a course likely or even certain

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<sup>46</sup> Clayton, ‘Suicide in the Works of Ælfric’, pp. 340–41.

<sup>47</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, pp. 48–50; Helen Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Hell in Anglo-Saxon England* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 300–8.

<sup>48</sup> Daube, ‘Linguistics of Suicide’; Hoof, *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity*.

to result in your death' i.e., a *suicide squad* or *suicide mission*, is a result of the recent expansion of *suicide*, which is first recorded around the First World War.<sup>49</sup> He thoughtfully points to the fact that this extension has only happened in the last century, and only in regard to extending the term *suicide* not to variations of the phrase *kill yourself*. The scope of 'to kill oneself', he explains, has been enlarged at a slower pace to include someone perishing accidentally doing some – typically dangerous – activity.<sup>50</sup> For example, if someone died climbing a mountain, people – specifically Americans – may say 'she killed herself climbing Everest'.<sup>51</sup> This is to say, that Daube's article traces the use and connotations of variations on 'to kill oneself' across time and through the lenses of different cultures. This makes his article immensely helpful for the aims of this thesis.

However, like the other pre-modern suicide scholars, Daube does not linger long on early medieval England, and quickly moves on to an analysis of the introduction of the term *suicide* in seventeenth-century England. Where he does discuss OE, Daube does not include any quotations, and merely says 'from very early, English made use of "to murder oneself." The word "self-murder" occurs in Old English, and Chaucer twice introduces a character thinking of "murdering himself"'.<sup>52</sup> He does not make use of or pay attention to the specific language used in OE or ME, though he does this for Ancient Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and even modern Japanese.<sup>53</sup>

While Daube opens conversations about the semantic change of suicide terms and their perception and use across cultures, he, like the other scholars discussed, sees early medieval

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 433, 435.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 390.

England as a barren wasteland, lacking linguistic activity and evidence for suicide. Finally, Daube proposes that there is no genuinely separate word for SUICIDE across languages. That is, ‘the words denoting it [suicide] are always qualifications of others, mostly either of “to die” or “to kill”. Suicide, that is, is exhibited as a dying or a killing, with a twist’.<sup>54</sup> This is one of Daube’s main arguments and is backed up by the evidence presented in this thesis.

### **Anton Van Hoof**

Hoof similarly reaches the conclusion that many words denoting ‘to kill oneself’ are made up of qualifications of ‘to die’ or ‘to kill’. His book *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity* focuses on the wide period between 1500 BCE to the sixth century CE.<sup>55</sup> Like that of Murray, Hoof opens by putting SUICIDE on the back foot: ‘a certain morbid collector’s mania is required for making a file of suicides in the Greco-Roman world’.<sup>56</sup> However, while Hoof considers his interest in Graeco-Roman suicide as a form of morbid mania, he does not fixate on this. His book began with making use of the Latin data provided by Yvonne Grise in 1983, but soon discovered many holes in her arguments and data collection. This is, unfortunately, similar to what I have made of Hoof’s 1990 study.

Hoof’s most useful data for this thesis, his linguistic data, is flawed. Firstly, he does not include full citations for where he found each term. Some citations contain line numbers, while others just list an author. Secondly, while he does include the Greek and Latin terms, he does not provide his own translation – or any translation – alongside it. Thus, any study which wants to compare other languages to the Greek and Latin must have an author who already knows Ancient Greek and Latin. He has also gone to the trouble of transcribing the Ancient Greek into

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Hoof, *From Autothanasia to Suicide*, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

the Roman alphabet but does not give the original Ancient Greek.<sup>57</sup> This means that any scholar wanting to compare the terms in his appendix must go through the trouble of nearly redoing his entire data set: finding the quotation, looking up the original Greek line, transcribing where necessary, and then translating each line. This is, unfortunately, what I have had to do to make use of his seminal findings. My revised data sets can be found in Appendices B and C of this thesis, so that any scholar who is interested in comparing the terms, methods, and linguistic data can do so.

### **Self-Killing in Early Medieval England c. 700–1150**

In terms of early medieval England, the act was not apparently illegal: there is no record of SELF-KILLING in any of the law codes from the period. Nor was there a theological consensus on the conditions that made SELF-KILLING an unholy act.<sup>58</sup> However, SELF-KILLING was condemned in Christian penitentials and by theologians, and ‘many of the Old English penitentials give expression to norms that were not voiced by royal legislation and yet must have enjoyed the status of customary law’.<sup>59</sup> According to Seabourne and Seabourne, common law in early medieval England made killing oneself illegal in the early thirteenth century.<sup>60</sup> While the cultural and social grounding for this institutional shift may have been present in the period under analysis (c. 700–1150), the act of SELF-KILLING was not yet, nor had ever been, illegal in England. The *OED* notes that ‘suicide is held to be a sin in some religions and classed as a crime

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243–50.

<sup>58</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 565.

<sup>59</sup> Stefan Jurasinski, *The Old English Penitentials and Anglo-Saxon Law*, Studies in Legal History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> Alice Seabourne, and Gwen Seabourne, ‘Suicide or Accident: Self-Killing in Medieval England. Series of 198 Cases from the Eyre Records’, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178 (2001), 42–47 (p. 42).



in many societies; for example, laws against suicide existed in English common law until 1961'.<sup>61</sup> While it is true that many societies that existed in England over time have found SELF-KILLING to be a moral, social, and legal wrongdoing, the long history of such attitudes does not extend before the twelfth century. Moreover, Classical history and early Germanic evidence does not imply that it had previously been illegal, though the immorality of the act, but not the actor, is up for debate.<sup>62</sup> As far as early Germanic history goes, SELF-KILLING does not seem to be construed as unspeakable.<sup>63</sup> Whereas early Christian law codes such as the first Council of Braga in c. 561 outlawed the proper burial of self-killers, these laws did not make their way into early medieval England.<sup>64</sup>

This thesis creates a starting point for future research by compiling a corpus of self-killing mentions in OE which can be manipulated by later studies.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, though this thesis is specific to early medieval England, its methodology can be adopted in other studies which seek to use linguistic and literary data to mine for cultural perceptions of mental health in pre-modern periods.

## Research Questions

This research investigates the words used for *suicide*, what they mean, and how we can differentiate between them. In doing so, this research answers three related questions. How can we identify discourses surrounding SUICIDE in a different cultural context from our own (and thus how does our culture, language, and time affect our understanding of SUICIDE acts, actors,

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<sup>61</sup> 'Suicide, n.1.' *OED Online*. Last accessed March 3rd, 2022.

<sup>62</sup> Naiden, 'The Sword Did It', pp. 85–95; Arezina, 'The Act of Suicide', pp. 65–75; Garrison, 'Attitudes toward Suicide in Ancient Greece', pp. 1–34.

<sup>63</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 565.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181–89.

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix A.

and thoughts)? What were the perceptions of suicides (acts and actors) of writers and their audiences in early medieval England? Lastly, what sort of rhetorical devices or effects were employed to discuss or avoid the topic of suicide in Old English?

On the whole, modern suicide is surrounded by misconceptions – the biggest of which is that victims want to die.<sup>66</sup> This study wanted to see how perceptions of suicide victims in early medieval rhetoric compared to the modern, and whether any of the myths about suicide which we hold in the modern day originated in the period.

### **Order of Chapters**

The study began by mining the DOEWC, dictionaries, and scholarship for examples of self-killing to build the data in Appendix A. It thus began by creating a semantic field of self-killing in OE. It then established that particular groups of words and texts were more nuanced in the use of these terms, phrases, and metaphors than others. Thus, the following chapters highlight different opinions of self-killing in early medieval England, as well as showcase different methods of interpreting and analysing the linguistic and literary data.

Chapter One: *Methods and Sources* provides a brief introduction to the relevant material and methods this thesis employs. It describes how the corpus of self-killing terms was compiled so that the methodological underpinnings of the study can be observed. Chapter Two: *X-phemisms* takes a wide-lens approach to perceiving views of self-killing through language. It outlines the ways in which we can view certain terms as positive, negative, or neutral, and then analyses some case studies which fit these views. This section looks at a wide array of the evidence this thesis uncovered and sets the tone for how much information diction and syntax

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<sup>66</sup> Samaritans, 'Myths About Suicide', *Samaritans*, 2021 <<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/myths-about-suicide/>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

alone can convey about our perceptions of a concept. I place it before the main case studies because it sets out some of the clearer perceptions and language around self-killing, which may negate some biases with which the reader might come to this thesis. The next few chapters of this thesis are made up of case studies grouped by method of self-killing. In this way, the thesis is ordered from general to specific, before widening the focus out again at the end for a final broad discussion.

The case studies were picked because they each highlight a different aspect or nuance of the language and rhetoric that describes, denotes, obscures, or erases self-killing in OE. Chapter Four: *Falling/Flying* sets the tone for how complex and rewarding distinctions between lexicography and literary interpretation can be. It explores the erasure that can and does happen when the intent behind a self-killing is not clearly conveyed. Chapter Five: *Falling on One's Sword* builds on the previous chapter and showcases yet another problem with literary interpretation through the PDE idiom, 'fall on one's sword' and how that can colour a reader's interpretations and expectations of early medieval texts. This chapter analyses some of Ælfric's works, without making the chapter entirely about his voice. This thesis found that grouping the studies based on method and not author or text allowed for richer comparisons.

Chapter Six: *Poison* shifts the discussion from self-killing briefly to other forms of weaponised rhetoric. This decision embeds the question of perception, authorial voice, and intent at the heart of the thesis, and allows the thesis to explore what happens when some methods of death are perceived as 'better' or 'worse', and how these perceptions may impact rhetorical choices. Chapter Seven: *Self-Immolation* follows this model and sets out the historic view of self-immolation in the period, and the shifting attitudes towards immolation in general in this period. It follows the chapter on self-poisoning because the two of them make up the most

painless and painful ways of killing oneself in the corpus. Self-immolation was chosen as a topic because it allows this thesis to look at some of the other impacts of the conversion to Christianity, and the effect of shifting burial practices on the perception of self-killing, which effect and shape perceptions and myths surrounding self-killing. Chapter Eight: *Hanging* focuses on one of the most iconic forms of self-killing and is placed at the end of case studies where the shift is from least obvious self-killing to the most.

Chapter Nine: *Authorial and Editorial Perceptions* widens the scope out again to look at the different voices we do have in the period, and what their main views of self-killing are based on the literary and linguistic evidence available. It is placed at the end so that it can build on conclusions made about certain word choices and meanings throughout this thesis, and answers many of the original research questions in doing so, as well as answering and asking several more.

Ultimately, the chapters answer the research questions and present the broadest array of evidence and deepest analysis that this thesis can suitably answer within the wordcount. This means that some avenues of analysis, such as perceptions of why people kill themselves, the effects on family/friends, mental states of self-killers, and even some interesting self-killing episodes must be left out in order for this thesis to accomplish what it set out to do: identify discourses surrounding SELF-KILLING, illuminate perceptions of the act and actors, and investigate the rhetorical devices and effects employed by authors to discuss, erase, or obscure SELF-KILLING.

## Chapter One: Methodology and Sources

### Method

To avoid anachronism and ethnocentrism, this thesis employs both onomasiological and semasiological approaches to foreground early medieval concepts. Onomasiology is a study where one starts with a concept and then the name or names for it are investigated and compiled. For example, ‘a beverage drunk predominantly in the morning to wake you up’ assessed onomasiologically might yield *coffee*. In order to answer the onomasiological question ‘how is X expressed in Old English?’, this study made use of the *Dictionary of Old English (DOE)*’s web corpus as well as the *Thesaurus of Old English (TOE)* to find instances of Old English constructions for self-killing acts and agents. This thesis looked for instances in the literature and corpus where a self-killing act or agent was being described (a death that was intentional and own-handed) and then compiled the terms and descriptions used.

Once assessed onomasiologically, this thesis used a semasiological approach to better analyse the sense relations between the terms found to express self-killing acts and agents. A semasiological approach would focus on the term first, ‘what does term X mean?’. Therefore, following the previous example, one would start with the term *coffee* and attempt to define it based on the instances in which it was used. In which case, *coffee* could be considered a ‘strong caffeinated beverage drunk predominately in the morning’, and/or ‘a daytime beverage in which social interactions revolve’. In this case, SELF-KILLING was first investigated with an onomasiological question: how is SELF-KILLING expressed in OE? Once a set of terms were discovered which expressed the concept of SELF-KILLING, a semasiological approach was used to further understand the OE terms which labelled the act of SELF-KILLING. Based on these two approaches, a semantic field for SELF-KILLING in OE was created. This was then used for cultural

analysis. In this way, this thesis uses lexical analysis to read cultural values and fears reflected and embedded in and by language. As such, the bulk of this thesis focuses on and returns to lexical analysis while simultaneously investigating case studies wherein broader literary and cultural methods are applied.

Of course, these methods alone were not enough to catch the majority of self-killing instances in the OE corpus. This study made use of additional data sources and dictionaries to compile the corpus of self-killing instances in OE you can find in the appendix.

## **Dictionaries**

### **DOE**

*The Dictionary of Old English* (DOE) is a current dictionary project conducted by the University of Toronto. The goal is an entirely electronic dictionary of Old English, covering the period between 600-1150 AD. It complements the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), in that all three will provide a comprehensive vocabulary of the English language.<sup>1</sup> The DOE is currently up to the letter ‘I’.

While this thesis has made use of the main dictionary, it has been more indebted to the Dictionary of Old English Corpus, which is the research tool which is being used to create the dictionary entries. The DOE is based on a comprehensive analysis of the extant OE sources which are compiled in the corpus, and therefore, is not indebted to previous dictionaries. The DOE lists 3133 different texts which make up the OE corpus and uses all these texts to create lexical entries for each term.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Home page’, *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*, ed. by Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette dePaolo Healey et al., *Dictionary of Old English Project*, 2016 <<https://www.doe.utoronto.ca/>> [accessed 10 October 2021].

This makes the DOE the most up-to-date and useful dictionary of OE. However, as it is yet unfinished, other sources and dictionaries were consulted and relied upon for this thesis which are sometimes problematic. The main dictionary of OE remains Bosworth and Toller's *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, by Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, printed in 1898, and its *Supplement* by Toller of 1921. This dictionary records the period c. 700–1100. It has been digitised many times, most prominently as *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* by Sean Crist and Ondřej Tichý, and it is this edition of the dictionary that this thesis cites. As Christ and Tichý explain, it is 'today the largest complete dictionary of Old English (one day to be hopefully supplanted by the DOE)'.<sup>2</sup> Yet *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* remains a product of the nineteenth/early twentieth century and it therefore does not reflect the last century of progress in lexicography, Old English semantic research, or other academic advances. It is, as should be expected, missing several newer insights, and is coloured by the theories and assumptions of its time. This is particularly apparent in relation to theories and assumptions about medicine and health. This is also the case for John Richard Clark Hall's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, first published in 1894.<sup>3</sup> Hall found upwards of 2,000 words not included in Bosworth's original dictionary.<sup>4</sup> However, the supplement by Toller for Bosworth's dictionary does include and reference Hall. The two dictionaries are therefore intertwined and thus share and expand on any assumptions and issues. Unfortunately, these two are the main dictionaries used to create other studies and sources. One such source is the *Thesaurus of Old English* (TOE), which was used to make the *Metaphor Map of Old English*.

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<sup>2</sup> *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. by Thomas Northcote Toller and Others. Comp. Sean Crist and Ondřej Tichý (Prague: Charles University, 2010), <<https://bosworthtoller.com>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>3</sup> J.R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. edn by Herbert D. Meritt (Blacksburg: Wilder Publications, 2011), p. vii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## **MME/MMOE**

The metaphor mapping project by the University of Glasgow analyses data from the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE) project by tagging instances where words extend their meaning from one domain (the source domain) into another (target domain).<sup>5</sup> The project has two outputs online: The *Metaphor Map of English* (MME) and *Metaphor Map of Old English* (MMOE). Both the MME and MMOE use visualization software to illustrate links that exist between domains. The MMOE/MME visualisation views connect different metaphor domains via a clear yellow line but obscure the connection's direction. More specific views (tabular, timeline, and card views) given by the site list the terms which create the connection between domains and clearly label the direction of the connection. Depending on the frequency of use, and number of terms, a connection between a source and target domain is labelled strong or weak. Together, these outputs show these mainly unilateral connections between weak and strong metaphoric links from c. 700 to the present day. The metaphor maps are used in this thesis to illustrate conceptual links and overarching and embedded metaphors which relate to or make up SELF-KILLING.

## **TOE**

*A Thesaurus of Old English* (TOE) is a conceptually arranged presentation of the OE lexicon. Its vocabulary is drawn from five hundred years of English: some from eighth-century England, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus* (University of Glasgow, 2015), <<https://mappingmetaphor.arts.gla.ac.uk>> [accessed 10 October 2021]



then more and more terms until the twelfth century, so that it is richer in twelfth-century terms.<sup>6</sup> It uses Bosworth Toller, Hall, and fully edited material from the OED as its source dictionaries.

This thesis attempted to mine the TOE for data. To do so, the author inputted the concept SUICIDE into the TOE, wherein four degrees of larger sense categories conceptualised by modern terms narrowed down to Modern English (ModE) *suicide*:

02. Life and Death

02.02. Death

02.02.04. Killing, violent death, destruction

02.02.04.04. Manslaughter, Homicide

02.02.04.04.02. Suicide<sup>7</sup>

Once at the conceptual level of *suicide*, the TOE headwords switch from ModE to OE. There are two terms listed at the level of *suicide* with two additional subcategories given, so that the hierarchical ontology given for *suicide* is:

*Selfcwalu*

*Selfmyrþrung*

01 v. To commit suicide

*Offeallan*

*Spildan*

02 n. One who commits suicide

*Agenslaga*

*Selfbana*

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<sup>6</sup> ‘About the Thesaurus’, in *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2021), <<https://oldenglishtesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/introduction/>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>7</sup> For now, it is enough to note that ‘suicide’ or what this thesis refers to as SELF-KILLING is expressed as a subunit of the larger concept of VIOLENT DEATH/ DESTRUCTION.

*Selfcwala*

*Selfmyrpra*<sup>8</sup>

Once these terms were discovered, data on instances of SELF-KILLING in the OE corpus was collected through a combination of the simple and phrasal search functions in the DOEWC. In addition to finding the instances for SELF-KILLING, these searches also revealed two main issues with the evidence in the TOE.

First, there was a problem finding evidence of the extant usage of certain terms. *Selfmyrprung*, one of the top terms for the concept of SELF-KILLING in the TOE, happens to be a ghost term. It only exists as an emendation, found for example in Hall's dictionary with a definition of 'a suicide', but no evidence is given as to where the term was found, or if the form was created by Hall.<sup>9</sup> This likely has to do with lexicographers not knowing what to do with *selfmyrþe* which occurs only as a gloss in *Aldhem's De Virginitate* (AldV 13.1 (Nap) C31.13.1 and CIGI 3 (Quinn) D8.3.)), and is a subject of interest in Chapter Two.<sup>10</sup> For now, this is to say that when the TOE reaches the OE, it is not formatted according to frequency of concepts and terms, nor do the subcategories *selfcwalu* and *selfmyrprung* match up grammatically to the categories given beneath.

Additionally, of the verbs listed for 'to suicide', neither Hall nor Bosworth list 'suicide' as a definition for *spildan*, 'to destroy, waste', and the examples given in Bosworth are not of cases of self-killings.<sup>11</sup> The TOE does not point to where such a connotation was conceived, and only the *Historical Thesaurus of English (HTE)* lists *spildan* with such a synonym, though they both used the OED as a source.

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<sup>8</sup> '02.02.04.04.02 (n.) Suicide', in *A Thesaurus of Old English*, <<http://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/category/?id=990>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>9</sup> Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 287. What the DOEWC lists as *sylfmyrþ* or *selfmyrþ*, the TOE lists as *selfmyrþra*. This specific term will be investigated in Chapter Two.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix. Specifically, it occurs twice.

<sup>11</sup> Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 274; 'Spildan', *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

Secondly, the hierarchical concept of SUICIDE in the *TOE* is based on Bosworth and Hall, not on frequency in the OE corpus.<sup>12</sup> Given that some of the constructions were impossible to find, and that others occur solely as glosses, the terms given in the *TOE* are too far removed from the source texts in their construction to tenably argue for the hierarchical ontology listed, though the hierarchy given up to the concept of SUICIDE is accepted by this study. The *TOE* was helpful in noting nouns and verbs as a starting point for inputting as a search in the *DOE* web corpus.

## **DOE**

Having noted that the *TOE*'s OE specific breakdown of the concept of SELF-KILLING is untenable, this study moved to use the *DOE* web corpus in order to construct the list of occurrences in the OE corpus which can be found in the appendix.

Beginning with the four terms the *TOE* gave for 'one who commits suicide', both simple and phrase searches were inputted into the *DOEWC* in search for constructions of phrases and compounds which conveyed the concept of SELF-KILLING. These were run at length for possible variants in spelling and construction of phrases, including in the constructions of the reflexive component. As stated in the *TOE*, four compound words were found to cover the concept of a SELF-KILLER. This search yielded an additional five phrases of varying complexity which convey the same sense of DEATH DONE TO/ BY SELF.

Once constructions were found with instances listed in the *DOE*, certain texts such as the *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials* and Old English glossaries were manually checked as they were not listed to have any SELF-KILLING constructions by the *DOE*, though the author knew them to exist from previous knowledge. Moreover, some of the constructions were found by other scholars,

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<sup>12</sup> Jane Roberts and Christian Kay, 'The Source Dictionaries', in *About a Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2017), <<http://oldenglishtesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/classification>> [accessed 18 August 2021].

such as in Murray or Clayton, which were not found through input searches into the DOE web corpus.<sup>13</sup> Such a failure is alarming, as the likelihood for missing constructions or instances of description is high. In order to lessen the likelihood of missing constructions, constructions found through other means were placed back into the DOE web corpus through the Boolean search in order to ascertain whether there were any additional texts which used the same SELF-KILLING construction. Finally, texts found to contain instances of SELF-KILLING were then checked against each individual manuscript version of the text to make sure that the versions did not include a different construction for the description of the specific SELF-KILLING (e.g., it is said in the *Chronicle* that Herod killed himself. A manual check of each version of the *Chronicle* then shows two different ways the same sentence is written). In this way, the OE corpus was assessed both computationally and then manually to yield twenty-four variations in SELF-KILLING constructions in Old English.

These twenty-four different OE constructions could point to a lexical gap that different writers tried to fill by creating their own constructions, and or using phrases and context-specific descriptions of the acts in place of a frequently used term for the act of SELF-KILLING. As most of the instances occur as translations for Latin parallel texts, this argument cannot be completely rejected.

The constructions can be separated into two groups. The first which considers the nouns for the agents of self-killing, and the second which considers the verb phrases for the acts. The first group is made up of four nouns for the agents: *agenslaga*, *selfbana*, *sylfcwala*, and *selfmyrþ*. Then, there are twenty verbs which relay the act of self-killing:

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<sup>13</sup> Such as ‘he hine selfne awyrgde’ in the *Homily for Saint Martin*. Or ‘ageote þin blod’, ‘ic gehwyrfde þone ord ongean me’, ‘acwellan mid uncer agene swurde’, and ‘hwerf þu nu þin swurd in þe’ in *the Life of Malchus*. See Appendix A.

1. *Acwellan*
2. *Adrencan*
3. *Adydan*
4. *Ahon*
5. *Amyrran*
6. *Awyrgan*
7. *Feallan*
8. *Fleogan*
9. *Forbærnan*
10. *Endian*
11. *Gewitan*
12. *Hangian*
13. *Hwierfan*
14. *Lætan*
15. *Spillan*
16. *Offeallan*
17. *Ofslean*
18. *Ofstician*
19. *Ofstingan*
20. *Ʒyddan*

Each of these constructions are important to note as they feature different clues both in their etymological makeup, form, and function pointing to how SELF-KILLING was perceived in the wide period of written OE.

## Important Authors

It is important to note that most texts which mention self-killing in Old English are written by a small number of authors, which means that the strongest evidence for views of self-killing from the period only come to us through a handful of voices. Of course, most texts written in OE are similarly designated to a few authors: Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 950–1010), King Alfred the Great (c. 849–899), Wulfstan (Bishop in c. 993; died c. 1023), and Bede (c. 673–735). The DOE lists 3133 different texts which make up the OE corpus. Of those, Ælfric has had the most works attributed to him.<sup>14</sup> Unsurprisingly then, one of the major authors this thesis looks at is Ælfric of Eynsham. Another is the Compiler of the *Old English History of the World*, an adaptation of Paulus Orosius' *Historia Adversus Paganos Libri Septem* or *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*.<sup>15</sup> Although Orosius wrote his work c. 417, the Compiler did not adapt the piece until at least the late ninth century.<sup>16</sup> These two authors make up the bulk of the self-killing evidence in this thesis, and their views will be expanded on in the ninth chapter of thesis. The remaining evidence for self-killing is unattributed, though the texts are formed within a certain, typically Christian, tradition. In these cases, comparative analysis, both literary and linguistic, allows us to disentangle different authorial voices.

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<sup>14</sup> The DOE includes glosses, multiple manuscripts, and sometimes breaks up a text and counts it multiple times. So, a specific number for each author is hard to come by. If you count each entry under each author in the DOE, then one hundred and ninety-eight are attributed to Ælfric, eighty-two to Wulfstan, forty-six to Bede, forty-five to Aldhelm, and thirty-six to Alfred. These numbers were reached by counting the numbers through a simple search in the DOE 'List of Texts'. Each instance was checked to make sure no texts were counted twice (through the mention of the authors name a second time like with Ælfric's name in the title of the text 'Homilies of Ælfric' and the publishing society 'Ælfric Society'). There are likely some missed through this process if the DOE does not list the author in the text information, and some may be counted as the work of an author where that is contested by scholars. Thus, these numbers are approximate.

<sup>15</sup> I have chosen to capitalise the word *compiler* when referring to the OE *History of the World* to treat it as a proper noun. *The Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius*, trans. by Malcolm Godden, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*, 44 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. vii–ix.

<sup>16</sup> According to Batley, the text was likely composed between 890 and 899. However, according to Godden, the text was likely composed around 930. See *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Janet Batley, Early English Text Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. xcii; *The Old English History of the World*, Godden, p. xi.

### **Methods in Distinguishing Sense and Usage**

In order to better understand the differences in meaning behind the varying descriptions for SELF-KILLING in OE, this thesis will utilise various methodologies from the fields of cultural semantics, the history of emotions, and linguistics. This thesis will analyse the terms for SELF-KILLING in OE through an analysis of sense-relation, based on the words' etymologies, through the formation and analysis of a taxonomic and connotational chart. Finally, this thesis will address the usage and collocation of certain terms through and with metaphors, using Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT). Ultimately, this thesis will highlight the nuances of the SELF-KILLING constructions. Thus, this section will define the methods used in this thesis for distinguishing sense and usage. To do so, it will outline and give background to some of the major theories and methods which underpin this thesis.

### **Synonymy and Sense Relations**

Near synonymy, or cognitive synonymy, as this thesis will refer to it, is the relationship between two terms or linguistic units which can be exchanged while keeping the same truth conditions, but which differ in associative meanings. Plesionyms are like cognitive synonyms in the fact that in most cases they can stand in for the word they relate to. However, the truth conditions do not always stay the same. For example, *rained* and *pelted* are plesionyms. Depending on the context, these terms can keep the same truth condition, but in other situations they do not. One of the main differences between plesionyms and cognitive synonyms is that 'there is always one member of a plesionymous pair which it is possible to assert without paradox, while

simultaneously denying the other member'.<sup>17</sup> For example, *he was not killed; he committed suicide*. Cognitive synonyms do not collocate normally with the constructions 'not exactly' or 'more exactly', as they are too close in meaning, both denotatively and associatively: he *died*, or more exactly, he *passed away*. Here, *passed away* is not more exact than *died*, but they keep the same truth conditions. Thus, *died* and *passed away* are cognitive synonyms. Whereas, he *died*, or more exactly, he *committed suicide* is an example of a plesionym with a unilateral truth condition. It would not make sense to say, he *committed suicide*, or more specifically he *died*.

Both plesionyms and cognitive synonyms can differ in associative meaning, which is most useful for an analysis of the semantics of SELF-KILLING in OE. The typical aspects of associative meaning wherein cognitive synonyms and plesionyms may differ are collocational range, level/ style of formality, register/ field of discourse, dialect (regional or social), and euphemistic usage.<sup>18</sup>

### **Natural Semantic Metalanguage**

It is important to note that aspects of associative meaning are context specific, and that their general contexts also reveal insights into the culture(s) in early medieval England defined more broadly.

In the case of SELF-KILLING, NSM provides an opportunity for meaning to be clearly expressed without the ethnocentrism and anachronism that comes with assuming one-to-one definitions across temporally distinct cultures. The main thrust behind the NSM approach 'is that meaning is the key to insightful and explanatory descriptions of most linguistic phenomena,

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<sup>17</sup> David Cruse, *Lexical Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 285.

<sup>18</sup> See Philip and Hirst, 'Near-Synonymy and Lexical Choice', pp. 105–44; Stanojevic, 'Cognitive Synonymy', pp. 193–200.



phonetics and phonology excepted'.<sup>19</sup> The system itself is decompositional. It assumes (through what its proponents call empirically established) a universality of language, and secondarily, a universality of cognition.<sup>20</sup> NSM uses semantic explication, or reductive paraphrase, made up of so-claimed universal 'primes' to represent meaning. A prime, according to proponents of NSM, is an expression that represents unitary meanings.<sup>21</sup> Goddard illustrates the semantic primes proposed by NSM and their related categorises, which is useful to note here:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING/THING, PEOPLE, BODY                                     | substantives                                      |
| KIND, PART   | relational substantives                           |
| THIS, THE SAME, OTHER/ELSE   | determiners                                       |
| ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH/MANY   | quantifiers                                       |
| GOOD, BAD  | evaluators  |
| BIG, SMALL   | descriptors                                       |
| KNOW, THINK, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR   | mental predicates                                 |
| SAY, WORDS, TRUE   | speech  |
| DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH  | actions, events, movement, contact                |
| BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, HAVE,<br>BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)                          | location, existence, possession,<br>specification |
| LIVE, DIE  | life and death                                    |
| WHEN/TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT<br>TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT | time  |
| WHERE/PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE                           | space   |
| NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF   | logical concepts                                  |
| VERY, MORE   | intensifier, augmentor                            |
| LIKE/WAY   | similarity  |

Notes: (i) Primes exist as the meanings of lexical units (not at the level of lexemes) (ii) Exponents of primes may be words, bound morphemes, or phrasemes (iii) They can be formally complex (iv) They can have combinatorial variants (allolexes) (v) Each prime has well-specified syntactic (combinatorial) properties.

Figure 1: Semantic Primes

Whether one is convinced by the universality of the NSM primes (which this author is not), many linguists, this author included, do agree that there is heuristic value in NSM's reductive paraphrase and basic breakdown of language.

In this way, NSM is utilised by this thesis to highlight the situational nuances and contextual meaning beyond what would be covered in a typical definition. The use of NSM's

<sup>19</sup> Cliff Goddard, 'The Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach', in *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, ed. by Bernd Heine and Heiko Narrog (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 459–84 (p. 459).

<sup>20</sup> Also known as linguistic relativity or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which states that the particular language that one speaks has an influence on the way one thinks. See Caleb Everett, *Linguistic Relativity: Evidence Across Languages and Cognitive Domains* (Mouton: De Gruyter, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Cliff Goddard, 'The Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach', p. 463.

reductive paraphrase allows for these nuances to be described without the interference of more ambiguous or complicated language which could obfuscate the meaning based on the reader or creator's language biases. The purpose of NSM in this thesis is thus to exaggerate the associative sense differences for a few of the SELF-KILLING constructions which occur in different contexts where it is useful and necessary to explicate and expand on the semantics. By using the specific contexts wherein each of the constructions crop up, not only is the meaning of the word highlighted, but the cultural and social knowledge and biases implicated in the usage. Thus, NSM's reductive paraphrase technique is utilised, without relying on empirical universal explicability to render early medieval cultural perceptions towards variations of SELF-KILLING visible.

### **Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)**

The theoretical assumptions on which this thesis relies come from the cognitive model of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). CMT was initially developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, where they argued that metaphors are central to thought (i.e., as Eliecer Crespo-Fernández says, 'we talk about things the way we conceive of them').<sup>22</sup> Lakoff explains that metaphor is 'a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system' — that is a mapping from a source domain (concrete: *journey*) to a target domain (abstract: *death*).<sup>23</sup> As Crespo-Fernández puts it, 'the source domain is used to understand, structure and, depending on the speaker's intention, mitigate or reinforce the associations of a negative kind of the target domain'. Crespo-Fernández, unlike Lakoff and Johnson, is concerned with metaphors in response to a taboo subject.

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<sup>22</sup> Eliecer Crespo-Fernández, 'Conceptual Metaphors in Taboo-Induced Lexical Variation', *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 10.14 (2011), 53–71 (p. 54).

<sup>23</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 203.

## X-phemisms

X-phemism refers to euphemisms (think of the nicer way to talk about something taboo: a euphemism replaces a taboo referent for a more positive, abstract term/phrase), dysphemisms (the more vulgar version: a dysphemism replaces a neutral term/phrase for a vulgar, offensive term/phrase), and orthophemisms (neutral language. Not overly blunt ‘straight-talk’, but not euphemistic either). All of these are of course culturally and socially contextual. X-phemistic language can be broken down into preferred and dispreferred units:

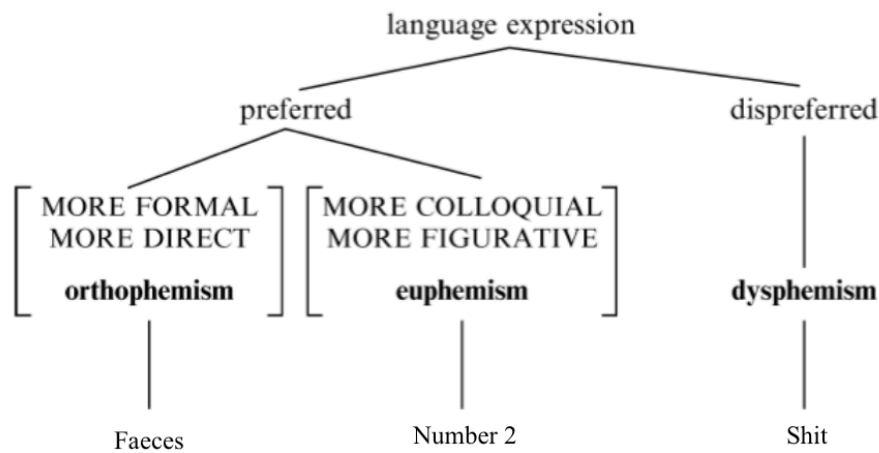


Figure 2: X-phemisms<sup>24</sup>

Allan and Burbridge also use the examples ‘toilet, loo, and shithouse’ to contrast X-phemisms.<sup>25</sup> The above examples highlight X-phemistic connotations in diction, though arguably, the terms are context-specific. For instance, one might find all three references to pooping inappropriate to a given audience. If you were meeting your partner’s grandparents for the first time, even saying ‘excuse me, I have to go number two’ would likely be less appropriate than asking where the *restroom* is located. Thus, depending on context and audience, certain terms and phrases will be

<sup>24</sup> Adapted from *Forbidden Words*, p. 34. There, they use *faeces*, *poo*, and *shit* as examples of Orthophemism, euphemism and dysphemism respectively.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

considered dispreferred or preferred, and whole subjects may be considered dispreferred. It is possible that SELF-KILLING is one such area which was off-limits for ‘proper’ conversation in early medieval England. Before getting into the evidence for this, it is important to note the other factors which influence the categorization of X-phemistic language, and the implications thereof.

In addition to context and audience, Crespo-Fernández explains that X-phemistic metaphors are greatly influenced by the degree ‘to which the tabooed conceptual traits have become associated with the X-phemistic metaphorical alternative’.<sup>26</sup> Crespo-Fernández calls this process *lexicalization*, which in a broad sense refers to the adoption of a syntactic construction or word formation into the lexicon.<sup>27</sup> Traugott and Brinton explain that lexicalization is a change which results in ‘a new contentful form with formal and semantic properties that are not completely derivable or predictable from the constituents or the construction or word formation pattern’.<sup>28</sup> They explain that over time, lexicalization of X-phemistic language can lead to the loss of ‘internal constituency’ and the word or phrase may become more *lexical*: i.e., more ingrained and highly specified semantically. Traugott and Brinton refer to ‘lexical’ as something that must be learned by speakers.<sup>29</sup> PDE idioms are a great example of this, as they are often *dead metaphors*, or lexicalized metaphors. A dead metaphor, according to Pawelec, is a metaphor with a conventional meaning different from its original meaning that has become so widely used that there is no need to understand or consult the original meaning to understand it.<sup>30</sup> For example, PDE *rain check*. Originally, *rain checks* were literal tickets given for later use

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<sup>26</sup> Crespo-Fernández, ‘Conceptual Metaphors in Taboo-Induced Lexical Variation’, pp. 57–58.

<sup>27</sup> Laurel Brinton and Elizabeth Closs Traugott, *Lexicalisation and Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Andrzej Pawelec, ‘The Death of Metaphor’, *Studia Linguistica*, 123 (2006), 117–22 (p. 118).

when a sporting event or game was interrupted or postponed by rain.<sup>31</sup> Currently, the term is used more generally to refer to an obligation or offer which will be taken up later – whether it is raining or not. Most native speakers would not know that the term used to refer to literal tickets issued due to rain, which ‘deadens’ the metaphor in use since the source domain is unknown. This process of lexicalization takes time, and in the case of *rain check*, has occurred over a century. Some of the metaphors we get for death, like *passed away*, have been in use since at least the late ninth century.<sup>32</sup> Of course, at one point, saying someone *passed away* would not have been an explicit euphemism for DEATH.

Explicit PDE X-phemisms were once novel or creative metaphors before they underwent this process of lexicalization. Therefore, OE counterparts to modern explicit X-phemisms or dead metaphors had not necessarily undergone this process of change in which the X-phemism clearly means one thing (i.e., *pass away* is lexicalized in PDE but without research it would be incorrect to assume the same of *forþfaran*). Crespo-Fernández models this process of metaphorical manipulation with two sets of taboo referents: to ‘reach orgasm’ and to ‘die’:

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Rain check, n.’ *OED Online*, <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/269412?redirectedFrom=rain+check#eid>> [accessed 24 August 2021].

<sup>32</sup> According to the OED, *forfare* was used first in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, around 897. See: “forfare, v.2.” *OED Online*, <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/73273?rskey=xSr9TZ&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 24 August 2021].

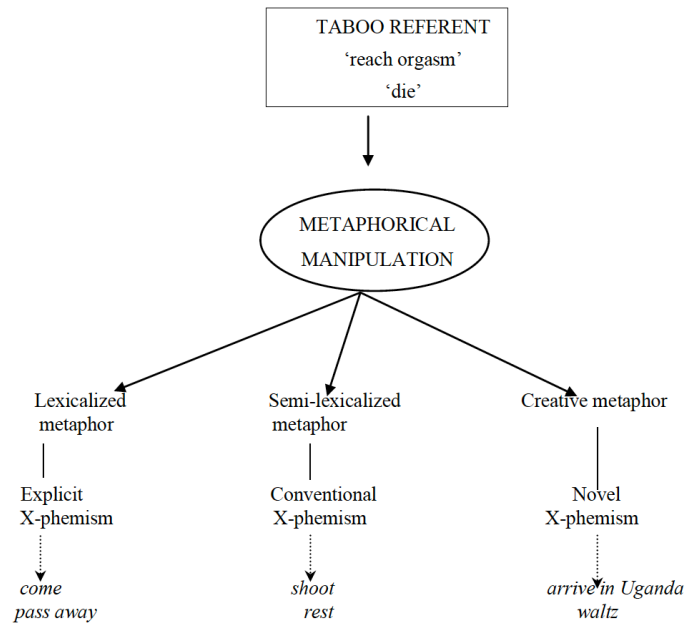


Figure 3: Lexicalization and Metaphor<sup>33</sup>

Semi-lexicalized metaphors (conventional) are in the process of becoming fixed expressions or syntactic constructions, but are not cemented the way explicit, lexicalized metaphors are. It is likely that *forþfaran* was at the very least a conventional euphemism for DEATH at the time the *Chronicle* was being written.<sup>34</sup> As Crespo-Fernández explains, contrary to novel and most conventional X-phemistic substitutes, the explicit X-phemistic alternative undoubtedly refers to the taboo referent it stands for. When this happens, the X-phemism becomes tainted and usually gets replaced by a more creative metaphor, starting the process anew. More than leading to new X-phemisms, this process affects the connotation and understanding of the taboo referent in explicit X-phemisms. Specifically, we know that the more a modern euphemism becomes lexicalized, the less it diverts attention from the taboo referent. Allan and Burridge explain that

<sup>33</sup> Crespo-Fernández, 'Conceptual Metaphors', p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> See my forthcoming book chapter 'The Language of Death in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', which will be found in *The Handbook of the Language of Death* published by Bloomsbury.

‘where a language expression is ambiguous between a taboo sense and a non-taboo sense, its meaning will often narrow to the taboo sense alone’.<sup>35</sup>

Take, as Crespo-Fernández does, for example, the word *cock*. The term was originally an animal term with the meaning of ‘adult male chicken’ and was first used with a sexual sense as a euphemism for *penis* as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Through frequent use, ‘*cock* is now regarded by the *OED* as “the *pudoris causa*, not admissible in polite speech or literature”.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the word *cock* is now unable to frame the taboo topic in a certain conceptual sphere.

Through frequent use, the term has lost the ability to mitigate the sexual concept or provide any specific way of understanding it. Similarly, *pass away* is now synonymous with *die*. Though it is still a preferred language expression, as in, it is a milder or euphemistic way to say someone died, it no longer mitigates the concept of death – instead, it reinforces it. We can now not say that someone passed away, without knowing explicitly that we are talking about death.

Ultimately, by determining where a syntactic construction was in the process of lexicalization, we can reconstruct how frequently it was used in early medieval societies.

Moreover, Steen rightfully points out that a lot of metaphors are likely processed non-metaphorically, having been previously derived from conventional metaphors, and are now polysemous, without evoking the metaphoric connection in people’s minds.<sup>38</sup> To some, Steen elaborates, ‘it has raised the question of whether “Lakoff attacked Glucksberg” can even count as metaphorical’.<sup>39</sup> I believe, as Steen does, that the domain of WAR is still activated in this process,

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<sup>35</sup> Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, p. 23

<sup>36</sup> Crespo-Fernández, ‘Conceptual Metaphors’, p. 63; “cock, n.1 and int.” *OED Online*, <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/35327?rskey=v8Ud4B&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 24 August 2021].

<sup>37</sup> Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, p. 63

<sup>38</sup> Gerard Steen, ‘The Paradox of Metaphor: Why We Need a Three-Dimensional Model of Metaphor’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 23 (2008), 213–241.

<sup>39</sup> Gerard Steen, ‘From Three Dimensions to Five Steps: The Value of Deliberate Metaphor’, *metaphorik.de*, 21 (2011), 83–110 (p. 85).

and that the distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor does not line up with novel and conventional metaphors.<sup>40</sup> As in, in order to be deliberate a metaphor does not have to be new. This suggests that even where frequency of a metaphor suggests that it is lexicalised or strongly conventional in the OE period (or now), the metaphoric domain can still be activated either by the reader or speaker.

In addition to assuming frequency of use, analysing the metaphors embedded in X-phemistic language with Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) allows us to reconstruct conceptual structures, as well as identify motivations for X-phemistic language. Allan and Burridge explain that, like euphemism, [dysphemism] is sometimes motivated by fear and distaste, but also by hatred and contempt.<sup>41</sup> They argue that ‘speakers resort to dysphemism to talk about people and things that frustrate and annoy them, that they disapprove of and wish to disparage, humiliate and degrade’.<sup>42</sup> Dysphemisms are therefore characteristic of groups or teams discussing their opponents and include things like curses, name-calling, and derogatory comments intended to insult or wound others.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the methods and major theories which underpin this thesis. The following chapters will call upon these models and theories where relevant to investigate and analyse the language of self-killing in OE c. 700–1150.

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<sup>40</sup> Steen, ‘From Three Dimensions to Five Steps’, pp. 84–85.

<sup>41</sup> Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, p. 31

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



## Chapter Two: Nouns

### ***Biothanatus* – Glosses Case Study**

Nearly all the nouns/adjectives for self-killing appear as glosses to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*.<sup>1</sup>

There, different glossators take a variety of approaches to glossing one word into OE:

*biothanatus*. This chapter outlines what *biothanatus* is and means, how it is used in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, and the various approaches different OE glossators take when they encounter it.

The introduction to this thesis discussed the possibility of a lexical gap for self-killing in OE, which Clayton argued for in her survey of self-killing in Ælfric's works. This chapter demonstrates that there was no frequently used noun for the act or agent of self-killing between c. 700–950 in our extant evidence, as Clayton suggested, but that the terms chosen to gloss *biothanatus* are not all conveying the same idea. Ultimately, this chapter surveys the linguistic and literary evidence of the extant nouns (and adjective) extant which are typically assumed to mean 'suicide' and sheds a little more light on their meaning(s) and purpose(s).

### **Aldhelm**

Aldhelm (c. 639–709), was abbot of Malmesbury c. 675, made first bishop of Sherborne c. 705, and was one of the most prolific writers in Wessex.<sup>2</sup> His largest work, *De Virginitate*, a treatise written in both poetry and prose, includes the term *biothanatas*, or the phrase *inter biothanatas*, in chapter thirty-one in the prose versions. There, Aldhelm discusses the general high opinion of virginity:

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<sup>1</sup> Three out of four. One, *agenslaga*, seems to be an idiolectal term of Ælfric's.

<sup>2</sup> John Cannon and Robert Crowcroft, 'Aldhelm', in *A Dictionary of British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Magna est igitur puritatis praerogatiua, quam qui amittere per uim compellitur, si ob hoc humanum exosus consortium communi uita sponte caruerit, apud. CXLIV. milia uirginale carmen canentia in caelesti contubernio gloriosus gratulabitur.<sup>3</sup>

(Great therefore is the opinion of purity: that if anyone is through violence forced to lose it [purity], if on account of this they, hating human community, voluntarily absent from this life, then they shall rejoice gloriously in the celestial society among the 144,000 singing the virginal song).

Here, in reference to SELF-KILLING, Aldhelm uses *sponte* (from *spons*, *spontis*) meaning ‘of free will’ in tandem with *vita* ‘life’ and *careo*, *-ere* ‘to be without, to be absent from’.<sup>4</sup> *Sponte* is often used in classical Latin texts when self-killing is mentioned, along with *voluntaria*, to clarify the wilfulness of the act.<sup>5</sup> In *De Virginitate*, Aldhelm goes on to explain that this in fact did happen in Eusebius, where (some virgins, in order to preserve their chastity, grasping of the sea, immersed themselves headfirst in the riverbed) ‘*quae se pro integritatis pudicitia conseruanda rapaci gurgitis alueo per praeceps immerserunt*’.<sup>6</sup> He follows this with a quotation by St. Jerome who considered it allowable to kill oneself in this specific circumstance. Aldhelm himself comments that in any other circumstance when someone is unwillingly subject to other types of sins:

si sub praetextu cauendi noxam et declinandi delicta quolibet exitii genere uim uitae crudeliter intulerit, extraneus ab ecclesiae societate inter biothanatas reputabitur!<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Aldhelm Scireburnensis, ‘Prosa de uirginitate’, *Library of Latin Texts* (2021).

<<http://clt.brepolis.net.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx?ctx=1470375>> [accessed 5 August 2021].

<sup>4</sup> ‘Sponte’, Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 1747; ‘Careo’, Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> See Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, pp. 69, 76, 149, 384, 426; Murray, *The Curse of Self-Murder*, pp. 444–45.

<sup>6</sup> Aldhelm, *Sancti Aldhelmi: Opera Quae Extant Omnia E Codicibus MSS Emendavit*, ed. by J. A. Giles (Oxford: Parker, 1844), p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

(If under the pretext of avoiding sin and diverting from crime, someone brings forth any kind of exit through force of violence onto their life, they are considered by the church as among other *biothanatas*!)

Clearly, although *De Virginitate* is a text about virgins who kill themselves to remain pure, the term *biothanatus* is not about them, but about others who kill themselves for bad reasons. But what does *biothanatus* mean?

### ***Biothanatus***

*Biothanatus* is a late Latin neologism from Greek, entering Latin by the third century CE, and it is not made up of *bio* and *thanatos* as it would seem.<sup>8</sup> It derives from the Greek *biaiothanatos*, literally meaning ‘violent death’, as *biaios* means ‘violent’.<sup>9</sup> According to Lewis and Short, *biothanatus* is an adjective that denotes ‘that dies a violent death’.<sup>10</sup> *The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* goes a little further and specifies: ‘biothanatus [βιοθάνατος], one dying (deservedly) a violent death (esp. suicide)’.<sup>11</sup> In Aldhelm’s work, *biothanatus* is a substantive adjective, which likely means ‘one that dies a violent death’.

Murray argues that *biothanatus* perjured over time, and suggests a medieval definition of ‘a wicked, unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church’.<sup>12</sup> He argues that it is ‘the absence of Church reconciliation which merged the suicide and the violently killed into one’, at least by c. 1100.<sup>13</sup> He comes to this conclusion based on several sources, most compellingly, two from c. 1100 in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis, where

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<sup>8</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 474.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879), p. 238.

<sup>11</sup> R.E. Latham, Howlett, D.R., and R.K. Ashdowne, ‘Biothanatus’, *The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London: British Academy, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 476.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 475–76.

*biothanatus* is used twice in ways that do not match up to suicide, but where the dead are refused ecclesiastical burials.

One of the examples, is of King William II of England, known as Rufus, who, while hunting in the New Forest, is shot and killed.<sup>14</sup> Still, he is denied an ecclesiastical burial. They did not ring any bells for him, ‘et aecclesiastica veluti biothanatum absolute indignum censuerunt’ (and the ecclesiastic ones judged him unworthy of absolution just as a biothanatum).<sup>15</sup> If he did not kill himself, why should dying violently cause him to be unworthy of absolution? Murray rightly points to the fact that Rufus did not take the sacrament and lived a life ‘of ostentatious contempt for the church’. Therefore, he was deemed unworthy of absolution by the church.

Clearly, Murray seems to be correct that from the third century to the twelfth, *biothanatus* was undergoing a process of pejoration. However, when it was used by Aldhelm in the late seventh century and glossed by various early English glossators in the eighth, it is unclear whether it meant ‘a wicked, unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church’, or a *violent death*. If we turn to the glosses used, they may shed some light on this.

## Glosses

*De Virginitate* has been glossed in OE in at least sixteen manuscripts, but only four of them include glosses to *biothanatus*.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, even though many of the previously listed self-killing terms are used as glosses for Aldhelm, three of the Aldhelm glosses use a different OE term: *sylfcwala*, *sylfbana*, and *sylfmyrð*.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that there may be a lexical gap for self-

<sup>14</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 475.

<sup>15</sup> The Latin is quoted in Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 475. The translation is my own.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Napier, *Old English Glosses* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), pp. xiii–xviii.

<sup>17</sup> For the full list of occurrences, see Appendix 1.

killing in OE c. 800–1000. However, this chapter argues that the varied responses to glossing *biothanatus* have less to do with a lexical gap for SELF-KILLING and more to do with an uncertainty about what to do with the term *biothanatus*.

The three nouns which gloss *biothanatus* are not calques (element-for-element translations). They are not even following the same compounding model, which makes it even more interesting that the glosses are so similar. As I previously outlined, *biothanatus* is a + DEATH compound. However, the three terms which gloss it, *sylfcwala*, *sylfbana*, and *sylfmyrð*, are all constructed with a reflexive + KILL. Here, we have multiple scribes glossing the same word with similarly structured compounds, yet the similarity between the glosses seems not to be explained by structure of the term being glossed. So, what is happening here?

It seems likely that the different glossators are trying to find a match for *biothanatus*, but because its meaning is not clearly either ‘violent death’ or ‘one who kills themselves’ the glossators are unsure of what to make of it. Murray suggests that *self-bana* is used in the eighth-century gloss to Aldhelm because the context leaves the glossator little choice. In some respects, this is completely fair. However, if we look back at Aldhelm, we can see that he already uses a slightly confusing phrase for self-killing, ‘quolibet exitii genere uim uitae crudeliter intulerit’ (someone brings forth any method of exit through force of violence onto their life). Here, I chose to translate *exitium* as *exit* instead of *death*, mainly because there are clearer, more commonly used terms for death which were not chosen here by Aldhelm.<sup>18</sup> According to Lewis and Short, *exitium* can mean ‘a going out’, ‘destruction’, ‘end’ etc.<sup>19</sup> Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, however, chose to translate the above as: ‘he shall by any manner of death inflict violence on his

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<sup>18</sup> Additionally, this is another example of where I believe *exitium* can mean ‘a death’ through metaphoric extension, but not necessarily through its own denotation.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 689.

life’.<sup>20</sup> No matter how it is translated, it is clear that Aldhelm already offers a description of self-killing prior to the use of *biothanatus* where the self-killing is done through *vis* ‘violent force’.

This means that from context, a glossator could either assume that *biothanatus* means a VIOLENT SELF-KILLING or a VIOLENT DEATH done by someone who is not dying for a ‘pure’ reason (that is, in order to remain chaste). Clayton assumes that the goal of the glossators is to gloss *biothanatus* as ‘a suicide’ specifically, rather than ‘one who dies violently’ more generally.<sup>21</sup> But, if we assume that *biothanatus* either means ‘one who dies a violent death’ or ‘a wicked, unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church’, as Murray suggests, then we must revisit what the three terms may mean.

### *Sylfcwala*

The only gloss to *biothanatus* that is used in other circumstances is *sylfcwala*. Bosworth and Toller define *sylfcwala* as ‘a suicide’, referring to the actor.<sup>22</sup> This is based on *sylfcwala* glossing *biothanatus*, which is assumed to mean ‘a suicide’. *Sylfcwala* is a compound consisting of *sylf*, meaning ‘self’, and *\*cwala*. *Cwala* does not occur as a simplex, but it is transparently an agent noun derived from *cwalu*. According to Kroonen, *cwalu* comes from the Proto-Germanic feminine noun *\*kwalo-* ‘torment’, being an ‘An o-stem derived from *\*kwelan-* ‘to suffer’ (q.v.)’.<sup>23</sup> Bosworth and Toller list a definition of *cwalu* as ‘A quelling with weapons, torment, a violent death, slaughter, destruction; nex, cædes, exitium’, while the *DOE* lists ‘murder, violent death, destruction’ as the main sense of *cwalu*, followed by ‘to cwale (a)gyfan / (ge)sellan “to

<sup>20</sup> Aldhelm, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Cambridge: Brewer, 1979), p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Specifically, Clayton mistakes *biothanatus* for a neologism meaning ‘alive-dead’. Clayton, ‘Suicide’, pp. 369–70.

<sup>22</sup> ‘*sylf-cwala*’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/57970>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

<sup>23</sup> Guus Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 315.

give over to death, put to death, betray to death’”, and a secondary sense of ‘torment, torture’ which is said to render the Latin *cruciatus*.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, *sylfcwalu* is used in the poem the ‘The Fortunes of Men’ (Fort A3.12) in the *Exeter Book* to describe a man who dies from drinking too much:

Sum sceal on beore þurh byreles hond  
 meodugal mæcga þonne he gemet ne con  
 gemearcian his muþe mode sine  
 ac sceal ful earmlice ealdre linnan  
 dreogan dryhtenbealo dreamum biscyred  
 ond hine to sylfcwale secgas nemnað  
 mænað mid muþe meodugales gedrinc<sup>25</sup>

(One shall by beer, through a cup-bearer’s hand, [become] a man excited with mead; when he does not know the measure to assign his mouth in his own mind, but shall give up his life very miserably, deprived of joy, suffer profound misery, and men will identify him with *sylfcwale*, [and] relate with their mouth the drinking of the mead-excited [one].

The dative singular form *sylfcwale* in the text can, if declining regularly, only come from *sylfcwalu* (‘self-killing’), and not from *sylfcwala* (‘self-killer’), though English translations generally handle the word as if it means ‘self-killer’, and Clayton explicitly identifies *sylfcwale* as a form of *sylfcwala*.<sup>26</sup> Howe believes *sylfcwalu* to be an obvious calque for *suicidia* but does

<sup>24</sup> ‘*Cwalu*’, in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/6894>> [accessed 10 August 2021]; ‘*cwalu*’ *Dictionary of Old English: A to H* online. ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey *et al.* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Old English from: *The Exeter Book Part II: Poems IX-XXXII*, ed. by W.S. Mackie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 28. See also: Exeter, Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501, f. 88<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Clayton, ‘Suicide’, p. 370. For Howe’s translation of ‘suicide’ and Brady’s of ‘self-slaughterer’ see Brady, ‘Death and the Landscape of the Fortunes of Men’, p. 334; *The Exeter Book Part II: Poems IX-XXXII*, ed. by W.S. Mackie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 29: ‘self-slayer’; T. A. Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old*

not recognise that *suicidia* is a later coinage.<sup>27</sup> Brady translates it as ‘self-slaughterer’ even though she notes that it does not mean *suicide*.<sup>28</sup> What is important for present purposes is that ‘self-destroyer’ and ‘self-torturer’ would make equal sense here and would retain both the truth conditions of SELF-KILLING and VIOLENT DEATH. Benjamin Miller expands on this point, explaining that the beer-drinker’s death here is ‘indirect suicide only – something the man has done carelessly, though not intentionally’.<sup>29</sup>

The senses of *cwalu* and *sylfcwalu* suggest that glossators who chose *self-cwala* were trying to convey some form of ‘self-violent killer’, ‘self-destroyer/destroyer’, or even ‘self-tormentor’. Arguably, in effect this may still result in the same truth condition for the few instances in where it occurs, but *sylfcwala* may have been a broader term than ‘self-killer’, including circumstances that would not be considered ‘self-killing’. If we focus on the etymology and context of *sylfcwala*’s usages, we can see that it, like *biothanatus*, is used more broadly than ‘self-killing’. Though it relates to self-killing through overlap congruence, it seems likely that *sylfcwala* denotes ‘one who destroys himself’.

The last example Clayton gives for *sylfcwala* is in the *Vercelli homily* (HomS 3 (ScraggVerc 8) B3.2.3)), where ‘The author of Vercelli VIII, an eschatological text, declares in lines forty-two that Jews, suicides (*sylfcwalan*) and heathens will not be summoned to judgement on the last day but will be condemned immediately when they die’.<sup>30</sup> Again, if *sylfcwala* is translated as *self-destroyer*, it keeps the truth conditions in this example intact, while broadening the scope of what a *sylfcwala* is. Like *biothanatus*, *sylfcwala* could reasonably refer to a ‘wicked,

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*English* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976), p. 61: ‘And men say he killed himself, openly put the blame on what the alcoholic drank’.

<sup>27</sup> Found in Brady, ‘Death and the Landscape of the Fortunes of Men’, p. 334.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin S. Waller, ‘Metaphorical Space and Enclosure in Old English Poetry’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oregon, 2013), p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> Clayton, ‘Suicide’, p. 370.



unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church' which would make sense in a list of people who are not Christian.<sup>31</sup> It would also suggest that the Aldhelm glossators were choosing a word that was more applicable to *biothanatus* than one would originally assume.

### *Selfbana*

*Self-bana*, according to Bosworth and Toller, denotes 'one who kills himself, a suicide'.<sup>32</sup> This, again, is because it glosses *biothanatus*. *Bana*, according to the *DOE*, occurs disproportionately frequently in poetry, with fifty total occurrences in the corpus.<sup>33</sup> Bosworth and Toller simply define *bana* as a 'A killer; interfectoꝛ', while the *DOE* considers it to refer to a 'killer, slayer, the agent who causes death'.<sup>34</sup> This is the first gloss which unequivocally denotes a 'self-killer' or 'one who kills themselves'. Unlike *sylfcwala*, however, *self-bana* only occurs as a gloss to Aldhelm, despite the argument above that *sylfcwala* seems like a better fit.

### *Sylfmyrþ*

This particular form, *sylfmyrþ*, only occurs as two, almost certainly textually-related, glosses on Aldhelm's phrase *inter biothanatas: betweonan sylfmyrþ* and *betweonan sylfmyrð*.<sup>35</sup> No simplex *myrþ* is known, making this gloss a puzzle; it may represent an abbreviation or scribal error. Moreover, whatever the word was, it may have been coined as a gloss-word rather than belonging to the common lexicon. Bosworth and Toller emended it to *sylf-myꝛþe*, which they

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<sup>31</sup> This is Murray's main point. Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, pp. 474–76.

<sup>32</sup> 'Self-bana', in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/27393>> [accessed 10 July 2019].

<sup>33</sup> 'Bana', *DOE A-I Online*; 'Bana', in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/4838>> [accessed 10 July 2019].

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Respectively, William Garlington Stryker, 'The Latin-Old English Glossary in MS. Cotton Cleopatra A iii' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Stanford University, 1951), gloss number 3248; J. J. Quinn, 'The Minor Latin-Old English Glossaries in M.S. Cotton Cleopatra A. iii' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Stanford University, 1956), gloss number 744. See *DOEWC*.

suggest is an adjective meaning ‘self-destructive’, which would fit since *biothanatus* is a substantive adjective.<sup>36</sup> However, Hall lists *self-myrðra*, a noun whose second element is quite well attested as a simplex meaning ‘a murderer, a homicide’, and suggests that it denotes the self-killer: ‘one who takes his own life’.<sup>37</sup> Clayton tentatively accepts the word as a noun but suggests instead that it means ‘the act of suicide’. Implicitly, though, all commentators agree that the second element of the word has something to do with the root found in *murder* and is to do with KILLING. What *sylfmyrþ* does clearly suggest, whether it is a mistake or not, is that various different glossators found the same term in Aldhelm and chose similar, but different terms to gloss it. It seems likely to me that one of the glosses for *biothanatus*, *sylfcwala*, could refer to ‘one’s own destroyer’, while *self-bana* seems to clearly refer to ‘one’s own killer’. It is nearly impossible to say based on the evidence whether this distinction points definitively to or away from a lexical gap for ‘self-killer’ in OE. It seems likely that *self-bana* means a self-killer, but it is not frequently attested. As it is only found glossing *biothanatus*, we cannot be sure that there is no lexical gap, as a glossator may have made the word up for this specific instance. Similarly, *sylfmyrþ* may have been created by a glossator specifically for this instance.

Unlike the other nouns, *sylfcwala* is used in other instances with similarly vague truth conditions, which do not definitively suggest it meant or did not mean a ‘self-killer’, but it does confirm that the word was used in the vernacular outside of the one instance with Aldhelm. One example which may push us more to assume that *sylfcwala* is categorically different than ‘self-killer’ and more likely to be synonymous with Murray’s idea of a ‘a wicked, unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church’, is that there is one other noun not used as a gloss

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Self-myrþe’, in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/27400>> [accessed 26 October 2021].

<sup>37</sup> Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 260.

for Aldhelm, which is used right after *sylfcwala* when talking about groups of people who will not be going to God's kingdom: *agenslaga*. If *sylfcwala* did mean 'self-killer' then it would be repetitious for Ælfric to add another self-killing term directly after it.

### *Agenslaga*

*Agenslaga* breaks the pattern of the Aldhelm glosses discussed above by beginning with the prefix *agen-*, meaning 'own, oneself'. Bosworth and Toller define *agenslaga* as 'a self-slayer, self-murderer'.<sup>38</sup> Bosworth and Toller define *slaga* the noun as "a slayer, homicide; interfecter, percussor, lanio", which derives from the PG v. *\*slahan-*, meaning 'to beat, strike, slay'.<sup>39</sup>

*Agenslaga* is only used in Ælfric's homilies, and only to refer to general SELF-KILLING.<sup>40</sup> It could even be an idiolectal usage of Ælfric's.

When Ælfric uses *agenslaga* and *sylfcwala* together, it is in the introductory prose paragraph of the composite versions of the *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*. The section reads: 'Eaðe mæg se mann findan hu he hine sylfne amyrrre ac we sceolan witan þæt nan sylfcwala þæt is agenslaga ne becymð to Godes rice'.<sup>41</sup> (Easily may the man find how he may destroy himself, but we should know that no self-destroyer, that is one who kills himself, will go to the Kingdom of God). Clayton suggests that the use of *sylfcwala* here is redundant, which is only true if we conclude that both *agenslaga* and *sylfcwala* mean 'suicide' exactly.<sup>42</sup> However, it would make a lot of sense if *sylfcwala* denoted 'self-destroyer' which overlaps contextually with 'self-killer', but does not denote it. If we take Murray's conclusion that *biothanatus* by this point

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<sup>38</sup> 'Agen-slaga', in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/1220>> [accessed 10 June 2019].

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.; Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, p. 452.

<sup>40</sup> See further the discussions of Ælfric below, especially in chapter nine.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Clayton, *Two Ælfric Texts: The Twelve Abuses and The Vices and Virtues: An Edition and Translation of De Duodecimo Abusiuis and De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), p. 142.

<sup>42</sup> Clayton, *Suicide*, p. 369.

in history means ‘a wicked, unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church’, and *sylfcwala* is synonymous with that, then it is not redundant on Ælfric’s part to use *agenslaga* to clarify the meaning of *sylfcwala* here. This would suggest that while there are multiple terms in use around the same time for similar and overlapping concepts, it seems as if only two of them, *selfbana* and *agenslaga*, strictly denote a ‘self-killer’.

### Conclusion

The glosses on Aldhelm’s *biothanatus* demonstrate that there was no frequently used noun for the act or agent of self-killing between c. 700–950 in our extant evidence. This does not definitively point to a lexical gap in SELF-KILLING, but certainly points to a lack of certainty on the glossators’ part for what to do with the term *biothanatus*. This lack of understanding caused some glossators to gloss *biothanatus* as a SELF-KILLING, while others went for the broader SELF-DESTROYER, or ‘a wicked, unrepentant person, suddenly killed, unreconciled to the church’. All the terms are related through overlap congruence and can refer to SELF-KILLING in some contexts. However, it should be noted that only *sylfcwala* and *agenslaga* are used outside of glosses for *biothanatus*, and only *sylfcwala* is used by different authors. If anything, this could suggest that *sylfcwala* was a favoured noun for SELF-DESTROYER and could be used to refer metaphorically or contextually to SELF-KILLING or other forms of VIOLENT DEATH intentionally or unintentionally caused to oneself, and likewise that *sylfcwalu* was favoured for SELF-DESTRUCTION, as in the *Fortunes of Men*.

## Chapter Three: X-phemisms

In almost all societies death is talked about indirectly by euphemism.<sup>1</sup> As David Crystal has shown, there is a remarkable creativity surrounding the vocabulary of death.<sup>2</sup> Expressions and terms range from formal, to serious, to hilarious, and even wry. The best example which he and other scholars of the language of death cite is the ‘parrot sketch’ in the BBC television series *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*. In it, a customer returns a dead parrot to a pet-shop, explaining that he was told the parrot was sleeping when it is clearly dead. In typical comedic fashion, the owner of the pet shop refuses to acknowledge that the parrot is indeed, dead, forcing the customer to assail the owner with an outburst of deathly vocabulary:

He’s not pining! He’s passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! He’s expired and gone to meet his maker! He’s a stiff! Bereft of life, he rests in peace! If you had not nailed him to the perch, he’d be pushing up the daisies! His metabolic processes are now history! He’s off the twig! He’s kicked the bucket! He’s shuffled off his mortal coil, run down the curtain, and joined the bleeding choir invisible! This is an ex-parrot!<sup>3</sup>

While it may seem to be a modern phenomenon, David Crystal rightly points out that OE scribes would have had no trouble writing an equivalent to this episode, as they had over forty synonymous death expressions in OE.<sup>4</sup> The OE equivalent could say that the parrot *forþfare*

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<sup>1</sup> Beth Ralston, ‘Morbid Curiosity and Metaphors of Death in the History of English’, ed. by Wendy Anderson, Ellen Bramwell, and Carole Hough, *Mapping English Metaphor Through Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 79–96; Denis Jamet, ‘Euphemisms for Death: Reinventing Reality Through Words?’, in *Inventive Linguistics* (Montpellier: Presses Universitaires du Languedoc et de la Méditerranée, 2010), pp. 1–14.

<sup>2</sup> David Crystal, ‘From Swelt to Zonk: Words for Dying’, in *Words in Time and Place: Exploring Language Through the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–21.

<sup>3</sup> Crystal, ‘From Swelt to Zonk’, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Crystal suggests that the ‘customer could have described his parrot as gone (gegan), departed (leoran), fallen (gefeallan), died away (acwelan), parted from life (linnan ealdre), gone on a journey (geferan), totally died off (becwelan), with its spirit sent forth (gast onsendan), completely scattered (tostencan), or glided away (glidan)’. Crystal, ‘From Swelt to Zonk’, p. 2. I do not fully agree with his translations and would correct them to: *acwellan* (killed), *gefaran* (went), *becwellan* (killed), *tostencan* (scattered).

(passed away), *licgende* (laid down), *feoll to þære eorðan* (fell to the earth), *forlet his life* (gave up his life), *geendode his dagas* (ended his days), *sweordum aswefede* (slept by swords), *wesan gelogod to his folcum* (to be gathered to his people) or was *deað genumen* (taken by death).

Clearly, there is some truth to the universality of the fear of death, which gives rise to these circumlocutions. Ralston explains that ‘death is a primal human fear’ which is simultaneously not ‘tellable’, and yet, as Labov concludes, it remains a ‘universal centre of interest’.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that experiences of death and dying in the modern and medieval periods are homogenous.<sup>6</sup> Walter suggests that modern views towards death as a discussion topic are highly impacted by Victorian romanticism ‘which depicted the loss of a loved one as unbearable and insurmountable, and a twentieth-century denial of death’.<sup>7</sup> This is itself a paradox: people struggle with bereavement while there is an obsession in both the media and academia with death as a concept.

Scholars of rhetoric and euphemism typically use the term *taboo* to refer to the reason why there are so many euphemisms for death in nearly all societies. The term ‘*tabu* is a loanword from Tongan, a Polynesian language, brought into English by Captain Cook in 1777’.<sup>8</sup>

According to the OED, it originally referred to items:

Set apart for or consecrated to a special use or purpose; restricted to the use of a god, a king, priests, or chiefs, while forbidden to general use; prohibited to a particular class (esp. to women), or to a particular person or persons; inviolable, sacred; forbidden,

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<sup>5</sup> Ralston, ‘Morbid curiosity and metaphors of death’, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Nor, to say that death and dying experiences in each period are homogenous themselves.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 81. Tony Walter, ‘Modern Death: Taboo or not Taboo?’, *Sociology*, 25.2 (1991), 293–310 (pp. 296–301).

<sup>8</sup> “*taboo* | *tabu*, adj. and n.” *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) <[www.oed.com/view/Entry/196824](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196824)> [accessed 21 May 2021].

unlawful; also said of persons under a perpetual or temporary prohibition from certain actions, from food, or from contact with others.<sup>9</sup>

By the 1930s, it became used in linguistics to refer to complete or partial prohibition of certain words, expressions, topics, etc., – especially in social discourses.<sup>10</sup> This is the form of the word that is used now by scholars studying metaphor.<sup>11</sup> Of course, it seems as though death as a concept is considered prohibited discourse in certain social circles, communities, or situations now, but whether that was true for early medieval England remains to be seen. As McNamara and McIlvenna explain, people in early modern and medieval Europe ‘experienced death and dying differently [. . .] the dead formed a more significant social ‘presence’; they typically ‘experienced the deaths of family and community members in far greater numbers than their modern counterparts’.<sup>12</sup> Classen posits that we might be tempted to conclude that the culture of death was more important than the culture of life, given the incredible effort premodern peoples took regarding all aspects surrounding death, dying, and the afterlife, such as building remarkable cathedrals.<sup>13</sup> In early medieval England, evidence for this culture of death can be found in the monastic presence in particular, as monks from this period were completely imbued in a Benedictine concept of the afterlife.<sup>14</sup> It may be hard to believe that death was a ‘taboo’ in early medieval England, given the strong connection Benedictine monks had with the dead and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*.

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca F. McNamara, and Una McIlvenna, ‘Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying’, *Parergon*, 31.2 (2014), 1–10, doi:10.1353/pgn.2014.0078.

<sup>13</sup> Albrecht Classen, *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Victoria Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, 4 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), p. 40.

afterlife.<sup>15</sup> However, as with the modern day, death is heterogenous – there was not one approach or understanding.

Kümper asserts that patristic concepts concerning death and dying are broad in range.<sup>16</sup> He explains that the ‘general tone of many early Christian texts on death may seem at first surprisingly positive’, but a shift begins from the eleventh-century onward, where theological writing begins to focus and contemplate on the inevitability of death. Ultimately, by the twelfth century there was a surge in rites that help prepare people for death.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, the period this thesis studies are too broad to consider death perceptions as homogenous. Although we cannot consider the period from c. 700–1100 to view death in the same way, previous scholarship does conclude that broadly speaking there were ‘official beliefs’, which are core teachings of the Christian church, and ‘unofficial beliefs’, which were variable and fluid.<sup>18</sup> Watkins explains that to some extent, everyone held both of these kinds of beliefs, and as such, unofficial or popular beliefs which were not part of the broad spectrum of ‘official beliefs’ were not necessarily seen as ‘pagan, unchristian, heretical or erroneous’.<sup>19</sup> This is not to say that there was no pushback or tension between these belief systems, but that the distinction between the two (unofficial and official) is likely clearer to us as modern scholars, but not to those living in the communities holding those beliefs.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For a popular argument on the pitfalls of the Western removal of death from the everyday by an ex-medievalist, see: Caitlin Doughty, *From Here to Eternity: Travelling the Word to Find the Good Death* (London: Orion, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Hiram Kümper, ‘Death’, in *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 320.

<sup>17</sup> Kümper, ‘Death’, p. 323.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Watkins, “Folklore’ and ‘popular religion’ in Britain during the Middle Ages” *Folklore*, 115.2, 2004, 140–50 (pp. 145–47); Helen Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Watkins, ‘Folklore’, p. 146; Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 14: Foxhall Forbes evidences this with a study of modern Greece, where they found that ‘people did not distinguish clearly between central tenets of their denomination of Christianity and other beliefs (such as the evil eye) which are not officially part of Orthodox teaching’. The same can be said of the Armenian Church.

<sup>20</sup> For an example of the tension between unofficial and official belief systems in the modern day, one could look to the relationship between the Catholic Church and Santa Muerte in Mexico.



Foxhall Forbes argues that there is no better example of the difficulty for finding an official line of belief for the Early Church, than when looking at beliefs about the afterlife.<sup>21</sup> Dunn explains that ‘the earliest surviving Christian funerary liturgies essentially seem to function as rituals of separation – rather than, as in other cultures, rites of transition or incorporation’. This means that the soul of the average person would wait in a receptacle for Judgment Day, while other souls who were either irredeemably bad or saintly would have a taste of Heaven or Hell.<sup>22</sup> In stressing this seclusion from the dead person’s soul and the living, Dunn suggests that ‘the idea that the body was impure was rejected by the church’.<sup>23</sup> Naturally, this idea is not likely taken up across the board. Moreira explains that Bede and Boniface, who were near contemporaries, did a lot to contribute to the idea of purgatory in early medieval England.<sup>24</sup>

Bede’s purgatory is a place where souls wait and undergo ‘a period of chastisement until the Last Judgment. That trial would ultimately cleanse them, and it might be shortened by the charitable intervention of their friends’.<sup>25</sup> Moreira adds that there is a challenge in studying Bede and by extension the early medieval period because of a gap in our knowledge about early medieval intellectual culture around the seventh century. She explains that Bede’s view of purgatory fit the popular idea around his time of spiritual commerce where monks and nuns could petition friends for prayers.<sup>26</sup> This became a statement of orthodoxy, as well as the idea of purgatory.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Marilyn Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons c. 597–c.700* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Dunn, ‘Christianization’, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Isabel Moreira, *Heaven’s Purge and Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 147–76.

<sup>25</sup> Moreira, *Heaven’s Purge and Purgatory*, p. 161.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Indeed, Thompson explains that in early medieval England, ‘there were various understandings of the relationship of mind, soul, life, living body and corpse, by no means all compatible’.<sup>28</sup> McNamara and McIlvenna explain:

Conceptions of the body and the soul were different, too, influenced by current theological thinking and lay and learned medical practice. The way the dead were categorised varied – certain types of death were criminal or sinful, others were ‘good’ and noteworthy – and this affected responses to the dead and their surviving families and communities.<sup>29</sup>

Self-killing is one of these conspicuous types of death, which, like death in the modern day, is simultaneously unspeakable and an obsession for certain theologians. Because of this, a lot of the euphemistic language surrounding self-killing can be the same as that for death, while dysphemistic language and orthophemistic language is more likely to clearly signify the mode of death: self-killing. This is either motivated by a desire for clarity (orthophemism) or by fear, hatred, and/or disgust (dysphemism).

It is unsurprising, then, that the most prolific dysphemistic language for SELF-KILLING is found in Ælfric’s works, given his clear distaste and revulsion for the act and actors. What may be surprising, however, is that X-phemistic language surrounding SELF-KILLING in OE is not entirely dysphemistic. It is impossible to say how much of the language surrounding SELF-KILLING in OE was dysphemistic or euphemistic. This is not only due to the lack of extant evidence, but because some euphemistic language generalises to the point that the taboo referent is completely obscured. Moreover, for X-phemistic language surrounding death, the specific

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<sup>28</sup> Victoria Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Rebecca F. McNamara and Una McIlvenna, ‘Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying’, p. 2.

method of death is often obscured by euphemism. Dysphemisms typically specify the means of death through violent or grisly detail, though some obfuscate the method, opting for a more general approach, like orthophemisms. For example, ‘hine sylfne amyrrre’ (destroys himself) obscures the method of death, while ‘þurh ædra wylm’ (through welling of veins) specifies the method as some form of cutting.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, this is to say that the following X-phemistic language is very likely only a small portion of X-phemistic language on SELF-KILLING in OE as a lot of X-phemistic language cannot be reliably distinguished from other forms of death, especially when it comes to euphemism. In the modern day, Semino and colleagues created the ‘Metaphor in End of Life Care’ project in order to investigate metaphorical expressions for hospice care.<sup>31</sup> In their work, they discovered that ‘good’ and ‘bad’ deaths were represented by different, recurring metaphors: ‘Good’ deaths were characterised by peace, movement, journeys, and ‘bad’ deaths by struggle, conflict, tension, and a lack of control.<sup>32</sup> It is possible that this is similar to the categorical differences behind obscuring self-killing through euphemism or choosing a grislier phrase.

As X-phemisms are context specific, it is impossible to say whether any X-phemisms are employed about SELF-KILLING unless the context is explicit. Certainly, a lot of X-phemistic language used to refer to SELF-KILLING is nearly impossible to pick up without context. Most deaths in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, for instance, do not use anything more than *X forþfaran* which could be a normal death (natural), a self-killing, or some other death the author was either not interested in, or trying to obscure.

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<sup>30</sup> *Hine sylfne amyrrre* is used in the prose introductory paragraph to Ælfric’s *De Dueodecim Abusivis* and *þurh ædra wylm* can be found in the OE *Juliana*. See Appendix A.

<sup>31</sup> Zsófia Demjén, Elena Semino, and Veronika Koller, ‘Metaphors for “good” and “bad” Deaths: A Health Professional View’, in *Metaphor and the Social World*, 6.1 (2016), pp. 1–19, <<https://10.1075/msw.6.1.01dem>> [accessed 24 August 2021].

<sup>32</sup> Demjén, et al., ‘Metaphors for “good” and “bad” Deaths’, pp. 1–3.

Take the following examples of all three PDE X-phemisms about the taboo subject, *sex*:

1. We *did the business*.
2. I pulled her down and *mounted* her.<sup>33</sup>
3. We did *it*.

In the first example, ‘did the business’ is a euphemism for having had sex, highlighting the conceptual metaphor TO COPULATE IS TO WORK which can be seen in the euphemism for prostitute *working girl*. The second example is a dysphemism for copulation: TO COPULATE IS HORSE-RIDING, which ‘dehumanizes the act of coition and implicitly conceives sexual partners – women in the example proposed – as animals’.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, the third example does not employ metaphor, and depending on context would be an orthophemism. However, all three rely on context to tell us that we are talking about copulation. If the third example was exclaimed in an office, at a football match, etc., it is unlikely that context would suggest that *it* is *sex* instead of some form of success. In this way, X-phemistic language is highly dependent on context. Still, if it is true that metaphors give structure to everyday knowledge, as argued by scholars such as Deignan, then conventional and lexicalised metaphors which are frequently used, will help outline a shared community framework for everyday knowledge about subjects such as death and self-killing.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, this section outlines the contexts and usages of X-phemistic language for self-killing in OE to reconstruct some perceptions of self-killing and self-killers in early medieval England.

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<sup>33</sup> Eliecer Crespo-Fernández, ‘Conceptual Metaphors in Taboo-Induced Lexical Variation’ *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 10.14, 2011, 53–71 (p. 54).

<sup>34</sup> Crespo-Fernández, ‘Conceptual Metaphors’, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> Alice Deignan, *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005), p. 24.

### Self-killing Orthophemisms in OE

Orthophemisms, dubbed by Keith Allan, are not always clear cut from an outsider's perspective. Out of the three PDE X-phemisms for death *pass away*, *die*, and *snuff it*, 'die' can be considered an orthophemism as it is the most neutral term. However, it is hard to say whether the direct expression *hine sylfne acwealde* (killed himself) would have been so blunt as to be deemed dysphemistic to an OE audience, or if it was clear-cut enough as to be considered an orthophemism for self-killing when it was appropriate or necessary to depict or describe the taboo act.<sup>36</sup> For example, if one was asked 'how did he die?', it would not necessarily be dysphemistic to say, 'he killed himself', whereas 'he gutted himself like a pig' would certainly be a vulgar, negative response.<sup>37</sup>

Although *cwellan* is the most used term for killing in OE, it does carry negative connotations.<sup>38</sup> For example, *cwellan* is used as a gloss for various Latin terms: *decollare* 'decapitate', *interficere* 'kill, destroy', *mortificare* 'kill or mortify', *necare* 'kill, murder', *occidere* 'fall, go down [of heavenly bodies], perish, die', *trucidare* 'slaughter, massacre', *truncare*, 'maim by cutting', and *mactare* 'kill'.<sup>39</sup> Some of these, like *necare* or *trucidare*, seem to be inherently negative, while others like *occidere* could have been used euphemistically. It is certainly hard to say whether it would have been orthophemistic or dysphemistic; certainly, *cwellan* (with a variety of prefixes, most often *a-*) is used in enough varying instances to have been read as any of the three. The main function of an orthophemism about self-killing would be to factually and clearly explain the taboo without going so far as to offload either positive or

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<sup>36</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, pp. 296–97.

<sup>37</sup> This could be the meaning behind *ofstician*, which will be outlined shortly, and is the language used to describe Herod's death outside of Ælfric's works.

<sup>38</sup> I conducted a DOEWC search to find this out. It will be explained in detail in my forthcoming book chapter on the language of death in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the *Language of Death* edited collection by Bloomsbury.

<sup>39</sup> 'Cwellan', *DOE Online*.

negative judgment. Moreover, *cwellan* can be found used on its own, or with additional descriptors which may push the description into the realm of negative judgments of self-killings, for example, when the phrase *a on ecynsse ðrowað* is added (suffers forever in eternity).<sup>40</sup> It is likely, then, that alone, *hine sylf acwealde* (killed himself), was neutral, or orthophemistic, and depending on the circumstances, could be used with other descriptors to be viewed negatively, or even, positively.

Other accounts of a self-killing that describe the method of death (e.g., stabbed oneself) are likely to have been considered dysphemistic, as they would be now, in that they are motivated to share the specifics of the taboo because of hatred, contempt, or fear.<sup>41</sup> Surely, it depends on the circumstance as to whether stating the exact method would be considered neutral or vulgar. If someone asked, ‘what happened to Sarah?’, the neutral response in the case of self-killing may be just to say that she *killed herself* or *died*. The euphemistic response would likely be to say either that she *passed on*, with no indication as to how or why, or she *took her own life*.

In Ælfric’s *Life of St. Martin* (ÆLS (Martin) / B1.3.30), the phrase ‘hine sylfne adyde’ can be found in two manuscripts of this *vita*: London, British Library, Cotton Julius E.VII, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343.<sup>42</sup> *Adyde* comes from the verb *a-dydan*, meaning ‘to put to death, to destroy, kill, mortify’.<sup>43</sup> Bosworth and Toller explain that *a-dydan* is used to gloss Lat. *mortificare* ‘to kill, destroy’, *perdere* ‘to make away with, to destroy, to ruin’, and *occidere* ‘to strike or cut down, kill, slay’ or ‘to fall down, fall’.<sup>44</sup> The DOE backs up Bosworth

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<sup>40</sup> This is likely Ælfric’s idiolect.

<sup>41</sup> See Crespo-Fernández, ‘Conceptual Metaphors’, p. 103 and Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, p. 153.

<sup>42</sup> There is a third manuscript containing this *vita*, London, British Library, Cotton MS Caligula A.XIV but it is missing the beginning of the *vita* and therefore does not contain this phrase.

<sup>43</sup> Of *dydan*, Bosworth and Toller say ‘To put to death’ and link to *didan*, which is a variant spelling of the same verb. Of ‘a-didan’, Bosworth and Toller give a slightly different definition: ‘to destroy’ or ‘to deaden/make torpid, to mortify’. ‘a-didan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/8177>> [accessed 24 August 2021].

<sup>44</sup> Lewis and Short, ‘mortifico’, p. 1167; ‘perdere’, p. 1337; ‘1. occido’ and ‘2. occido’, p. 1250.

and Toller's definition and lists that *a-dydan* means 'to put to death, kill, destroy', and that with a reflexive it can mean 'to kill oneself'.<sup>45</sup> The DOE links to the Middle English Dictionary, where *adeden* v. means '(a) to die off, die away, (b) to deaden, kill'.<sup>46</sup> I find it likely that *a-dydan* means 'to put to death' or 'to deaden', as it does in MidE, and that as per usual, 'to kill oneself' is being used as a definition by the DOE because of our modern conceptions of self-killing. 'To deaden oneself' in PDE sounds wrong but would make sense here as the definition of a reflexive *a-dydan*. If it were to keep similar connotations, it is likely that the syntactic construction 'hine sylfne adytde' is an orthophemism: 'made himself dead'.<sup>47</sup> Translated in this way, *a-dydan* keeps its meaning, and does not denote 'kill' when made reflexive.<sup>48</sup>

The only other use in the corpus of a form of *dydan* for a self-killing is also implemented by Ælfric. This time, he uses it in the *Passion of Saint Alban* (ÆLS (Alban), B.1.3.20). There, Ælfric closes his commentary on Achitofel and Judas' self-killings by making a general statement against the act and actors: 'Ælc man bið eac forðemed þe hine sylfne adyt and ælc agen-slaga a on ecnyse ðrowað' (any person who makes themselves dead will also be condemned and each self-slayer will suffer forever in eternity).<sup>49</sup> Although his sentiment is clearly negative, the specific phrase 'hine sylfne adyt' (makes themselves dead) may not be. This would make sense given that Ælfric wants to view all self-killings as homogenous where his audience may not. Thus, 'hine sylfne adyt' could reasonably be an orthophemism, providing an umbrella term for self-killing which may include non-wilful deaths, or self-killings that were otherwise considered respectable by some of Ælfric's perceived audience.

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<sup>45</sup> 'a-dydan', *Dictionary of Old English A-I online*, <<https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/>> [accessed 20 October 2021]. This term is mainly in Ælfric's works.

<sup>46</sup> 'adeden', *Middle English Dictionary Online*, <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED465>> [accessed 20 October 2021].

<sup>47</sup> Chapter Eight focuses on this case in more detail.

<sup>48</sup> Of course, 'made himself dead' is synonymous with *kill*, though the intent is less apparent.

<sup>49</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 428.

Therefore, we might conclude that Ælfric uses neutral language for describing self-killing to make clear that anyone who causes their own death is considered an *agen-slaga* (one's own-slayer) no matter what other people may originally think of them, thus portraying self-killings as homogenously terrible. The phrase *a on ecynsse ðrowað*, however, is a different story.

### Dysphemisms

A dysphemism replaces a neutral term or phrase for a vulgar, more offensive term or phrase. Given the dependence on audience and context which is near impossible to reconstruct, dysphemisms are some of the hardest metaphoric languages to decipher. One way we can decipher whether something would have been seen as dysphemistic or orthophemistic would be to do a sort of meter check with the terms used in the *Chronicle* and compare them to the word choices made in other places. Arguably, death terms for king and members of the church used in the *Chronicle* should be neutral if not euphemistic. For instance, one of the most common words for death in the *Chronicle* is *forfaran* 'pass away'.<sup>50</sup> This is used mainly for kings and people in the church(es).

Of the words for KILLING, it seems as though *ofslean* is used broadly for any killing, while *ofstician* and *ofslean* refer to the righteous stabbing (and murder) of horrible people. Specifically, in the *Chronicle*, they are used only for Herod and a handful of other people. One of these people is Cynewulf's relative, Sigebriht, who is mentioned in the *Chronicle*:

755. Her Cynewulf benam Sigebrihte his rices 7 Westsexna witan for unrihtum dædum  
butan Hamtunscire; 7 he hæfde þa þæt he ofsloh þone ealderman þe him lengest mid

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<sup>50</sup> This can be either *for-* or *forþ-*, as they are used interchangeably.



wunode. 7 hine þa Cynewulf on Andred adræfde, 7 he þær wunode þæt hine an swan ofstang æt Pryfetesflodan, 7 se wræc þone ealdormann Cumbran.<sup>51</sup>

755. This year Cynewulf took back Sigebriht's kingdom with the consent of the West-Saxon councillors, for unrighteous deeds, except Hampshire; and he had that until he slew the alderman who had lived the longest with him. And then Cynewulf drove him to Andred, where he lived until a man stabbed him at Privett and avenged the alderman Cumbra.

Sigebriht not only had his kingdom taken away by Cynewulf but is also singled out as having committed 'unrihtum dædum' (unrighteous deeds). He keeps Hampshire as a kingdom, until he slays the alderman who had lived with him the longest, seemingly for no reason, and is then stabbed as revenge. The *Chronicle* is not being obscure about the perception of Sigebriht's death. Moreover, it should be noted that *ofslean* is used for the killing of the alderman, clearly in reference to a non-natural death. The killing of the alderman is likely meant to be read negatively, given his status and the set-up for his avenging. It would seem as though Sigebriht's stabbing should then be written clearly negatively, which, if true, would mean that *ofstingan* has negative connotations. The three other instances which use *ofstingan* in the *Chronicle* are not used because the victim was evil, but possibly to signify the repugnance of the killing act. This points to *ofstingan* being negatively connoted, but not to this connotation affixing any associative connotations to the victim through its use.

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<sup>51</sup> This section is taken from Chronicle B, (ChronB (Taylor)), Manuscript B, Cotton Tiberius A.VI, which was made accessible in an XML transcription by Tony Jebson as part of the *Chronicle* online project. Manuscripts A-E all have this section, according to the *Chronicle* online. Tony Jebson, 'Manuscript B', *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 2006, <<http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/b/b-L.html>> [accessed 19 October 2021]. It is also in C: (ChronC (O'Brien O'Keefe) B17.7).

For example, Chronicle D (ChronD (Cubbin) B17.8)), MS Cotton Tiberius B.IV, in the year 946, reads: ‘Her Eadmund cyning forðferde on Sancte Agustinus mæssedæge, þæt wæs wide cuð hu he his dagas geendode, þæt Liofa hine ofstang æt Puclancyrca’ (In this year, King Edmund passed away on Saint Augustine’s festival; it was widely known how he ended his days, that Liofa stabbed him at Pucklechurch).<sup>52</sup> Manuscript E (ChronE (Irvine) B17.9), MS Bodleian Laud 636, similarly relays Edmund’s death as ‘Ædmund cyning wearð ofstungen’ (King Edmund was stabbed).<sup>53</sup> *Ofstingan* is dysphemistic word choice here, even though it is not positioning Edmund as a bad king. Instead, as Halloran explains, Edmund was likely killed in secret, possibly in a successful assassination plot which earlier records, such as the one in *Chronicle A*, the *Parker Chronicle*, erase. Halloran argues that more than a century after the event, Manuscript D of the *Chronicle* names the killer Liofa and suggests that it was widely known how he ended his days.<sup>54</sup> However, the circumstances of his death were not widely known, because various literary traditions arose which record different tales. As Halloran argues, two traditions began over the centuries regarding a thief and a brawl, which William of Malmesbury compounds into a humorous account of a thief, banished for six years, who returns to a banquet and sits next to Edmund. Edmund, in an uncharacteristic rage, recognises Liofa, and attacks him, only to be stabbed in the chest while tackling Liofa to the ground in front of

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<sup>52</sup> Kevin Halloran, ‘A Murder at Pucklechurch: The Death of King Edmund, 26 May 946’, *Midland History*, 40:1, 2015), 120–129, pp. 124 <10.1179/0047729X15Z.00000000051> [accessed 10 August 2021].

See also Manuscript D, MS Cotton Tiberius B.IV, f. 71<sup>r</sup>

<[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_tiberius\\_b\\_iv\\_f003r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_tiberius_b_iv_f003r)> [accessed 21 August 2021].

<sup>53</sup> Manuscript E, MS Bodleian Laud 636, f. 35<sup>v</sup>, <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/6272311c-058d-417a-8e21-05e463b4f1f9/surfaces/691878d2-4a4f-4a21-b1f8-e30e9b34b191/>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

In the year for 948, it reads: *Her Ædmund cyning wearð ofstungen, 7 feng Ædred his broðor to rice, 7 he sona gerad eall Norðhymbra land him to gewealde, 7 Scottas him aðas sworon þet hi eall wolden þet he wolde.*

<sup>54</sup> Halloran, ‘A Murder at Pucklechurch’, pp. 120–29.

everyone. Malmesbury concludes that rumours about his death spread all over England, noting that two hundred years later, there is still a grand mystery surrounding Edmund's death.<sup>55</sup>

Halloran and others conclude that the most likely possibility is that Edmund was killed by his own retinue, which is what the often ignored Irish *Annals of Clonmacnoise* state in an entry under the year 941: 'Ettymon, king of the Saxons, was killed by his own familie'.<sup>56</sup> The OE name *Liofa*, first appearing in *Chronicle D*, while a common male personal name, is also a term for 'beloved', commonly used as a substantive for 'a loved one' or 'one who is dear'. Halloran concludes that it could be either that this was misunderstood or purposefully played upon by later writers.<sup>57</sup> If that is true, then the use of *ofstingan* is also suspect, as it is an uncommonly used verb in the *Chronicle*, most often used for extremely negatively perceived murders.

Finally, the last uses of *ofstingan* are in Manuscript E, in the annal for 626: 'Her com Eomer fram Cwichelme Westseaxna cininge; þohte þet he wolde ofstingan Eadwine cininge, ac he ofstang Lillan his ðegn 7 Forðhere 7 ðone cining gewundode'.<sup>58</sup> (In this year Eomer came from Cwihelm, King of the West-Saxons; he thought that he would stab King Edwin, but he stabbed his thane, Lilla, and Forðhere, and wounded the king.) According to Bede, Cwihelm sent an assassin, Eomer, to kill King Edwin with a poisoned sword while delivering a fake message. Edwin's thane, Lillan, got in the way of the poisoned sword and was killed instantly, but his interference meant that Edwin was only wounded. Afterwards, Bede says that when Edwin recovered, he gathered his army and slew all the people he discovered had plotted against

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<sup>55</sup> Halloran, 'A Murder at Pucklechurch', p. 121.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Halloran cites *The Annals of Clonmacnoise: Being Annals of Ireland from the Earliest Period to A. D. 1408*, ed. by D. Murphy (Dublin, 1896), p. 154. He adds that Andrew Breeze suggested that 'familie' can refer to the general household and not 'immediate blood relations'.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>58</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition. Vol. 7, MS. E: A Semi-diplomatic Edition with Introduction and Indices*, ed. by Susan Irvine (Woodbridge: DS Brewer, 2004), p. 24. From: Manuscript E, MS Bodleian Laud 636, f.12<sup>v</sup>, <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/6272311c-058d-417a-8e21-05e463b4f1f9/surfaces/6ef43b64-1bb8-4661-a8ce-501bbb2b55f3/>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

him.<sup>59</sup> From the examples in the *Chronicle*, it seems likely that *ofstingan* carried negative connotations, given that it has been used for those who assassinate kings or Herod (who also plotted and carried out his own self-stabbing). Moreover, *ofstician*, which is only used in the *Chronicle* for Herod's self-killing, is also a term used to refer to the sticking (stabbing) of pigs.<sup>60</sup>

By themselves, the instances where *ofstician* and *ostingan* are used do not tell us much. However, whenever the nature of the killing is specified, it is meant to be read as unpleasant or horrid, which is dysphemistic. Where these terms are used for self-stabbing, they are used for excessive and evil characters: Herod, who plotted the death of Jesus, and Arbogastes, who plotted against his king Sardanapalus in the OE *Orosius*, and then killed himself. While the terms themselves may not be dysphemistic compared to other terms for stabbing, they are employed in such a way as to add to the negative view of certain characters' self-killing acts.

One of the other dysphemistic choices for relaying the act of self-killing in OE is by using the adverb *hetelice* 'violently' in conjunction with a less used verb for striking/thrusting/stabbing: *pyddan*. This is another creation of Ælfric's for describing the self-killing of Herod, this time in one of his Catholic Homilies, *Nativity of the Innocents* (ÆCHom I, 5B1.1.6). The *Nativity of Innocents* can be found in eight manuscripts from the tenth to twelfth centuries; their number is noteworthy insofar as they exhibit some textual variation, which I assess below.<sup>61</sup> The homily details the story of King Herod, who murders all the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding cities after his men did not give him the Christ child. After the

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<sup>59</sup> Malcolm Godden, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> One of the examples given by Bosworth and Toller is *ofstikian bār*, where *bār* means 'boar'. 'Of-stician', *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/24369>> [accessed 19 October 2021].

<sup>61</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 178 (c. 1000–1099, at Worcester); Cambridge, University Library, MS II. 1. 33 (1150–1200, at Canterbury); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 114 (c. 1000–1099, at Worcester); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 113 (1050–1100, at Worcester); British Library, Royal MS 7 C XII (c. 700–1150); British Library, Cotton Vitellius D. XVII (1040–1060); British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius C V (975–1050); British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian D XIV (850–1100, at Christ Church, Cathedral Priory, Canterbury).

killings, Herod is afflicted with misery and infected by a mysterious disease from which he is bound to die. Instead of dying of this mysterious ailment, however, Herod fetches a knife used for cutting apples, and kills himself; at least, in most of the versions.

The scene in which a sick Herod asks for an apple knife with the intent of killing himself is not new in the Ælfric version. Both Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*, and Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* mention this scene in Latin. Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* was written c. 93 or 94, while Eusebius was writing c. 315.<sup>62</sup> However, in those versions, Herod's SELF-KILLING plot is either foiled or left unfinished. Josephus says that the king's cousin prevents his SELF-KILLING, whereas Eusebius ends the passage at Herod's intent to stab himself.<sup>63</sup> Ælfric's mention of the SELF-KILLING of Herod seems to gain traction in post-conquest England. For instance, in the Latin *Summa Gloria* by Honorius in c. 1110, it is said that 'Herodem mortem voluntariam sibi conscivisse' (Herod voluntarily brought death upon himself).<sup>64</sup> Honorius does not mention the mode of death, possibly because it had already become common knowledge. Herod's death is elaborated on in the *Heliand*, an Old-Saxon life of Christ text from c. 830. However, in this text it is only said 'antthat uurd forenam Erodes thana cuning' (then fate took Herod the king).<sup>65</sup> It is not made clear whether *uurd* 'fate' is a force outside of Herod himself, though it would seem to be more likely that the *Heliand* version follows the path in which Herod died from his mysterious ailments, and not at his own hand.

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<sup>62</sup> According to Devore, Burgess' theory is now widely accepted as the main dating hypothesis for Eusebius' *History*. Devore says Eusebius' three editions of the *History*, dated respectively to 313/14, 315/16, and 324/25. David DeVore, 'Character and Convention in the Letters of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 7.2 (2014), p. 230, <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/563953#b9>> [accessed 16 October 2021]. Information about Josephus comes from *Jewish Antiquities, book 20, General Index*, trans. by Louis H. Feldman (Loeb Classical library, 1965), <<https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL456/1965/volume.xml>> [accessed 16 October 2021].

<sup>63</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, pp. 345–46.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 350.

<sup>65</sup> Prisca Augustyn, 'Thor's Hammer and the Power of God: Poetic Strategies in the Old Saxon Heliand Gospel', *Daphnis*, 33 (2004), in *Literature Online Core (LION Core)*, p. 37.

This is very different from the version that Ælfric develops, wherein Herod's sickness is only ended with his self-killing. The text in Ælfric's OE *Nativity of Innocents* reads:

Æt nextan, ðaða hé gefredde his deaðes nealæcunge, þa het he him his seax aræcan to screadigenne ænne æppel, and hine sylfne hetelice ðyde, þæt him on acwehte. Þyllic wæs Herodes forðsið, þe mánfullice ymbe þæs heofenlican æþelinges to-cyme syrwe, and his efen-ealdan lytlingas unscæððige arleaslice acwealde.<sup>66</sup>

(At last, when he knew of his death's approach, he commanded that they reach for him his knife to cut an apple, and he violently thrust himself [with it], so that it quivered in him. That was Herod's death, who with much evil ensnared the coming of the heavenly prince, and wickedly killed the innocent two-year-old little ones.)

The way Ælfric chose to portray Herod's death here is possibly one of the most negative and cruel descriptions of a self-killing in OE. It is not clear from this passage alone whether *ðyde*, from *þyddan*, plays a direct part in that or not. There is an anonymous version of this homily in the *Old English Martyrology* around the mid-eleventh century in two manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41 and British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D. XVII. The latter also contains Ælfric's version and was copied at the same time. In it, the text uses 'he ofstang hine silfne mid his agenre handa' (he stabbed himself with his own hand).<sup>67</sup> The addition of 'mid his agenre handa' cements the self-killing as a premeditated, voluntary death. It is striking that the anonymous homily emphasises how much more elaborate Ælfric's version is, which pushes home the idea that Ælfric is exceptionally hateful of self-killing and self-killers, to a greater degree than other writers and theologians.

<sup>66</sup> Ælfric, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church. the First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, Or Homilies of Ælfric*, ed. and trans. by Benjamin Thorpe (London: Ælfric Society, 1844), pp. 88–89.

<sup>67</sup> *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. and trans. by Christine Rauer, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 10 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), p. 40.

Despite being wholly negative in regard to self-killing, not all of the word choices Ælfric makes here are intrinsically negative and dysphemistic. The use of *pyddan* here is interesting, and a closer look at the Latin terms it glosses seem to point to its use as a neutral STRIKING term. According to Bosworth and Toller, *pyddan* glosses the Latin *impingo, -ere* ‘to push, strike, or drive at/into anything’, as well as *percutio, -ere* ‘strike, beat, pierce, thrust, kill’; *jungo, -ere* ‘join, fasten, attach’, and *ferio, -ire* ‘strike, cut, slay, give a deathblow’.<sup>68</sup> Given that *pyddan* glosses both killing and striking verbs, it seems unlikely that *pyddan* by itself would be negatively connoted. Coupled with *hetelice* ‘violently’, however, and the use becomes clearly negative.

Finally, one of the last dysphemistic ways found to relay a self-killing in OE is ‘Hine sylfne amyrrē’ (he marred/destroyed/killed himself). It should come of no surprise by now that Ælfric uses this term frequently. *Amyrrē* comes from the OE verb *amyrran*. Kroonen suggests an etymology from the PG *\*am(m)on-*, a w.v. ‘to irritate’.<sup>69</sup> While this sense remains, the DOE points to a more likely denotation of ‘destroy/waste’.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the DOE suggests five other senses which highlight injury, deception, and destruction:

3. to injure, inflict harm on (someone)
4. to injure morally, lead astray, confuse, deceive, defile (someone)
5. to waste, squander (something)
6. to lay waste, destroy, ruin
  - c. to destroy, kill (someone)
    - c.i. specifically: to destroy (one's soul, youth)<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, pp. 903, 1336, 1017, 737.

<sup>69</sup> Kroonen, *An Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, p. 24.

<sup>70</sup> ‘A-myrran’, *Dictionary of Old English Online*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

These meanings all portray the same concept of *hurt* or *destroy/waste*, which contextually matches the concept of self-killing. The term narrows in some respects by the Middle English period as the v. *amerren*. *MED* lists the sense of v. *amerren* as: ‘(b) mar, harm, or destroy (virtue, reputation, the mind, etc.)’, which is the sense that refers to self-killing in MidE in the *Lambeth Homilies*, c. 1225, *Sayings of Saint Bede*, c. 1300, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, c. 1340, *Mum and the Sothsegger (1)*, c. 1475, and the Middle English version of the *Gesta Romanorum*, c. 1500.<sup>72</sup> Ælfric is likely using *amyrrre* in order to connote destruction of the soul and body when talking about self-killing, making the use of *amyrrre* a negative word choice in place of a more neutral or positive term, and therefore dysphemistic.

As explained before in the section on Ælfric, the introductory prose paragraph wherein SELF-KILLING is mentioned only exists in the composite versions of the *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*. In it, Ælfric uses *hu he hine sylfne amyrrre*, as well as the nouns *sylfcwala* and *agenslaga*.<sup>73</sup> He states that none of these people will go to the Kingdom of God. *Amyrran* is the only verb used here to refer to the act of self-killing, but it does not specify the means of death, or even specifically that death is caused. As *amyrran* has a low frequency of denoting killing, it is possible that it means death through metaphoric extension in reference to the destruction of the soul.

According to the MMOE, *amyrran* (spelt *amierran*) has three different connections:

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Amerren v.’, *Middle English Dictionary Online*.

<sup>73</sup> The section reads: *Eaðe mæg se mann findan hu he hine sylfne amyrrre ac we sceolan witan þæt nan sylfcwala þæt is agenslaga ne becymð to Godes rice* (Easily may the man find how he may destroy himself, but we should know that no self-slayer, that is one who kills himself, will go to the Kingdom of God).



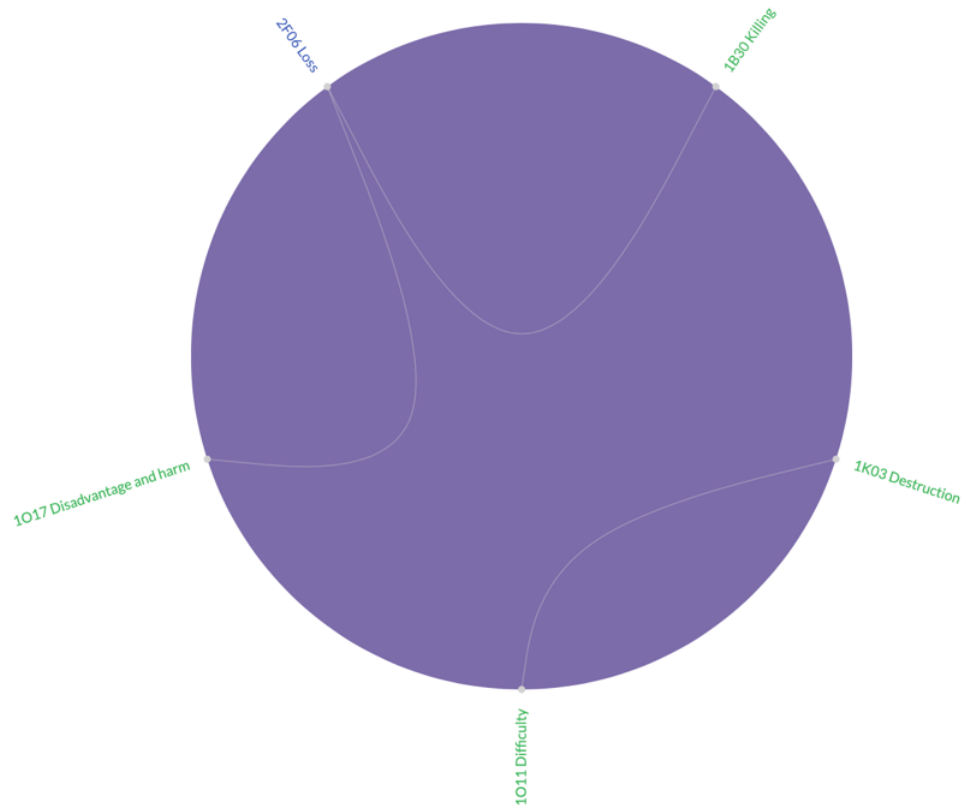


Figure 4: MMOE Amyrran

The above visualisation shows that *amyrran* is used to map DISADVANTAGE AND HARM bilaterally with LOSS, as well as LOSS onto KILLING and DESTRUCTION onto DIFFICULTY. All three connections are considered strong by the MMOE.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, *amyrran* is not used for DEATH, but is used to map LOSS onto KILLING. This is the same sort of mapping that we have in present day when we say we ‘lost Susie to Cancer’. The resulting meaning is that Susie *died*, because KILL has some of the same truth conditions as DEATH, but something or someone caused DEATH to happen to Susie. While it is impossible to say which version of the word was meant here, it is likely that ‘destroying oneself’ is meant to be a negative

<sup>74</sup> ‘Amierran’, *Mapping Metaphor* <<https://mappingmetaphor.arts.gla.ac.uk/map-old-english/drilldown/?adv=y&viewChange=y&expand=&changeBoxSelected=&strength=Strong&changeViewOpt=changeCard>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

and not neutral or positive description of self-killing. One which may have implications about the state of the soul after the act.

### Euphemism

Although Ælfric uses negative language to describe self-killing acts, he still takes up some euphemisms even while condemning the act and actor. For instance, he uses the euphemism *his feorh forlet* (left his life) to describe a man's hanging.<sup>75</sup> As Ælfric simultaneously goes to great lengths to describe the act and actor as negative, it is likely that his usage of the euphemism suggests it was a common phrase. Before turning to the use of *feorh* here, I will analyse the use of the verb *lætan*, which can be found in two other texts describing a self-killing euphemistically.

*Lætan* means to 'let go, give up, dismiss, leave, forsake, etc' and can be found in many OE texts in reference to losing one's life in general.<sup>76</sup> The MMOE lists four different connections of this nature: 1N06: MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION → 2F06: LOSS (strong connection; *forlætan*, *alætan*, *ageotan*); 1N06: MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION → 1B26: DEATH (Strong; seen previously with euphemisms like *forþ(ge)faran*); 2F08: RELINQUISHING → 1B26: DEATH (strong); 2F06: LOSS → 1B26: DEATH (strong). The relationship between loss and death is not novel, and most of the above metaphors utilising a form of *lætan* are in some way tapping into the conceptual metaphor: DEATH IS LOSS.

Based on the examples in Bosworth and Toller, it would seem as though *for-lætan* is more negative than *lætan* or *a-lætan*, meaning that not all the forms of *lætan* can be read with the same associative connotations. For example, *for-lætan* is used in referencing to 'losing', 'abandoning' and 'quitting' where *lætan* is less likely to do so, and *a-lætan* is more likely to

<sup>75</sup> See chapter eight on Hanging.

<sup>76</sup> 'Lætan', *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/21009>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

mean ‘lose/let go’ according to Bosworth and Toller.<sup>77</sup> While the DOE shows a closer connection between the two terms, *for-lætan* is used in reference to ‘neglect’ where *a-lætan* is not.<sup>78</sup> Even more convincingly, ‘abandon’ is used for twenty-two different descriptions of senses for *for-lætan* and only once for *a-lætan*.<sup>79</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Ælfric uses ‘his feorh forlet’ to describe a man’s hanging. While one could read *for-lætan* as ‘to leave’ it can also mean ‘to abandon’, which conveys more of a reproach to the choice than ‘to leave/to give up’. Though Ælfric uses *forlet* here as a negative, he taps into the same conceptual metaphor that using the less negative, *lætan* or *a-lætan* would activate: DEATH IS LOSS.

Solheim explains that DEATH IS LOSS is one of the most frequent metaphors found in early modern British tombstones, making up 10.1% of all expressions.<sup>80</sup> She explains that expressions which fall into this category ‘contain notions of loss or bereavement which do not explicitly include a personification’, as in they are not ‘taken’ by death personified. Solheim asks who experiences the loss or bereavement in this scenario through the question ‘DEATH IS LOSS – to whom?’<sup>81</sup> She explains that where death is considered a loss in the data she analysed, it is mainly conceived of as a loss to family and friends (97% of her data).<sup>82</sup> An example of this sort of sentiment would be ‘we *lost* Grandma yesterday’. While there has yet to be a study on the makeup of ‘DEATH IS LOSS – to whom?’ for the OE corpus, SELF-KILLING IS LOSS can be placed clearly into the ‘dead person’ and ‘world’ categories; not for family and friends.

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<sup>77</sup> See ‘letan’, ‘a-letan’ and ‘for-letan’ in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

<sup>78</sup> See meanings 7a-8 ‘*for-lætan*’, *DOE Online*.

<sup>79</sup> See meanings 8, 11b, 12a, 12b-f (including c.i), 13a-b, 14-15c, 1 and 6a-e ‘*for-lætan*’ in the *DOE Online*.

<sup>80</sup> Mari Anette Dittmann Solheim, ‘Death by Metaphor: A Study of Metaphors and Conceptualisations of Death in British and American Obituaries’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oslo, 2014), p. 51.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to appearing in Ælfric's *Deposition of St. Martin*, which is investigated at length in Chapter Eight on *Hanging* in this thesis, *lætan* in reference to self-killing is used in two other texts: The OE *Orosius* and *Juliana*. In Book Two, Chapter Five of the OE *Orosius*, Leonidas gives a roaring speech to his companions, resulting in a mixed bag of victory:

‘Nu we untweogendlice witan þæt we ure agen lif forlætan scolan for þæm ungemetlican feondscipe þe ure ehtende (on) sindon; uton þehhwæþere acræftan hu we heora an þisse niht mægen mæst beswican, 7 us selfum betst word 7 longsumast æt urum ende gewyrcaþ.’ Hu micel þæt is to secganne þætte Leoniða mid VI C monna VI C M swa gebismrade, sume ofslog, sume gefliemde!<sup>83</sup>

(‘Now we certainly know that we must abandon our own life because of the excessive hostility of our persecutors; let us nevertheless devise how we may on this night most deceive them and achieve for ourselves the best and most enduring reputation at our end.’ How much that is to say that Leonidas with six hundred men thus mocked six hundred thousand, slew some, and caused some to flee!

This section gives evidence for one of the more ‘noble’ reasons why someone might kill themselves: because they are going to die in battle anyway. Unfortunately, the intent of this thesis is not to investigate the reasons why people kill themselves in Old English.<sup>84</sup> For now, what is important to note, is that the phrasing ‘Nu we untweogendlice witan þæt we ure agen lif forlætan scolan’ is not based on the Latin. The Latin reads:

dimissis sociis Spartanos admonet, de gloria plurimum, de uita nihil sperandum; neque exspectandum uel hostem uel diem, sed occasione noctis perrumpenda castra, conmiscenda arma, conturbanda agmina fore; nusquam uictores honestius quam in castris

<sup>83</sup> Sweet, *Orosius*, pp. 80–82.

<sup>84</sup> More on this and plans for forthcoming research can be found in the conclusion to this thesis.

hostium esse perituros. persuasi igitur mori malle, in ultionem futurae mortis armantur tam quam ipsi interitum suum et exigent et uindicarent. mirum dictu sescenti uiri castra sescentorum milium inrumpunt. tumultus totis castris oritur; Persae quoque ipsi Spartanos adiuuant mutuis caedibus suis; Spartani quaerentes regem nec inuenientes caedunt sternuntque omnia, castra peruagantur uniuersa et inter densas strues corporum raros homines uix sequuntur: uictores sine dubio, nisi mori elegissent. proelium a principio noctis in maiorem diei partem tractum: ad postremum uincendo fatigati, ubi quisque eorum deficientibus membris uisus est sibi mortis suae ultione satiatus, ibi inter impedimenta cadauerum campumque crasso et semigelato sanguine palpitantem lassus lapsus et mortuus est.<sup>85</sup>

(When he had dismissed his allies, he warned the Spartans that they could hope for great glory, but that they had no chance of life; that they should not wait for the enemy or daybreak, but break into the enemy's camp by night, exchange blows with him, and throw his columns into confusion; and that they could have no more honourable death than as victors in their enemy's camp. Persuaded therefore to choose death, they armed themselves to avenge their coming deaths as men who would both bring about their own demise and take revenge for it. Wondrous as it is to relate, 600 men burst into the camp of 600,000. The whole camp was in uproar, the Persians helping the Spartans by killing one another. The Spartans sought the king, and, on not finding him, slew and laid low everything they found. Ranging through the whole camp, they were scarcely able to pursue the scattered men amid the piles of corpses and would without a doubt have been triumphant, had they not chosen to die. The battle dragged on from nightfall into the

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<sup>85</sup> Paulus Orosius, *Presbyteri hispani aduersus paganos historiarum libri septem*, ed. by Syvert Haverkamp (Thorunii: Lambecius, 1857), pp. 50–51.

latter part of the following day. Finally, worn down by their triumph, after each of them with failing, tired limbs had taken his fill of vengeance for his own death, weary, they fell down and died among the baggage of the dead and battlefield which was oozing with thick, half-congealed blood).<sup>86</sup>

Here we are repeatedly reminded that Leonidas and his men chose not to die but died anyway at the end of a glorious battle. They, as he says at the beginning of his speech, were able to hope for glory, but not survival. In this version, they are ‘worn down by their triumph’ (*ad postremum uincendo fatigati*); only then did they die. The Latin does not say that they did anything specific to die, besides be worn down (*fatigati*) so that they each were dead (*mortuus est*). While both the Latin and OE do take a semi-positive approach to Leonidas and his men, the Latin relates that they would have won, had they ‘not chosen death’ (*nisi mori elegissent*). This is the only negative comment about the group, which is seemingly reflected in the choice of using *forlætan* in the OE. As we have seen, using *forlætan* positions the men as ‘abandoning’ their life, instead of ‘letting it go’. The Latin does not make use of the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS LOSS, and instead focuses on repeating the voluntary nature of their end, despite their ability to turn the tide and win the battle. In both versions, Leonidas is meant to be read as a heroic character who takes down multiple foes in the face of certain death, somewhat like Byrhtnoth in the *Battle of Maldon* (Mald A9).<sup>87</sup> In the OE, part of the tragedy is thus the heroic characters losing their lives in battle.<sup>88</sup> Solheim is smart to note that the *loss to whom* is the important part of the conceptual

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<sup>86</sup> Translation from Fear, *Orosius*, p. 89.

<sup>87</sup> For more on what Harris refers to as Byrhtnoth’s ‘suicidal loyalty’ see Stephen J. Harris, ‘Complicating the Old English Comitatus’ (unpublished), <[https://www.academia.edu/14945318/Complicating\\_the\\_Anglo-Saxon\\_Comitatus](https://www.academia.edu/14945318/Complicating_the_Anglo-Saxon_Comitatus)> [accessed 21 August 2021]; Fred C. Robinson, ‘God, Death, and Loyalty in *The Battle of Maldon*’, in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza (2008), pp. 425–44 <<https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300129113-023>> [accessed 16 August 2020]; John Halbrooks, ‘Byrhtnoth’s Great-Hearted Mirth; or, Praise and Blame in *The Battle of Maldon*’, *Philological Quarterly*, 82.3 (2003), 235–55.

<sup>88</sup> Robinson, ‘God, Death, and Loyalty’, pp. 425–44.

model of DEATH IS LOSS. Leonidas positions himself and his men as those who will experience the loss: ‘we ure agen lif forlætan scolán’ (we must abandon our own lives). While there are few self-killing references using the term *forlætan*, there is a collocation between *lætan* and *lif* and *lætan* and *feorh* in the OE corpus.<sup>89</sup> The collocation between *lætan* and *lif* is much more frequent than the latter. *Feorh* is used with *lætan* four times in the OE corpus, in four different texts.<sup>90</sup> *Lif* is used in 27 different texts 40 times.<sup>91</sup> The collocation between *lætan* and *feorh* may be misleading, however, because *feorh* is connected to other verbs for relinquishing, losing, forfeiting, and wasting in the DOE. In this case, the DOE considers all these phrases to figuratively mean ‘to die’.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, the alliteration of *lætan* and *lif* may have promoted the use of the collocation in verse (and in some styles of prose) in ways which might be unrepresentative of everyday Old English. Thus, while *lætan lif* may be more common, other phrases do exist which mean the same thing. Even so, it is still likely that the euphemistic phrase most likely to indicate a self-killing is versions of *lætan + lif*, though more novel/creative metaphors follow the same model and do exist. More creative metaphors are more likely to indicate a different associate connotation than the conventional or explicit metaphor.

What these collocations suggest is that the phrase *forlætan lif* was common enough as a euphemism for death, and that it could be used for self-killing without clearly denoting it. Thus in the OE corpus there are likely more euphemistic references using this phrase for self-killing

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<sup>89</sup> Conducted through DOEWC searches.

<sup>90</sup> From the DOEWC: Andreas A2.1, Juliana A3.5, Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies ÆCHom II, 39.1 B1.2.42; B1.2.42; Ælfric’s Lives of Saints Ash Wednesday B1.3.13.

<sup>91</sup> According to the DOE web corpus: Christ A, B, C A3.1; Jul A3.5; Husb A3.32; Beo A4.1; DEdg A10.4; ÆLS (Memory of Saints) B1.3.17; ÆLS (Abdon & Sennes) B1.3.24; ÆLS (Maccabees) B1.3.25; ÆHom 15 B1.4.15; ÆLet 4 (SigewardZ) B1.8.4.4; ÆAdmon 1 B1.9.3; WHom 6 B2.2.1; LS 28 (Neot) B3.3.28; PsHead B8.2.2; Or; GDPref 1 (C) B9.5.1; GDPref and 4 (C) B9.5.6; BenRW B10.3.4; Conf 3.1.1 (Raith Y) B11.3.1.1; Ch 1283 (Rob 16) B15.3.5; ChronC (O’Brien O’Keeffe) B17.7; ChronD (Cubbin) B17.8; ChronE (Irvine) B17.9; Mart 1 (Herzfeld-Kotzor) B19.1.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Feorh’, *DOE Online*.

that will not be identified as self-killings because this phrase obscures it and subsumes it under general DEATH. This is especially problematic because it is likely that the most positively viewed self-killings are relayed in this euphemistic way, which obfuscates the method of death and therefore leaves them out of this study. This works similarly even when the self-killing is not so strictly positive.

For example, in the OE *Juliana* (Jul A3.5), the devil explains that ‘Eac ic sume gedyde þæt him banlocan blode spiowedan, þæt hi færinga feorh aleton þurh ædra wylm’.<sup>93</sup> (Also, some I treated so that their bodies spewed blood, and so they suddenly let go their lives through the welling of their veins). It is not clear here whether the devil makes people kill themselves by cutting themselves, or if he is referring to people who he spontaneously makes bleed out. The euphemism *feorh aleton* obscures whether this is a self-killing, and simultaneously could make it one, as the agency is placed not on the devil but on the people who lost their lives even while the devil is taking credit. Ultimately, it seems as though *lætan* is used for the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS LOSS, and this phrasing may sometimes obscure whether the act is a self-killing or natural death. In the case of *Juliana*, it can be treated simultaneously as a self-killing and as an unnatural death for which the devil is to blame, for example where the devil causes an aneurysm. Indeed, the devil(s) do claim self-killing acts as their own in clearer cases than this across the Middle Ages and continental Europe, as Murray outlines.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, it seems to be the case that *feorh* is less positive as a term for *life-force* than *lif* given that it is more commonly compounded with negative words than *lif* is.

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<sup>93</sup> Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501, f. 72<sup>v</sup>.

<<https://theexeterbook.exeter.ac.uk/viewer.html?imageset=single&image=72v>> [accessed 22 July 2021].

<sup>94</sup> See Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, pp. 3, 36–37, 103, 112, 151, 153, 222, 247–48, 268–69, 273, 278, 281–82, 285, 300, 310, 314, 327, 330, 334, 336, 343, 346, 364, 366, 430, 455, 467.



I compared all the compounds which use *feorh* and *lif* from Bosworth and Toller and considered any terms referring to *death/ the end of life*, or a *bad, wicked, or wasted LIFE* as ‘negative’ compounds, and anything referring to a *good, well-lived life* or type of life in general as ‘positive’. This showed more ‘negative’ compound forms for *feorh*, where *feorh* is meant to denote ‘mortality’ or even ‘deadly’.<sup>95</sup> It also showed that *lif* is more commonly used to create compounds for religious lives specifically, or life in general.<sup>96</sup> While *feorh* is more commonly used in a ‘positive’ way as a term for the body.<sup>97</sup> On a whole, *lif* has more compounds in general, and they are overwhelmingly used to refer to types of life, or good lives, whereas *feorh* is most often used in conjunction with negative terms, to refer to death or a bad life. While it is hard to say convincingly before the DOE has gotten to ‘L’, it does seem as though the use of *feorh* could

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<sup>95</sup> The nineteen ‘negative’ compounds for *feorh* as found in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* are: *feorh-adl* (mortal illness), *feorh-bana* (killer), *feorh-benn* (mortal wound), *feorh-bealu* (deadly evil), *feorh-cwalu* (death), *feorh-cwealm* (mortal destruction), *feorh-ge-dal* (parting from life), *feorh-dolg* (deadly wound), *feorh-goma* (fatal jaws), *feorh-legu* (death), *feorh-ge-nipla* (mortal enemy), *feorh-scyldig* (guilty of capital offence), *feorh-seoc* (mortally ill), *feorh-sweng* (fatal blow), and *feorh-wund* (mortal wound). This was compared to the seven negative *lif* compounds: *edwit-lif* (A disgraceful life), *ende-lif* (An end of life, death), *lif-cearu* (Care or anxiety about life), *lif-gedal* (Parting with life, separation from life, death), *lif-leas* (Lifeless), *lif-least* (Loss of life, death), *lif-lyre* (Loss of life) and *un-lif* (not life, spiritual death).

<sup>96</sup> The thirty-nine ‘positive’ compounds for *lif* as found in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* are: *a-lif* (everlasting life), *ancer-lif* (an anchorite’s or hermit’s life), *ancor-lif* (an anchorite’s or hermit’s life), *cot-lif* (cottage), *cyre-lif* (the condition of life which allows a person to choose his lord), *feo-lif* (munificence, bounty), *feorh-lif* (life), *god-lif* (a good, virtuous life), *lang-life* (\*long life), *lif-brycgung* (life, intercourse), *lif-bysig* (busy about saving life), *lif-dæg* (a day of life), *lif-fadung* (the ordering or regulating of one’s life), *lif-fæc* (the time during which life lasts), *lif-fæst* (living, having life), *lif-fæstan* (to give life, quicken), *lif-frea* (the lord of life), *lif-fruma* (the author of life), *lif-gesceaft* (a condition of life as ordered by fate), *lif-getwinnan* (twins), *lif-lad* (conduct of life), *lif-lic* (vital, necessary to life), *lif-lice* (vitality, so as to infuse with life), *lif-neru* (support of life), *lif-weard* (a guardian of life), *lif-weg* (a way which leads to life, way of life), *lif-wela* (riches that confer or possess life), *lif-welle* (life-giving), *lif-wraðu* (a support of life), *lif-wynn* (a pleasure or joy of life), *munuc-lif* (the monastic life), *mynster-lif* (monastic life), *nunn-lif* (the life of a nun), *preost-lif* (\*the life of a priest), *regol-lif* (a life according to ecclesiastical rules), *riht-lif* (a life of lawful matrimony), *stoc-lif* (\*town life), *sundor-lif* (a private life), *weorold-lif* (worldly life).

<sup>97</sup> The twenty-two ‘positive’ compounds using *feorh* are: *feorh-berende* (life-bearing), *feorh-bold* (the dwelling of life), *feorh-cyn* (living kind), *feorh-dæg* (a life day), *feorh-eacen* (endued with life, living), *feorh-fægen* (glad to live), *feorh-gebeorh* (life’s security, refuge), *feorh-gener* (life-safety, salvation of life), *feorh-gifa* (giver of life), *feorh-gifu* (gift of life), *feorh-hama* (some part of the body), *feorh-hord* (life’s treasure, the soul), *feorh-hus* (life’s house), *feorh-hyrde* (life-guardian or protector), *feorh-lean* (recompense for life saved), *feorh-lif* (life), *feorh-loc* (life’s enclosure, the breast), *feorh-ner* (life’s preservation or salvation, a refuge, sustenance), *feorh-ræd* (life-benefit, an action tending to the soul’s benefit), *geogub-feorh* (youthful life, youth), *mid-ferhþ* (middle life or age), *wide-feorh* (long life). Any \* before the definition means it is my own and not Bosworth and Toller’s.

be an indicator that the death was not as positively perceived as use of the euphemism (*left life*) would first imply.

This is helpful to remember when looking at two of the other euphemisms for self-killing: *gewat swa of life* ‘and so left his life’ and *geendode hys lyf* ‘ended his life’. The first euphemism, *gewat swa of life*, is found with this particular phrasing only once in this SELF-KILLING corpus, in *Saul and the Witch of Endor* in Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies Series II* (ÆHom 30 B1.4.30). In it, Saul falls upon his weapon when he finds that his army and children were killed: ‘he sylf þa feoll uppon his wæpne and gewat swa of life to þam swicolan deofle, swa swa he him ær sæde’ (then he [Saul] himself fell upon his weapon and so departed from life to that deceitful devil, as he [the devil] said to him before).<sup>98</sup> Here, Ælfric uses the euphemism *gewat swa of life* in conjunction with several other phrases to describe Saul’s exit from this world. The euphemism is not distinctively associated with self-killing: similar phrasings occur several times elsewhere.<sup>99</sup> Using *lif* here is straightforward, and this euphemism falls into the category of DEATH IS A JOURNEY. Ælfric’s choice of x-phemism does not itself seem to be pejorative. Rather, Ælfric here expresses his feelings towards self-killing and its eternal result by adding onto the conventional metaphors which make up the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY, to produce SELF-KILLING IS A JOURNEY TO HELL. Thus, he follows up *gewat swa of life* with ‘to þam swicolan deofle’, specifying that SELF-KILLING IS A JOURNEY TO HELL. Ælfric’s tendency to such explicit commentary on self-killing is unusual in Old English; it is possible that this leap is not made by other OE theologians strictly because the judgment is up to God.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> OE from: Clayton, ‘Suicide in the Works of Ælfric’, p. 354.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Ge-witan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, sense 2 <<https://bosworthtoller.com/50537>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

<sup>100</sup> See Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 129–201.

The euphemism *geendode hys lif* (ended his life), which is used twice in the OE *Martyrology* in two different texts, evidence the conceptual link between TRAVEL AND JOURNEYS → DEATH, as well as RELATIVE POSITION → DEATH, MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION → DECISION MAKING, COMPLETION → DEATH, CESSATION → DEATH, SEQUENCE → DEATH. All these links are considered strong by the MMOE project. As we have already looked at DEATH AS A JOURNEY (held up here by the conceptual links between TRAVEL AND JOURNEYS → DEATH, MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION → DECISION MAKING and RELATIVE POSITION → DEATH, it would be most beneficial to turn our eye to COMPLETION, CESSATION, and SEQUENCE. Again, the expression is common in Old English and not distinctive to self-killing or obviously pejorative.<sup>101</sup>

In both *25 June: Luceia and Auceia* and *2 August: Theodota and Her Three Sons* (Mart. 2.1 (Herzfeld-Kotzor) B19.2.1); Mart 5 (Kotzor) B19.5)), taking one's life is relayed as a voluntary 'ending'. The story of Luceia and Auceia follows the virgin St. Luceia, who was captured by King Auceia. At first, Auceia wanted to bed Luceia and was angry when she would not agree, but over time came to visit her so that she would pray to God on his behalf. When she did, he was always victorious. One day, Luceia got a vision and went to Rome where she was martyred by another king. Auceia then went to the same King and asked to be beheaded as well. That King asked why he would die for Christ when he is not Christian, and Auceia said he believed it would lead him to God: 'and then, professing God, he ended his life' (*and þa on þære godes andetnysse he geendode hys lyf*).<sup>102</sup> Here, the use of *geendode hys lyf* simultaneously treats DEATH AS A JOURNEY and DEATH AS COMPLETION. As with many of the other

<sup>101</sup> 'Endian', *DOE Online*, sense 1a.

<sup>102</sup> Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, pp. 124–26.

euphemisms for self-killing, the metaphor obscures whether the act is really a self-killing or would be considered a non-natural death. This depends on whether one considers Auceia's willingness for death as a self-killing even though the death is not own-handed. Given that he would not have died had he not asked to be beheaded, this thesis considers his death a self-killing. Furthermore, because he is not considered a martyr by the text, his death is categorically different than Luceia's who similarly went willingly to her death by third-party.

The second self-killing which occurs in the *Martyrology*, and uses the verb *geendode*, can be found on *2 August: Theodota and Her Three Sons*. Theodota lived in Nicaea and was harassed by Hyrtacus (not the King by the same name) for sex. When Hyrtacus did so, God's angel hit him on the nose so that it bled incessantly. Then 'seo halige wydewe æfter þam þurh fyr geendode hyre lif mid hyre þrym sunum' (later the holy widow ended her life together with her three sons through fire).<sup>103</sup> Again, here the metaphor itself blurs whether we would consider this a death or self-killing. However, Theodota is given some agency when it says 'through fire'. In placing the method before the verb, the text seems to be telling us that the fire was intentional, as it was through that she *geendode hyre lif*. Theodota is a saint, and so it is entirely possible that this is not really meant to be read as a self-killing. However, to exclude it merely because Theodota is a saint would be problematic. While this thesis excludes martyrdom as categorically different than self-killings, that does not mean that the categories were entirely distinct in the period. What we can say, however, is that this is clearly a positively conveyed form of saying that Theodota likely killed herself and her children, in line with the euphemistic use of *geendode his lif* more generally in Old English.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

## Conclusion

This chapter on X-phemistic language highlighted the varied connotations and emphasis that were employed to convey, describe, and obscure SELF-KILLING in OE. The dysphemistic language employed by the OE Compiler of the *History Against the Pagans* highlights a dark humour used to convey the topic of SELF-KILLING. It showed that *amyrran* underwent pejoration from ‘to irritate’ to ‘to destroy’ over the course of the period under study.

The dysphemisms for SELF-KILLING were shown to typically include the concept of DESTRUCTION, especially regarding the body and soul of the victim. In this way, the use of dysphemistic language for SELF-KILLING descriptions tend to doubly attack the choice to kill oneself. It also set out the argument that Ælfric as an author and theologian was completely against SELF-KILLING; a point to which this thesis will continually return.

The section on euphemisms highlighted that Ælfric uses euphemistic language even when condemning SELF-KILLING. This likely points to a shared use of euphemisms for SELF-KILLING, and VIOLENT DEATH in general, in the period for people that were well-liked by the community. Uses such as these are likely obscured and therefore not counted as SELF-KILLING by this and other studies and are likely further obscured and erased by history.

The chapter explained that the euphemisms used to convey a SELF-KILLING all employed the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS LOSS in some form or another. This loss is typically conceptualised as loss to the dead person and world, but not to the community which could point to an underlying concept of SELF-KILLING IS A LOSS TO DEAD PERSON/WORLD. This differs to the modern day in the United Kingdom and the United States, where DEATH IS LOSS is conceived mainly as loss to friends and family of the deceased, and sometimes the community. The section on euphemisms also uncovered a likely common euphemism for self-killing: *lætan*

*lif*. As there are hundreds of hits for variations on this Boolean phrase in the DOEWC which are not explicitly about self-killings, it is highly likely that this euphemism used for natural deaths subsumes self-killings under the category of natural deaths. It also found that *lif* is used more positively than *feorh*, though both are terms for 'life/soul'. This chapter suggested that variations on *laetan feorh*, therefore, are less positively received by an early medieval audience than *laetan lif*. Similarly, *for-let* seems to be more negatively connoted than other variants of *-laetan*. Finally, this section explained that the euphemism *geendode hys lyf* (ended his life) evidences the conceptual link between TRAVEL AND JOURNEYS → DEATH and COMPLETION → DEATH. Fundamentally, this chapter explored the different ways SELF-KILLING is conveyed through metaphor and diction. It set out the importance of connotations for our understanding of SELF-KILLING in the period, which the following chapters will expand on in more detail.

## Chapter Four: Falling/Flying

This chapter investigates the rhetoric of self-killing in two cases which use some form of falling/flying as a method of death. In both cases terms are used which demand the consideration of two different verbs (*feallan* and *fyllan*; *fleon* and *fleogan*). Past analyses of both cases have been swayed by translators' assumptions and literary interpretations, which hide and obscure cultural information embedded in semantics. This chapter thus investigates the etymologies and semantics of these terms, while highlighting the effect of literary interpretation on lexicography. It ultimately outlines the rhetorical effect and positioning of these terms in their respective texts and discusses what these mean for overall perceptions of self-killing at the time.

Specifically, the section on *of-feoll* argues that *of-feoll* is clearly from the verb *feallan*, despite a misleading history of translation. The section outlines and disproves the current theories and understandings belying the transitivity and denotation of *of-feallan*. It illustrates that *of-feallan* is not in itself a negatively connoted self-killing term, but can denote ATTACK, through metaphoric extension, as well as connoting other conceptual metaphors and meanings.

The section on Cato and the term *fleah* further plays with the idea of agency and the connotational differences between similar verbs, made vaster through meaning extension by metaphor. It uses Steen's method to tease out the intricacies between metaphor connections. Ultimately, the two argue that the method of falling and the terms which describe it easily muddy the self-killer's agency, placing the intent of the act into question, and thus the act entirely.

### King Sigferþ

An.. dccccxii. Her forðferde Ælfgar cinges mæg on Defenum 7 his lic rest on Wiltune; 7 Sigferð cyning hine offeoll 7 his lic ligð æt Wimburnan. 7 þa on geara wæs swiðe micel

mancwealm, 7 se micela manbryne wæs on Lundene, 7 Paules mynster forbarn 7 þy ilcan geare wearð eft gestapelad. On þys ilcan geare for Aþelmod mæssepreost to Rome 7 þær forðferde. xviii. kalendas Septembris.<sup>1</sup>

(In the year 962: Here passed away Ælfgar, a kinsman of the King, in Devon, and his body rests in Wilton; King Sigferð *hine offeoll* and his body lies at Wimborne. And in that year there was a very great torment of people, and the great fire where people died happened in London, and burnt Paul's minster, and in that same year it was restored again. In this same year Aþelmod, a mass priest, went to Rome and passed away there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August).

The phrase *hine offeoll* refers here, in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC)* MS A, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 173 (ChronA (Bately) B17.1), to the SELF-KILLING of King Sigferþ.<sup>2</sup> Chronicle A is also known as *The Parker Chronicle* or the *Winchester Chronicle*. The self-killing of King Sigferþ is one of three clear self-killings in the various nine surviving manuscripts of the *ASC*: the self-killings of the biblical King Herod, Godwine, and King Sigferþ.<sup>3</sup> Scholars generally agree that the first hand of Chronicle A wrote the King Sigferþ episode contemporary to the events it describes.<sup>4</sup> Chronicle A was likely written at Winchester before it made its way to Christ Church, Canterbury c. 1100.<sup>5</sup> It is the only one of the nine *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* to include the death of King Sigferþ in the annal for c. 962.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Original text from Janet Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: MS A: A Semi-Diplomatic Edition with Introduction and Indices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), III 75.

<sup>2</sup> Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Alice Jorgensen, 'Introduction' Story', in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. by Alice Jorgensen, *Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, v. 23 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Original text from Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 75. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.



Unfortunately, King Sigferþ's identity is a mystery. The *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* (PASE) distils all spelling variations of *Sigferþ* to *Sigfrith*, and two other Sigfriths are recorded in the *Chronicle* around the time of this King Sigferþ's death. A man with the same name, Sigfrith 13 in PASE, attests a charter for King Eadred c. 955, and the other, Sigfrith 21, is killed by Eadric c. 1015.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, one could assume that the King Sigferþ from the annal may be one of these Sigfriths, though the name and variations in spelling are also common among Danish princes of Northumbria. If we conclude that King Sigferþ died in c. 962 as *Chronicle A* says, it would be impossible for Eadric to kill him in c. 1015. He could be the Sigferþ who attested a charter for King Eadred in c. 955, or a completely different King Sigferþ altogether. As there is no other information about King Sigferþ and why he may or may not have killed himself, the only clue we must go on is this line of prose. The statement 'Sigferð cyning hine offeoll' may seem straightforward, but the reading is contingent on what *hine offeoll* means.

### **Translation History and Underlying Assumptions**

Fred C. Robinson warns against the subconscious confusion that occurs when a lexicographer acts unawares as a literary interpreter, 'recording a meaning for a word not on the basis of lexicographical evidence, but purely because his particular critical interpretation of the passage requires such a meaning'.<sup>8</sup> Once such a slip has occurred, interpretation based on these judgements may be fixed into a permanent course of error as scholars who encounter these 'definitions' interpret them as lexicographical fact.<sup>9</sup> Given the denotational richness of OE,

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<sup>7</sup> 'Sieferth 11', 'sieferth 13', 'sieferth 21', *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk>, accessed 1 Nov. 2019; See also Ingram, Rev., James, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Everyman Press, London, 1912), p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, Fred, C., 'Lexicography and Literary Criticism: A Caveat' *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, Fred, C., 'Lexicography and Literary Criticism', p. 100.

errors like these are common, and all too often, they go unchallenged. The translation history of *offeoll* points to one of these unconscious literary interpretations masquerading as lexicographical fact.

Hall defines *hine offeoll* as ‘committed suicide’ and gives this example of King Sigferþ’s death.<sup>10</sup> He assumes that it is so obvious that King Sigferþ killed himself that he gives no note for why he thinks so. The TOE, created from Bosworth and Toller, and Hall, lists *of-feallan* as a verb for ‘to commit suicide’.<sup>11</sup> There, it rests under the hypernyms ‘to kill, slay’, ‘suicide: to commit suicide’, ‘to fall’, and ‘to overcome, conquer’.<sup>12</sup> The only evidence for this choice refers to Bosworth and Toller, and Hall. One would therefore think that Bosworth and Toller would explain how they derive ‘commit suicide’ from *hine offeoll*. Disappointingly, they give the translation ‘King Sigferþ laid violent hands on himself’, but, as we can see from the OE, no ‘violent hands’ were ‘laid’ on anyone.<sup>13</sup> Just like Hall, they do not explain their translation. Continuing in this fashion, Guy Points translates *hine offeoll* as ‘killed himself’.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, Michael Swanton translates it as ‘fell upon himself’, and comments ‘committed suicide’ for clarity in his footnotes – possibly the closest attempt at lexicographical fact, placing the interpretation in the footnotes.<sup>15</sup> Still, all these lexicographers and translators assume that King Sigferþ’s death was a self-killing. Few explain their reasoning, and those that do refer only to each other as evidence.

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<sup>10</sup> Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 223.

<sup>11</sup> ‘of-feallan’, *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2018) <<https://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/category/?type=search&qsearch=offeallan&word=offeallan&page=1#id=991>>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Offeallan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/24296>> [Accessed 16 October 2021].

<sup>14</sup> Points, Guy, *The Combined Anglo-Saxon Chronicles: A Ready-Reference Abridged Chronology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 114.

Conversely, Alexander Murray's comprehensive study *Suicide in the Middle Ages* does not mention the death of King Sigferþ. This is not necessarily saying much, as the two volumes minimally cover sources in OE. However, Murray does mention two self-killings in the *Chronicle*: those of King Herod in c. 3, and Edwin, the half-brother of King Athelstan, in c. 933.<sup>16</sup> Why then, does he omit or disregard King Sigferþ? King Herod's self-killing was also written in the *Parker Chronicle*, but Murray does mention this version.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, one would assume that Murray did investigate self-killings in the *Chronicle A* manuscript. He may, of course, have only mentioned self-killings that were obvious to him. While Edwin's self-killing is not clear in the *Peterborough Chronicle* annal for 933, it is an explicit self-killing according to William of Malmesbury in c. 1125.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Murray may have disregarded King Sigferþ's self-killing because it was unclear, in contrast to what Hall and Bosworth and Toller seem to think.

It is possible that Murray disregarded King Sigferþ's self-killing as the death could be interpreted as the murder of Ælfgar who dies in the preceding line, as in: 'In the year 962: Here passed away Ælfgar, a kinsman of the King, in Devon and his body rests in Wilton; King Sigferð killed him [Ælfgar] and his body [Sigferð's] lies at Wimborne'.<sup>19</sup> This is because *hine* is in the third person singular masculine accusative (acc.) case (it refers to a male direct object). All we know for certain is that King Sigferþ did something (*offeoll*) to a male referred to by the pronoun

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<sup>16</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, p. 48; Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 349.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> This is an interesting case which was discussed earlier in the discussion about *ofstingan*. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was written contemporaneously, states that Edwin drowned at sea in 933. A later revised chronicle from after 1042 adds that Edwin was ordered to be drowned by his brother King Athelstan. The even later William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* from 1125 says that Edwin wilfully threw himself into the sea and so drowned. So, while the death is attested in 933, the self-killing is not attested until 1125. See: Murray, Alexander, *The Violent Against Themselves*, p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Ælfgar is buried at Wilton near Salisbury. David Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 500.

*hine*. For *Sigferð cyning hine offeoll* to mean that King Sigferþ did something to himself, *hine* needs to be reflexive. In Elly Van Gelderen's *a History of English Reflexive Pronouns: Person, Self, and Interpretability*, she asserts that the preferred form for the reflexive direct object in *Beowulf* is *hine/hyne*, though they occur reflexively at around ten percent of their total use.<sup>20</sup> As this is a low frequency for reflexive usage, it would be plausible to say that King Sigferþ did something to someone else. However, the only male character *hine* could refer to besides King Sigferþ would be the dead Ælfgar. While it would be completely possible for King Sigferþ to kill Ælfgar and their bodies be buried at different minsters, the verb *forðfaran* for 'passed away', used to refer to Ælfgar's death, makes this highly unlikely.

Most deaths recorded in the *Chronicle* are indicated either by the verbs *gefaran* or *forðferan*. Ælfgar and Aþelmod's deaths in this annal use these euphemistic verbs for 'to die'.<sup>21</sup> These euphemistic verbs equate to saying someone 'passed away' in PDE and refer only to natural deaths in the *Chronicle*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the implementation of *offeoll* instead of *gefaran* or *forðferan* highlights the untimely death of King Sigferþ. Other euphemistic constructions employ phrases about 'ending' one's life. These feature the noun *end* in the dat., i.e., *his lyfes ende*, *to his ende*, etc., and refer to dying from illness and old age, but never unnatural or sudden deaths.<sup>23</sup> Unnatural deaths use KILL verbs, most often (*of-*) *slean* meaning 'to slay'. Chroniclers use verbs

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<sup>20</sup> Elly Van Gelderen, *A History of English Reflexive Pronouns: Person, Self, and Interpretability* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Jacqueline Stodnick, 'Sentence to Story', in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. by Alice Jorgensen, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 23 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> Using xml transcriptions of Manuscripts, A–E from Tony Jebson's online XML transcription project for the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, this thesis created a data set of killing and death verbs used in the *Chronicle*. XML transcriptions of the manuscripts were inputted into a concordance and run for variants on conjugations and alternative spellings. These verbs were found in the TOE as verbs for To Kill/Slay and To Die/Perish. This data is the basis for my forthcoming book chapter, *The Language of Death in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which will be a part of *The Handbook for the Language of Death* by Bloomsbury. The date for publication is unknown at the time of writing this.

<sup>23</sup> See Chronicle E: 633, 634, 688, 709, 718 for some examples. Constructions with 'end' only occur seventeen times across manuscripts A–E.

denoting the method of killing less often: stabbing ((*of-*)*stican* ‘to stick’, (*of-*)*stingan* ‘to thrust/pierce’), hanging ((*a-*)*hangian*), starving (*steorfan*), burning ((*for-*)*bærnan*).<sup>24</sup> Finally, KILL verbs like *cwellan* ‘to kill’/torment, *myrbrian* ‘to murder’, and *slihtan* ‘to smite’ also occur, albeit minimally. In the whole *Chronicle* (all nine manuscripts) the King Sigferþ line is the only one to use *offeoll*. Ultimately, the use of *offeoll* instead of *gefaran* or *forðferan* points to King Sigferþ’s unnatural death, which may or may not be self-caused. With the sentence that we have, it is impossible to say that anyone else killed King Sigferþ. *Hine* must be reflexive, so whatever *offeoll* means, it was done by King Sigferþ to himself.

### What Does *Of-feoll* Mean?

*Hine of-feoll* does not mean ‘committed suicide’, but what does it mean? How did these translators derive the meaning of ‘committed suicide’ from *hine offeoll*, and is there any basis for this claim? The most pragmatic reading for *Sigferþ hine offeoll* is ‘Sigferþ felled himself’ – except *of-feoll* is not from the verb *fyllan* ‘to fell’.

*Offeoll* conjugates from the strong verb *of-feallan*. The simplex *feallan* is not usually transitive: the DOE does not include ‘to fell i.e.; cut down’ in its many possible senses for the simplex *feallan*.<sup>25</sup> (The weak verb *fyllan* ‘to fell’ is the transitive/causative counterpart, from PG \**falljan-*, because Proto Germanic systematically formed causative verbs from pre-existing strong verbs using the weak verb class.)<sup>26</sup> However, intransitive verbs can in OE be used with an

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<sup>24</sup> Hall, ‘*steorfan*’, p. 298.

<sup>25</sup> ‘*Feallan*’, in *Dictionary of Old English: A to H online*, ed. by Angus Cameron, and others (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Luisa Garcia, ‘Morphological Causatives in Old English’, *Transactions of the Philological Society* 110 (2012), p. 126 <10.1111/j.1467-968X.2012.01287.x> [accessed 13 September 2021]; Valdimir, E. Orel, *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology* (Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 91; Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, p. 126.

object pronoun in a reflexive sense.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the compound *of-feallan* is attested both in Old and Middle English in transitive use;<sup>28</sup> Bosworth and Toller give its sense as ‘to fall upon, kill by falling, destroy’, placing the King Sigferþ example as evidence for ‘to fall upon’.<sup>29</sup>

### *Of-*

Bosworth and Toller suggest that the prefix ‘*of-*’ acts as an intensifier and propose that it modifies the verb’s meaning by adding force – such as the force of *kill*ing.<sup>30</sup> The verb *feallan* takes on an assortment of other prefixes: *a-feallan*, *be-*, *ge-*, *of-*, *op-*, *to-*, with mixed results as to whether the prefixes alter the meaning of *feallan*. It is possible that the semantic connection between the meaning of a preposition and its meaning when used as a prefix has weakened at different rates for different prefixes.<sup>31</sup> *A-feallan* is supposed to mean ‘to fall down’, *op-feallan* means to ‘fall away, cease to have connection with; decay’, *to-feallan* means ‘to fall to pieces, fall away’, and *be-*, *ge-* have little to no effect.<sup>32</sup> It may be that the addition of ‘*of-*’ is what makes *feallan* here mean ‘kill by falling’ instead of ‘to fall’. This seems unlikely given that none of the other prefixes change the sense of *feallan* that extensively, and *of-feallan* is only minimally attested to have that meaning.

Bosworth and Toller suggest *of-* intensifies the verb to mean ‘kill’ for *of-feallan* and other verbs like *of-hnitan*, *of-hreosan*, *of-sceotan*, *of-stician*, *of-stingan*.<sup>33</sup> This claim will be

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), I 438–40 (§§1052–58).

<sup>28</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, under † *of-fall*, v..

<sup>29</sup> ‘*Of-Feallan*’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

<sup>30</sup> ‘*Of-* (prefix)’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

<sup>31</sup> Spockel discusses the weakening of meaning for prefix particles but does not include ‘*of-*’ in his analysis. He does, however, have an in-depth discussion of ‘*for-*’ and ‘*ge-*’. C. Spockel, *The Language of the Parker Chronicle*, 2 vols (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), II 27–40.

<sup>32</sup> Possibly because *be-* and *ge-* have lost their connection to their original constituent parts. See Thomas McFadden, ‘Preverbal *ge-* in Old and Middle English’, *ZAS Papers in Linguistics*, 58 (2015), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> ‘*Of-* (prefix)’, in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

investigated briefly below in order to prove that it has no objective evidence, and that it is used by Bosworth and Toller to substantiate literary criticisms they put forth as lexicographical fact.<sup>34</sup>

Although five verbs can imply ‘kill’ based on the context, it seems as though they keep their specific senses (stabbing, pushing, thrusting, shooting). Unlike the generic verb used for ‘kill’ in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*slean*), none of these five verbs are lexically entailed for ‘die’.

Lexical entailment refers to a causal relationship between propositions where A makes B true. It is generally used to refer to a unilateral relationship between two verbs.

For example,  $V_1$  entails  $V_2$  when  $V_1$  logically implies  $V_2$ .<sup>35</sup> An example would be A. ‘Jacob was killed’ entails that B. ‘Jacob died’. It is unilateral, because ‘Jacob died’ does not entail that ‘Jacob was killed’. Verbs are only entailed if there is no plausible situation in which A can be true and B can be false. That is, one could ‘die’ and not be ‘killed’. So ‘die’ is not entailed for ‘kill’. In OE, someone X *ofslog* entails that someone Y DIED.

A. X *killed* Y. Y *died*.

Someone X *of-hnit* is not entailed for DIE:

B. X struck Y. Y does not necessarily *die* (could be injured, could experience no harm if Y is stronger than X’s strike. Y could be something meant to be struck, etc...).

*Of-hnitan* derives from *hnitan* meaning ‘to strike, thrust, push, come against with a shock’.<sup>36</sup> The prefixed form, *of-hnitan*, is only attested once with the prefix *of-*. Bosworth and Toller state that *of-hnitan* means ‘to kill by butting, to gore to death’.<sup>37</sup> The example they give is

<sup>34</sup> See Fred C. Robinson, ‘Lexicography and Literary Criticism’, pp. 99–110.

<sup>35</sup> See J.A., Fodor, ‘Three Reasons for Not Deriving “Kill” from “Cause to Die”’, *Linguistic Inquiry*, 1.4 (1970), pp. 429–38. See also, Luisa Allo Fildalgo, ‘The Semantic Map of Verbal Troponymy and Aktionsart of Old English lexical Paradigms Based on Strong Verbs’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Universidad De la Rioja, 2016), p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> ‘*of-hnitan*; *hnitan*’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*.

from Exodus 21:28 and reads: ‘gif se oxa wer oððe wif ofhnit’. Bosworth and Toller give the translation: ‘if an ox gore a man or woman, that they die’.<sup>38</sup> However, they have omitted the Old English where the ‘that they die’ section comes from so that it looks like *of-hnitan* means ‘kill by butting’ instead of ‘strike intensively’.<sup>39</sup> Their version of *of-hnitan* would be lexically entailed for *die* – except they have falsified this meaning.

The full line is found in *Alfred's Introduction to Laws* (LawAfEl B14.4.3) in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 173, line 20, and reads: ‘gif oxa ofhnite wer oððe wif, þæt hie dead sien, sie he mid stanum ofworpod’<sup>40</sup> (if an ox hit a man or woman that they may be dead, he [the ox] will be killed with stones [by casting stones]).<sup>41</sup> Clearly, ‘they may be dead’ (*hie dead sien*) is a result of the ox hitting them, but the hypothetical sense of this example shows that this is not the only result *of-hnitan* could entail. Here, *sien* is the subjunctive plural form of the OE verb *wesan* ‘to be’. While they *might* become dead, they are more likely to be injured; death may be the worst-case scenario. The verb used in the original Latin is similarly unentailed for ‘die’, though the context makes it explicit that it may cause death. The Vulgate, an edited Latin Bible incorporating revisions by Saint Jerome, from which this scene is taken, also includes this specification.<sup>42</sup> There, it says: ‘si bos cornu petierit virum aut mulierem et mortui fuerint lapidibus obruetur et non comedentur carnes eius dominusque bovis innocens erit’.<sup>43</sup> (If an ox

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Exodus in the Heptateuch, London, British Museum, Cotton Claudius B.IV, and reads: ‘Gyf oxa hnite wer oððe wif ðæt hi deade beoð, sy he mid stanum oftorforod’ (If the ox hit a man or woman that they become dead, he [the ox] will be killed with stones [by casting stones]).

<sup>40</sup> Found via a DOEWC Boolean search. Transcribed from: *Exodus* London, British Library, MS. Cotton Claudius B. IV: Sally Crawford, *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, 160 (London: Early English Text Society, 1969).

<sup>41</sup> The line is also Exodus in the Heptateuch, London, British Museum, Cotton Claudius B.IV, and reads: ‘Gyf oxa hnite wer oððe wif ðæt hi deade beoð, sy he mid stanum oftorforod’ (‘If the ox hit a man or woman that they become dead, he [the ox] will be killed with stones [by casting stones]’).

<sup>42</sup> Richard Marsden, ‘Old Latin Intervention in the Old English Heptateuch’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 23 (1994), p. 232.

<sup>43</sup> Saint Jerome, *Exodus*, Bible Foundation and On-Line Book Initiative, ed. (Perseus Digital Library).



attacks a man or woman with its horn, and they might be dead, stone the ox: and do not eat its meat; also, the owner of the ox is innocent). Here, *of-hnitan* translates the Latin *peto, petere* ‘fall upon/ attack’, and *hie dead sien* translates the phrase *mortui fuerint*.<sup>44</sup> This clearly shows that *of-hnitan* does not explicitly denote ‘kill’ but ‘intense strike’. The ‘intense strike’ is not entailed for ‘die’ the way ‘kill’ would be because there could be cases where *of-hnitan* is not intense enough to cause death. The addition of *þæt hie dead sien* or *mortui fuerint* would otherwise be unnecessary to clarify. As *of-hnitan* does not change its meaning to ‘kill’ because of the addition of ‘of-’, it is unlikely that the prefix amends the denotation of the other verbs. In my forthcoming article, I take the time to examine the three remaining verbs in full, to prove this conclusion valid. For now, it should be enough to point out that the three remaining verbs can be translated as *kill* without denoting it unequivocally.

For example, Bosworth and Toller list *of-sceotan* as ‘to wound or kill by shooting an arrow or by hurling a weapon’. It is certain that the meaning of ‘shot the first man with his spear’ results in the same truth condition as ‘killed the first man with his spear’. However, it does not mean *of-sceotan* should be defined as ‘to kill by shooting’. While the event described refers to someone who was ‘killed by shooting’, it does not mean the word denotes ‘killed’. The differences are between the semantic equivalence of ‘kill’ versus ‘specific method of killing’ and ‘kill’ versus ‘method that may cause death’. For example:

- a. Allison *killed* Iain.

Allison (caused Iain (to be (dead))).

- b. Allison *stabbed* Iain to death.

Allison (caused Iain (to be (dead)) by means of (a piercing object)).

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<sup>44</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, *pĕto*, pp. 1364–65.

c. Allison *stabbed* Iain with a pen.

Allison (cause Iain (to be (*pierced*)) by means of (a writing implement)).<sup>45</sup>

Examples B and C show that *stabbed* is not entailed for DIE, though it may connote KILL.

This may be a distinction of troponymy and not synonymy. A troponym is a verb that indicates a specific form of doing something by replacing a more generalised verb.<sup>46</sup> This occurs in a unilateral direction and is ordered according to several entailment factors. For example, {communicate} – {talk} – {whisper}.<sup>47</sup> However, to be considered a troponym, V<sub>2</sub> has to entail V<sub>1</sub>. *Shoot* does not entail *kill*.<sup>48</sup> Neither, does *of-sceotan*. Unlike their definition of *of-hnitan*, Bosworth and Toller recognised that *of-sceotan* did not always result in death as they defined it as ‘to wound or kill’. This qualifier was not given for *of-hnitan*, but it is given for the rest of the verbs with ‘*of-*’ prefixes suggested to mean ‘kill’. As you cannot *wound* someone by *kill*ing them, it is clear that the other verbs are not synonymous with KILL either.

Unlike the other verbs, both *of-stician* and *of-stingan* are used to refer to self-killings. *Of-stician* refers to two clear self-stabbings which result in death: Herod’s self-killing and Antonius’ self-killing. *Of-stician* glosses the Latin *configere* in the Kentish Glosses for the MS. Cotton Vespasian D 6.<sup>49</sup> *Configet* is the third person singular indicative form of *configere*, which means ‘to pierce’, and does not necessarily equate to ‘kill’.<sup>50</sup> *Of-stician* also translates the Lat. *jugulare*

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<sup>45</sup> For the sake of the example, I do not go deeper into the analysis of ‘stab’. This example could be lexicalized with the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) as: *someone X (Allison) stabbed someone Y (Iain). Y felt something Z, bad. Z was not very bad.* Whereas the previous examples were *very bad*, as they result in *death*.

<sup>46</sup> See Fildalgo, *The Semantic Map of Verbal Troponymy*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Lynne Murphy, *Lexical Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 32–40.

<sup>49</sup> DOEWC search for ‘*of-stician*’. (The search was run for *ofstic-* to catch all possible endings.)

<sup>50</sup> Lewis and Short, ‘con-figo’, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 414.

‘slit the throat of’ which is a troponym of ‘kill’.<sup>51</sup> As a troponym of kill, *jugulare* is unilaterally entailed for DIE:

{cause to die} – {kill} – {*jugulo*, ‘I slit the throat of’}

Though *of-stician* translates a KILL troponym, it does not seem to be one itself. It is likely in the process of narrowing from ‘pierce’ to ‘kill by piercing’, though this shift is not finished by c. 900. This is because *of-stician* does not entail DIE in every instance, and the evidence of its occurrences are too minimal to speculate on proportions of frequencies. Therefore, it would be incorrect to refer to *of-stician* as a synonym of KILL, though it can be used as a ‘method of killing’. In this way, *of-stician* still denotes ‘piercing or striking through’ even with the addition of ‘of’. *Of-stician*, like the other ‘of-’ verbs, is therefore only related to KILL by overlap congruence.

The same can be said for the nine instances of *of-stingan* ‘to wound or kill by a thrust, to stab, pierce’.<sup>52</sup> Out of these nine instances, only four translate a Latin source text, and none of them gloss the same word. *Of-stingan* is used to translate the Latin *occisus* (past participle) ‘felled, cut to the ground’, *transverbero*, *-are* ‘strike through, pierce’, *transforo*, *-are* ‘bore through, pierce through’, and *confodio*, *-ere* ‘strike down by stabbing’.<sup>53</sup> It is clear by looking at the Latin, that *of-stingan* is not merely a word for ‘kill’, but a near synonym of CUT/PIERCE. This could imply KILL, but it does not necessarily entail DIE, which is clear by Bosworth and Toller’s addition of ‘to wound’ at the forefront of their definition.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Lewis and Short, ‘jugulo’, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 1016. It also translates *transverbero* ‘to strike or beat through, pierce’ Ibid., p. 1893.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Of-stingan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/24371>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>53</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary: confodio*, p. 416; *occisus*, p. 1251; *transforo*, p. 1890; *transverbero*, p. 1893.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Of-stingan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

Clearly, *of-* does not shift the meaning of verbs to ‘kill’. The same can clearly be said for the meaning of *of-feol*. Though the semantic shift cannot be ascribed to the prefix, it is still possible that *of-feallan* can mean ‘destroy/kill’ as the OED suggests, though this would not be its denotation.

### Meaning Extension Through Metaphor

The ultimate issue in defining *of-feallan* as ‘to fell’ and/or ‘to kill’ is that doing so erases important cultural information embedded in the term. Robinson calls this ‘denotational richness’, and while it is an unavoidable pitfall of any translation effort, this study of the rhetoric of self-killing in OE relies on keeping as many connotations and embedded cultural or social implications intact as possible.<sup>55</sup> If a scribe wrote that King Sigferþ *hine of-feoll* in the Chronicle, then it is of the utmost importance to this study to decipher what *of-feoll* tells us about self-killing in OE that ‘committed suicide’ in PDE does not. Any use of *of-feallan* could be denotatively rich and may simultaneously refer literally to FALLING and extend metaphorically into the domains of DEATH, BAD CONDITION, DESTRUCTION, CAUSATION, CHANCE, CHANGE AND PERMANENCE, MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION, FAILURE, MORAL EVIL, and LICENTIOUSNESS.<sup>56</sup> This means that the King Sigferþ example is likely using *of-feoll* as an idiom or metaphor for DIE/KILL. While there are no examples of *of-feoll* specifically being used this way, there is clear and compelling evidence that *of-feallan* can be used interchangeably with *feallan* and can mean ATTACK/KILL through metaphor extension.

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<sup>55</sup> Robinson, Fred, C., ‘Lexicography and Literary Criticism: A Caveat’, pp. 108–10.

<sup>56</sup> This is based on the connections the MME gives for fall in a ‘Category Search for ‘Fall’’ *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus*.

### *Psychomachia*

The clearest and most compelling example of *of-feallan* meeting the same truth conditions as *feallan*, as well as the same meaning through metaphor extension, comes in the OE glosses to Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. The *Psychomachia* is an allegorical tale written by Prudentius in the early fifth century.<sup>57</sup> It is illustrated in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 23 (PrudT 1 C26.1), British Library Cotton MS Cleopatra C VIII (PrudT 2 C26.2), and British Library Add MS 24199.<sup>58</sup> The *Psychomachia* details the battle between the vices and the virtues and is influenced by Virgil. In it, the personified Pride arrives on a horse to battle the virtues Hope and Humility (see figure 6): Pride brandishes a raised whip from the high seat of her horse, with the intent to attack the personified virtues.



Figure 5: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 23, f. 14<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> M., Holcomb, *Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), p. 69: MS 23, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

<sup>58</sup> 'Prudentius' *Psychomachia*' *The British Library Online* (2019), <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/prudentius-psychomachia>>.

<sup>59</sup> Accessed at 'Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 023: Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Prudentius. Orosius' *Parker Library on the Web* (2019), <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/nz663nv2057>>.

This Corpus Christi MS 23 image is captioned in OE: ‘Her seo modinys wyle offeallan ða eadmodnysse and ðone hiht’.<sup>60</sup> Here, *of-feallan* could literally denote CAUSE TO FALL (suggesting the translation ‘Here the Pride wishes to fell [i.e., cause to fall] that humility and that hope’). Alternatively, if translators render *of-feallan* here as PDE ‘fall upon’, the verb can become an idiom denoting ATTACK: ‘Here the Pride wishes to fall [upon] [i.e., attack] that humility and that hope’. This is how Michael Swanton translated King Sigferþ’s self-killing.<sup>61</sup> In the other captioned OE image, in British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra C VIII, f. 15<sup>v</sup>, Pride is not holding a whip, nor is her attack glossed by *of-feallan*:

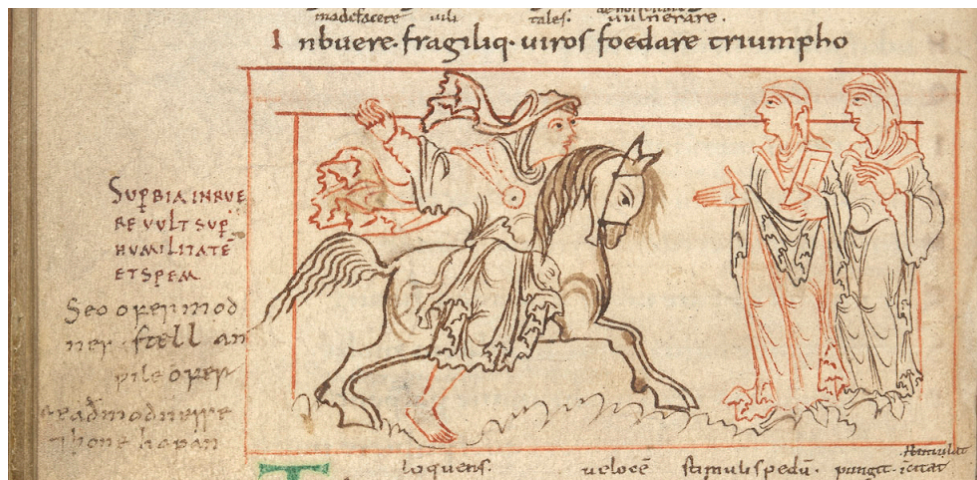


Figure 6: © British Library Board, British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra C VIII, f. 15<sup>v</sup>

Here, the OE reads: ‘Seo ofermodnes fællan wile ofer [þ]a eadmodnesse and þone hopan’ (The pride wishes to fall upon that humility and that hope). Here, then, *feallan* is used in conjunction with the preposition *ofer*, in a usage defined by the *Dictionary of Old English* as ‘figurative, of abstractions (temptation, evil, hardship, etc.): *feallan on / ofer* ‘to fall upon / come over / assail (someone *dat. / acc.*)’.<sup>62</sup> This demonstrates the interchangeability of *of-feallan* and *feallan ofer*,

<sup>60</sup> Mary Swan, and Owen Roberson, ‘Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 23 English Glosses and Titles Added to Latin Texts’, in *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220* (web: 2010), item f. 14<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 114.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Feallan’, *Dictionary of Old English Online*.

and offers a clear attestation of *of-feallan* in Bosworth and Toller's sense 'to fall upon' rather than their supposed 'kill by falling, destroy'.<sup>63</sup> Still, the possibility that *of-feallan* in 'her seo modinys wyle offeallan ða eadmodnysse and ðone hiht' in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 23, f.14<sup>r</sup> could still have the double meaning of 'cause to fall' is worth entertaining: in her attack, Pride may literally be causing her opponents to fall, but she is certainly causing them metaphorically to fall, into sin. 'Here, Pride wishes to cause Humility and Hope to fall' makes good sense. Translated as *wishes to cause [ \_\_ ] to fall*, Pride's action may extend into the target domain of IMMORALITY. As the poem is allegorical, it is likely that *of-feallan* is a double entendre because it connotes the metaphorical FALL FROM HEAVEN/FALL INTO SIN as well as denoting an ATTACK. Moreover, the double entendre made by using *of-feallan* here becomes ironic when Pride herself is literally caused to fall later in the poem. Both manuscripts illustrate the literal fall of Pride from her horse:



Figure 7: © British Library Board, British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra C VIII, f. 15<sup>v</sup>

<sup>63</sup> This is not the only instance where *of-feallan* and *feallan* have been used interchangeably. The *Lives of St. Martin of Tours* use variations of *feallan* and *of-feallan* in their four different versions. See Andre Mertens, *The Old English Lives of St Martin of Tours: Edition and Study* (Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 2017), pp. 236, 298.



Figure 8: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 23, f.14<sup>v</sup>

Corpus Christi College MS 23 (figure 9) reads *her seo modinys feald on done seað* (here Pride falls into the pit), and British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra C VIII, f. 15<sup>v</sup> (figure 8) offers a similar text.<sup>64</sup> The same image of Pride falling from her horse appears in the other two illustrated OE versions of the *Psychomachia*, though neither of them use *of-feallan* for Pride attacking Humility and Hope. When Pride FALLS off her horse and to her death, *feallan* is used literally for FALL insofar as Pride falls into a hole dug by Deceit (MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION: DOWN), but it is perhaps also being used abstractly for DEATH (MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → DEATH). This can be attributed to OE's 'denotational richness'.<sup>65</sup> It is ironic that Pride 'falls' because Pride is famously known for causing the biblical

<sup>64</sup> 'Her seo ofermodnes feol þ<æt> heo on þone fulan seað lag.'

<sup>65</sup> Robinson, 'Lexicography and Literary Criticism: A Caveat', pp. 108–10.



Fall.<sup>66</sup> In Heli Tissari's corpus-based study of conceptual metaphors surrounding pride in English, it is clear that older metaphors surrounding pride are firmly based on stories of the Fall which extends deeper and deeper into layers of discourses of pride in more recent periods.<sup>67</sup> Thus *feallan* is here a play on words (paronomasia) for 'to fall' and 'the Fall': MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → IMMORALITY; DESTRUCTION. Thus, it is possible that when Pride 'attacks' Humility and Hope, *of-feallan* is used idiomatically for 'attack' but might also be read as paronomasia reflecting the meaning of its root verb, implying 'cause to fall'. This hints that *of-feoll* in the Sigferþ episode might carry the same denotational richness as *feallan*.

### ***Feallan's* Meaning Extension Through Metaphor**

According to the MMOE, the simplex *feallan* is used for the conceptual metaphors: SIN IS DOWNWARD MOTION, DEATH IS A JOURNEY, and DEATH IS A DOWNWARD JOURNEY (for sinners). This is because *feallan* is used to talk metaphorically about SIN, DEATH, and HELL. An analysis of *feallan's* meaning extension by metaphor suggest that *kill* is not an acceptable translation for *offeallan* in the King Sigferþ example any more than it is in the *Psychomachia* gloss.

Both the MME and MMOE illustrate the connection between the target domain of KILLING and the source domain of MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION. Simply put, this means that words for *fall* or other terms denoting motion towards something (*send forth, cast, push, pull, etc...*) are shown to refer to KILLING though they do not denote KILL. For example, 'Sarah killed Nick' could be euphemistically relayed as 'Sarah sent Nick to hell'.

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<sup>66</sup> For some background about 'The Fall' in early medieval literature and art, see Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 63–90.

<sup>67</sup> Heli Tissari, 'Justified Pride? Metaphors of the Word *Pride* in English Language Corpora 1418–1991', *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 5 (2006), 15–49 (p. 46).

There, *sent*, a word denoting MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION is mapped onto the target domain of KILL. While both the MME and MMOE consider this link to be strong, the rest of this inquiry will focus on the MMOE.

In this case, the connection in the MMOE between KILLING and MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION is strong, and sustained by seven listed terms. Therefore, we know that OE authors are using verbs for MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION to talk about KILLING. These metaphors are articulated by the OE terms: *of-fall* < *offeallan*, *onsendan* ‘to send off, despatch’, *alecgan* ‘to lay down, suppress, lay aside’, *afeallan* ‘to fall down, tumble down’, *fell* < *(ge)fyllan* ‘to fell, cut down’, *(ge)feallan* ‘to fall’.<sup>68</sup> However, while *fyllan* is only mapped onto KILL, *-feallan* is mapped onto other domains. This is why untangling its meaning based on lexicographical fact separate from literary interpretation is so important. If we just assumed that *of-feoll* came from *fyllan*, we would miss other important connotations *feallan* has that *fyllan* does not.

*Feallan* is used both for DEATH/DIE and KILLING. DEATH, like KILLING, has strong connections to MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION.<sup>69</sup> However, unlike KILLING, the terms which sustain this connection are different: *utsip* ‘a going out’, *hweorfan* ‘to turn, change, move, wander’, *hryre* ‘a fall, decline, decay’, *gewitan* ‘to depart’, *gefeallan* ‘to fall’, *fare* < *gefaran* ‘to go, travel’, *forþ(ge)leoran* ‘to go, depart, pass away’, *forþfare* < *forþ(ge)-faran* ‘to go, depart’, *forlætan* ‘to let go, forsake’ and *(ge)dreosan* ‘to rush, fall’.<sup>70</sup> Ultimately, this highlights that metaphoric and idiomatic language used to refer to DEATH is different than that

<sup>68</sup> “Visualisation: Connections to / from ‘1N06 Movement in a specific direction’, Category ‘1B30 Killing’ selected, strength: both.” *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2019).

<sup>69</sup> “Visualisation: Connections to / from ‘1N06 Movement in a specific direction’, Category ‘126 Death’ selected, strength: both.” *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2019).

<sup>70</sup> “Card: Section ‘1B’, Category ‘1B26 Death’ selected with Section ‘1N’ expanded, strength: both.” *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2019).

used to refer to KILLING. Some words can overlap, of course, but those words have the capacity to refer to either domain in a given situation.

Finally, *feallan* is also mapped onto BAD with other terms for MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION. These lexemes are *worian* ‘to wander about’, *wiperweard* ‘of direction, contrary’, *þweores* ‘across as opposed to along’, *hryre* ‘fall, decline’, *aslidan* ‘to slide, slip’, *asigan* ‘to sink, descend’ and *afeallan* ‘to fall down, tumble’. MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION is also used to map onto the target domain of BAD CONDITION with the lexemes *hryre*, *feallende* and *(ge)feallan*.<sup>71</sup> These metaphorical usages are very similar to the way ‘to fall’ is used in PDE, which is highlighted by usages in the MME. A few examples in PDE would be:

A. He fell to cancer.

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → DEATH

B. She fell out of that line of work.

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → CESSATION

C. His business fell to ruin.

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → BAD CONDITION

Moreover, these metaphor maps outline connotations *-feallan* and ‘to fall’ have in OE and PDE respectively.

The other instances of *of-feallan* show similar meaning extensions by metaphor. Each example lists the quotation first, and then possible metaphoric connections are listed underneath, with the source domain listed on the left and target domain on the right:

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<sup>71</sup> ‘Movement in a specified direction → Bad condition; Metaphor card 690’ in *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus: Metaphor Map of Old English*.

1. *Æfter his fielle wearð þara casera mægð offeallen*<sup>72</sup>

(After his [Caesar's] fall the family of those emperors happened to fall)

RELATIVE POSITION → DEATH

RELATIVE POSITION → DESTRUCTION

2. *naht na framað wambe fram mettum acwellan & þa sawle offeallan mid þolungum*<sup>73</sup>

(One does not benefit at all to kill the belly by foods and then to fall the soul with passions)<sup>74</sup>

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → IMMORALITY

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → DEATH

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → DESTRUCTION

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → KILLING

3. *he on ðam felda ofslog XXV dracena on dægred, and hine ða deað offeoll*<sup>75</sup>

(Upon that field he slew 25 dragons at daybreak and then death fell [upon] him)<sup>76</sup>

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → DEATH

MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIED DIRECTION → KILLING

The second example highlights the broad range of possibilities *of-feallan* can connote.

Ultimately, this shows that *of-feallan* is not synonymous with KILL, though it may contextually refer to KILLING. However, it can be deployed to metaphorically and euphemistically refer to

<sup>72</sup> See the *Old English History of the World*, Book 6, Chapter 5, translation from *History of the World*, Godden, p. 365.

<sup>73</sup> *Defensor's Liber Scintillarum, with an Interlinear Anglo-Saxon Version Made Early in the Eleventh Century*, ed. by E. W. Rhodes (London: Trübner, 1889), p. 55. (LibSc C15).

<sup>74</sup> This is a literal and not literary translation which may seem very strange. However, because of the aims of this thesis, it seemed poor form to make literary choices here in my translation.

<sup>75</sup> 'Solomon and Saturn', in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by E.V.K. Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), pp. 31–48 (MSol A13).

<sup>76</sup> Likely not the same dragons, but more of them.

‘kill’ or even ‘die’. Finally, *of-feallan* can connote IMMORALITY through metaphorical extension, which differentiates it from its historically transitive counterpart, *fyllan* ‘to fell’.

Though it is now clear what *of-feallan* can mean, it is still unclear how to translate it into PDE. While *of-feallan* can certainly be used transitively, writing this as PDE past third singular ‘fell’ muddies its connotations and etymology because of PDE ‘to fell’. Adding an acc. preposition such as ‘upon’ may be the best-case scenario and doing so would keep the associative connotations and metaphoric extensions intact.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusions

This lengthy exposition of the possible meanings of *offeallan* illustrates the complex and at times ambiguous allusions and connotations which can be concealed by a lexicographer’s lapse into literary interpretation. It is helpful to have begun our case studies with such an exposition, as it indicates the need for interdisciplinary linguistic and literary analysis in conjunction with a semantic study. So far, this chapter has shown that the idiomatic ‘fell upon himself’ may be the best way to translate what happened to King Sigferð, as the idiom can imply causation and transitivity as well as keeping connotations of ‘fall’:

King Sigferð *fell upon* himself.

(Caused himself (to fall down))

(Caused himself (to become (dead)))

The idiom may also insinuate an *attack*, which is not entailed for DIE, though the following line in the annal would have us infer that his attack on himself was what caused him to die. This is because *attack* is related to KILL via overlap congruence.

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<sup>77</sup> This is what the best translation of this passage does: Michael Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 114.

Ultimately, defining *of-feallan* as ‘to fall’ allows for the possibilities of metaphorical extension into the domains of IMMORALITY, DESTRUCTION, ATTACK, and KILL to be read into King Sigferð’s death. These connotations would not be derived from KILL or FELL and may be significant for perceiving cultural and social attitudes to self-killing in OE language and culture. Now that we have pinned down the connotations and meaning of *offeallan*, it is possible to gauge perceptions of self-killing by its use.

### **Falling and Volition**

The arguments above suggest that *Sigferð cyning hine offeoll* could mean ‘King Sigferþ attacked himself’ or ‘King Sigferþ caused himself to fall’: it could refer to a literal, wilful fall that caused King Sigferþ to die; it could be a euphemism for his self-killing via another method of death; and/or it could suggest euphemistically that Sigferþ ‘fell’ into the afterlife. While the deed was done by King Sigferþ to himself, it is not clear whether there was any intent to die. The important note to make is that whether King Sigferþ killed himself or not, the scribe made the occurrence unclear – perhaps for a reason.

For a moment, let us depart from mid-tenth-century England and discuss a similarly ambiguous case around 1205, recorded in Pope Gregory IX’s *Decretals*. A young woman in a village near Tours found herself on a bridge. She had been trying for some time to escape the advances of a persistent nobleman, and late one evening found herself alone, on a bridge, with none other than his henchmen. While trying to escape, the young woman fell (*cadere*) off the bridge and to her death in the river below.<sup>78</sup> Afterwards, the priest in charge of the local chapel refused to bury her. The *Decretals* do not say why he refused, nor do they give any evidence for

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<sup>78</sup> Pope Gregory IX, *Decretales* (Mainz: Peter Schoeffer, 1473) <<https://www.loc.gov/item/49040113/>> [accessed 16 August 2021].

his judgment. Murray suggests that the priest's decision must have reflected community opinion, though there seemed to be no evidence supporting the fact that the girl had willingly jumped to her death.<sup>79</sup> If the girl had not had a persistent family, that would have been the end of it.

However, the family, after complaining to the local powers in vain, went to the archbishop of Tours, who was reluctant to interfere. Murray assumes that the archbishop felt pulled in two directions: to side with the parish priest who left the girl's corpse outside the bounds of the churchyard, and to side with the family.<sup>80</sup> Eventually, the archbishop was compelled to take the case to his superior, Lothar of Segni, Pope Innocent III. The pope's response was simple: the falling (*cadens*), was not deliberate (*non sponte sua*).<sup>81</sup> Despite what must have been community opinion, no one could prove that the girl had willingly killed herself.

A similar case transpires much closer in time and geographical location to King Sigferð in Byrhtferth of Ramsey's Latin *Vita S. Oswaldi*. Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita S. Oswaldi* was written sometime in between c. 997 and 1002 in early medieval England.<sup>82</sup> In it, it is stated that a monk fell from the walls of his church and died from the fall.<sup>83</sup> While the instance does not say that the monk fell voluntarily (*sponte* or *voluntaria*), it does say that following the fall/death, the monk was led to punishment (*ad poenam perductus*).<sup>84</sup> Oswald asks that some of the monks at Ramsey pray for the dead monk, resulting in the spirit of the monk appearing to Oswald and thanking him for saving him from perdition. It is not clear whether the monk fell on purpose, as dying suddenly would also result in not having had confession or last rites. The episode seems

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<sup>79</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. 443.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 444.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 306.

<sup>83</sup> Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, 2, ed. by Michael Lapidge, *The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgbwine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 148.

<sup>84</sup>For an explanation of Latin constructions of self-deaths, see Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 307.

suspect enough to Foxhall Forbes, who includes it in her overview of suspected self-killings. Whether this was the case or not, it seems likely that sudden deaths with no witnesses led to categorical confusion. After all, if someone falls from a great height with no one around, was it a FALL or JUMP?

This categorical confusion is essential to understanding the meaning behind King Sigferþ's death. Can you posthumously say that someone *killed themselves* if there were no witnesses? Did the young woman in Tours *kill herself* or unwillingly *fall to her death*? Based on the record of differing opinion between the local parish and the pope, there was a clear split in opinion regarding the death of the young woman in Tours. As King Sigferþ's death is written euphemistically, I think it likely that the same sort of split opinion applicable to the young woman in Tours in c. 1205 is happening here.

Many factors affected self-killing rulings, including the unwillingness to associate a family or community with the shame of a self-killing.<sup>85</sup> It is possible that the euphemistic, but negatively connoted, *of-feoll* tells us more about perceptions of King Sigferþ's death than one would first assume. His status is given to us: he is a *cyning*. It is possible that he is a Danish prince, as the name is common among Danish princes of Northumbria. He could also be the same Sigferþ who attested a charter for King Eadred in c. 955, making it likely that he is a Welsh sub-king like others who attest the charter.<sup>86</sup> Either way, it is possible that the self-killing of a high-status individual who committed no crimes would have been disturbing or shameful to recount. Whether the self-killing was witnessed or not, the enigmatic way it is written conveys a split opinion like that of the young woman from Tours.

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<sup>85</sup> See McNamara and Feros, 'Unlocking the Silences of the Self Murdered', pp. 67, 76.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 114.



Though the verb which recounts his death may highlight split opinion, King Sigferþ was given a proper burial. This could be because no one witnessed the death or because of King Sigferþ's noble status. It is not impossible that the abbey would bury a person of nobility who killed themselves. King Edwin, Athelstan's brother is whispered to have drowned himself at sea and is part of a divided literature tradition.<sup>87</sup> Like King Sigferþ, Edwin was given a proper burial place, inside the monastery at St. Bertin. Unlike King Sigferþ, Edwin's death is recorded in the *Chronicle E* unambiguously: 'Her adranc Ædwine æðeling on sæ' (here drowned Prince Edwin at sea).<sup>88</sup> *Chronicle E* does not point fingers at Edwin for causing his own drowning. *Adrincan*, the verb used, can be implemented to refer to the act of drinking or the drowning of ships and people.<sup>89</sup> The DOE does not include any instance of the verb being employed to refer to self-killing. The scribe for *Chronicle E* considered Edwin's death at sea to have been an accident – but that is not the end of his story.

*The Historia Regum* written by Simeon of Durham in c. 1129 does point a finger – but not at Edwin. There, Simeon suggests that Athelstan ordered Edwin's death at sea, while William of Malmesbury's account in c. 1125 says that Athelstan ordered Edwin's exile, and then Edwin drowned himself because he could no longer bear his fate.<sup>90</sup> This disparity in the twelfth-century explanations may echo the differing views of Edwin's death in c. 933, but the *Chronicle* does not show a split in opinion. It is possible that it records the bare facts of Edwin's death because it was written when Athelstan was still alive.

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<sup>87</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, p. 49.

<sup>88</sup> Annal for 933 in the E version of *the Chronicle*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud 636. (ChronE (Irvine) B17.9)).

<sup>89</sup> 'Drinca', *Dictionary of Old English Online*.

<sup>90</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, pp. 48–49.

No matter the reason, King Sigferþ's burial at Wimborne Minster does not absolve him of the self-killing. As Murray has argued, an abbey was unlikely to be above the discreet burial of a self-killing's corpse, especially when there were no witnesses attesting that it was a self-killing.<sup>91</sup> Murray and Foxhall Forbes mention a similar case in the *Annals of St Gall* and *Casus Sancti Galli* (Things that have happened at Saint Gall) from c. 976.<sup>92</sup> The incident involves a young monk named Wolo. In the annals, Wolo *cecidit* ('fell', from *cado*, -ere). However, in the *Casus Sancti Galli*, Abbot Notker was told by a demon that he and his brethren would have a 'bad night'. While copying a manuscript, Wolo jumped up and went to the belltower. There, 'ascendens vero cum super altare virginum venisset, impulsu, ut creditur, satane per laquear cecidit collumque confregit' (In his climb he reached a place right above the Altar of the Virgins, and there fell from a beam, pushed as we believe by Satan, and broke his neck).<sup>93</sup> Though the *Casus Sancti Galli* attributes his fall to Satan, Murray and Foxhall Forbes assume that though the texts say he fell, Wolo must have jumped. They ascribe this assumption to the extra precaution the Abbot and monks took for Wolo's salvation. Unlike the young woman of Tours and the Monk in St. Oswald, Wolo was given time to confess and absolve his sins before he died. It is even said that he never committed fornication, but Notker did penances for himself and Wolo for the rest of his life. *Why?*

There seems to be a discrepancy between inherent intent for FALLING (Lat. *cadere* or OE *feallan*) and the act of JUMPING (Lat. *saltare* and *balzare*; OE *hleapan*, *fægnian*, *springan*, and *sprengan*). Falling is inchoative (non-causative). It is typically written intransitively – without an agent – and is not a wilful act:

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 340; Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 307.

<sup>93</sup> Murray, *Violent Against Themselves*, p. 342.

Maddy *fell* from the building.

No one necessarily made Maddy fall. However, we could make ‘fall’ causative here by adding an agent. Depending on how we translate the causative, intent may or may not be added. This is expressed below, where ‘Dana’ is added as an agent/causer with different auxiliary verbs to express the analytic causative:

Dana *let* Maddy *fall* from the building (adding an agent but not intent).

Dana *forced* Maddy *to fall* from the building (adding agent and intent).

*Jumping*, on the other hand, can imply intent on its own:

Edith *jumped* on the trampoline.

Edith (caused Edith (to rise and to fall)).

Jump: CAUSE *x* (*y* TO BE-UP, then *z* TO BE-DOWN).<sup>94</sup>

Hattie *jumped* from the building.

Hattie (caused Hattie (to fall)).

*Jump*: CAUSE *x* (*y*, TO BE-VERY-DOWN).

The second example, using *jump*, implies that Hattie caused herself to fall from the building.

Though the same action may have occurred, translating a self-killing as *jump* instead of *fall* implies volition on the act of the causer/agent. This may be because terms for *jumping*, *springing*, and *leaping* tend to be causative, and therefore include an agent.<sup>95</sup> OE did have words for JUMP, though none are used for self-killing. The closest synonym would be the one instance

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<sup>94</sup> In these explications I am not using the natural semantic metalanguage as I normally would. This is because I do not feel as though *below* and *down* accurately depict *falling* in the same way. One does not go *below* to reach ground level, for instance, while one does typically *fall down* to ground level. For clarity, I am choosing *up* and *down* though they are not semantic primes to explicate these meanings.

<sup>95</sup> See *springan* and *sprengan* in Martin Haiden, *Theta Theory* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005), p. 92.

of ‘flying out’ over a wall. However, like the case of King Sigferþ, this term and episode is less than straightforward.

### **Cato and *fleah***

The self-killing of Marcus Porcius Cato of Utica (c. 95-46), also known as Cato the Younger, is depicted in the anonymous OE *History of the World* as a LEAP over a wall: ‘Æfter þam worde he eode to þære burge weallum and fleah ut ofer, þæt he eall tobærst’ (After that word he went to the walls of the city and flew out over, that he completely burst).<sup>96</sup> Here, *fleah ut ofer* is used to refer to jumping from a great height. Like *feallan*, it is intransitive and inchoative. However, unlike *feallan*, it clearly implies intent. No one would read that Cato ‘went to the walls of the city and flew out over them’ (*eode to þære burge Willum and fleah ut ofer*) as an accident. Cato’s intent was to die – why else would he fly out over a wall?

The anonymous OE *History* completely changes the narrative tradition of Cato the Younger’s self-killing. In the Roman tradition, Cato tears out his own entrails in front of his family and friends. The doctor is famously called to stitch him up, and Cato, intent on dying, rips out his stitches, finally taking his own life.<sup>97</sup> In the original Latin, Paulus Orosius’ version of Cato’s death simply says: ‘Cato sese apud uticam occidit’ (Cato cut himself down at Utica).<sup>98</sup> While it is impossible to say why the anonymous OE writer changed Cato’s famous death to a jump from a high wall, it is clear that the self-killing is not meant to be enigmatic. Given that

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<sup>96</sup> See the *Old English History Against the Pagans*, Book 5, Chapter 12, translation from *Old English History of the World*, Godden, pp. 338–39.

<sup>97</sup> See: Hooff, *From Autothanasia to Suicide*, p. 52; Griffin, ‘Philosophy, Cato, and Roman Suicide: II’, pp. 192–202; Alexei V., Zadorojnyi, ‘Cato’s Suicide in Plutarch’, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 57.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 216–30.

<sup>98</sup> *Pauli Orosii historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, ed. by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Zangemeister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899), Book 7, Chapter 16 <<http://www.attalus.org/latin/orosius6B.html>> [accessed 12 September 2021]; *Old English History of the World*, Godden, p. 339. This version could have been rewritten in OE with ‘fyllan’, but it is not taken up.

Cato was a famous pagan figure, it is possible that the OE writer wanted to provide a more positive depiction of Cato's self-killing than ripping out his own entrails.<sup>99</sup>

In the OE *Orosius* it is said that Cato heard that Julius Caesar, now appointed dictator, was going to come to Africa in pursuit of him. He sent his son out to ask for his protection, and when his son left, 'he eode to þære burge weallum and fleah ut ofer, þæt he eall tobærst' (he went to the city walls and *fleah* out over, so that he completely burst apart).<sup>100</sup> The rhetorical choices of *fleah* and *tobærst* are important to note here as they point to one of the biggest problems with reconstructing perceptions through rhetorical and lexical choices: they can seem contradictory.

Orosius' Latin *History* simply states that Cato '*sese apud Uticam occidit*' (Cato cut himself down at Utica).<sup>101</sup> This matches what happens in Plutarch. Cato's death in Plutarch is drawn out and completely different than the OE *Orosius*' tale. In it, Cato takes a bath, reads Plato's dialogue 'On the Soul', and asks for his sword to be brought to him.<sup>102</sup> His servants will not bring it to him, and after a while he begins to cry, and his son comes in. Cato exclaims that he has been judged a madman and that if he wants to kill himself, then he does not need his sword. Eventually they bring him his sword, and he resumes his bath and his book, happy to have his life in his own hands.<sup>103</sup> His son, friends, and servants think he 'has a mind to live'.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Oliver Pengelley, 'Rome in Ninth-Century Anglo-Saxon England' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 2010), p. 195.

<sup>100</sup> Lauderdale Manuscript British Library, Additional MS 47967, f.73<sup>v</sup>, <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_47967\\_fs001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_47967_fs001r)> [accessed 16 August 2021].

<sup>101</sup> *Pauli Orosii historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, ed. by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Zangemeister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899), Book 7, Chapter 16 <<http://www.attalus.org/latin/orosius6B.html>> [accessed 12 September 2021]; *Old English History of the World*, Godden, p. 339. This version could have been rewritten in OE with 'fyllan', but it is not taken up.

<sup>102</sup> Plutarch, *Parallel Lives, Volume VIII: Sertorius and Eumenes. Phocion and Cato the Younger*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library, 100 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), pp. 400–1.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 402–5.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

Eventually, Cato stabs himself, but does not manage to kill himself. He falls to the floor and the commotion brings people in. They call for a physician who begins to sew up the wound, when Cato wakes up and pushes the physician away before tearing out his organs.<sup>105</sup>

According to Bately, Cato's speech before his self-killing in the OE is likely taken from Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, I. xxiii, 'where it is said that Cato commanded his son to hope for Caesar's clemency but refused it for himself, possibly because he envied Caesar the glory he would win for sparing him'. However, the details of the self-killing act appear to be a result of 'careless reading' from Firmianus Lactantius' *Divine Institutions, Patrologia Latina* vi, col. 48 where Cato's self-killing is linked with Cleombrotus'. Cleombrotus, the Ambraciot, is mentioned after Cato's suicide in Book Three Chapter Eighteen: 'quid Ambraciotes ille, qui cum eundem librum perlegisset, praecipitem se dedit nullam aliam ob causam nisi quod Platoni credidit?'<sup>106</sup> (What of the man from Ambraciotes who, when he read that same book, gave himself up headlong for no other reason than because he trusted Plato?)

Interestingly, here Lactantius uses the phrase *praecipitem se dedit* to describe Cleombrotus' self-killing. *Praecipitem* likely comes from the noun *praeceps* used as an adjective, describing Cato and implying his method of death; *dedit* is from the verb *dedere* (to give up/surrender).<sup>107</sup> This noun is made up of *prae-* (before) and *-ceps* (headed).<sup>108</sup> Clearly no

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 406. This same story is echoed in Appian, *The Civil Wars* in Appian, *Roman History, Volume IV, Civil Wars, Books 1-2*, ed. by Brian McGing, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), p. 430; as well as in Dio Cassius, *Roman History, Books 41-45*, trans. by Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library, 66 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), p. 228.

<sup>106</sup> L. Caelius Firmianus, *Lactantius, Divinarum Institutionum libri septem*, ed. by Cael Eberhard Heck and Antonie Wlosok. Fasc. 2. Libri III et IV (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), p. 270.

<sup>107</sup> 'de-do: Latin Word Study Tool', *Perseus Digital Library*, ed. by Gregory R. Crane (Tufts University) <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=dedit&la=la#lexicon>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

<sup>108</sup> 'Praecepta, Peaecepta 2, Praecipito: Latin Word Study Tool', *Perseus Digital Library* <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=Pracipitem&la=la>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

verb for ‘leap’ is used to describe the way in which Cleombrotus’ kills himself – so what made the OE Compiler choose this turn of phrase?

Of course, Lactantius (c. 250–350) and Augustine (c. 354–430) were writing several hundred years before the OE *History of the World* was composed. It is possible that other works and turns of phrases affected this word choice other than the original Latin texts it was adapted from. Overshooting my period of study by a hundred years or so, in William of Malmesbury’s *De Gesta Regum Anglorum*, written sometime between the years c. 1114 and 1123, William describes the tale of a monk who wanted to *fly*:

Henricus rex Francorum, miles strenuus et bonus, potionis haustu interiit. Non multo post, cometes stella, ut ferunt, mutationes regnorum praetendens, longos et flammeos crines per inane ducens, apparuit: unde pulchre quidam nostri monasterii monachus, Eilmerus nomine, viso coruscantis astri terrore conquiniscens, ‘Venisti,’ inquit, ‘venisti, multis mastribus lugende; dudum est quod te vidi, sed nunc multo terribiliorem te intueor, patriae hujus excidium vibrantem.’ Is erat literis, quantum ad id temporis, bene imbutus, aevo maturus, immanem audaciam prima juventute conatus: nam pennas manibus et pedibus haud scio qua innexuerat arte, ut Daedali more volaret, fabulam pro vero amplexus, collectaque e summo turreis aera, spatio stadii et plus volavit; sed venti et turbinis violentia, simul et temerarii facti conscientia, tremulus cecedit, perpetuo post haec debilis, et crura effractus. Ipse ferebat causam ruinae quod caudam in posteriori parte oblitus fuerit.<sup>109</sup>

(A comet, a star foretelling, they say, change in kingdoms, appeared trailing its long and fiery tail across the sky. Wherefore a certain monk of our monastery, Eilmer by name,

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<sup>109</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. by Thomas Duffus Hardy (London: Samuel Bentley, 1839), I 380.

bowed with terror at the sight of the brilliant star, sagely cried art come! A cause of grief to many a mother art thou come; have seen thee before; but now I behold thee much more terrible, threatening to hurl destruction on this land.’ He was a man learned for those times, of ripe old age, and in his early youth had hazarded a deed of remarkable boldness. He had by some means, I scarcely know what, fastened wings to his hands and feet so that, mistaking fable for truth, he might fly like Daedalus, and, collecting the breeze on the summit of a tower, he flew for more than the distance of a furlong. But, agitated by the violence of the wind and the swirling of air, as well as by awareness of his rashness, he fell, broke his legs, and was lame ever after. He himself used to say that the cause of his failure was his forgetting to put a tail on the back part.)<sup>110</sup>

While the whole story is certainly bemusing, it should be noted that the Latin from this tale uses *volo, -are* for ‘to fly’ and *cado, -ere* ‘to fall’. Unlike the self-killers, there is no rhetorical reason to obscure or clarify the voluntary aspect of the movement: here, Eilmer wants to *fly*. Even though this is a clear example of someone voluntarily jumping off a building, the terms used here are not words for LEAP or JUMP, mainly because the motion which Eilmer is going for is not merely to go briefly higher up than the tower, but to go beyond it, into the sky.<sup>111</sup>

This makes the use of *fleah* in the OE *History of the World* even more intriguing. Cato is not trying to copy Daedalus, but there is a possibility that *fleah* could be being used metaphorically as a euphemism describing Cato’s exit from this world, or it could be part of *fleah*’s normal semantic denotation. There is an assumption translators make of *fleah* from *fleon* here, which is to assume that *fleah* here means *flew*, which translators like Godden choose to

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<sup>110</sup> Lynn White, ‘Eilmer of Malmesbury, An Eleventh Century Aviator: A Case Study of Technological Innovation, its Context and Tradition’, *Technology and Culture*, 2.2 (1961), 97–111 (p. 98).

<sup>111</sup> Another instance of a Monk ‘falling’ from a tower will be analysed in the section on falling as a method of self-killing. However, there, the word is again *cado, -ere* for ‘fall’.



amend as ‘jumped’ to give Cato more agency in his self-killing.<sup>112</sup> As the DOE explains, ‘it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between fleogan and fleon [q.v.]: the forms of the preterite are the same and some senses overlap’.<sup>113</sup> If *fleah* comes from *fleogan*, we could postulate that it is being used as part of a euphemism for jumping over the wall.

The MME explains that 1N04: RATE OF MOVEMENT AND SWIFT MOVEMENT is mapped onto 1E09: BIRDS with a strong connection.<sup>114</sup> This likely compares the speed at which Cato hurried off the wall, likening it to the *flight of birds*. This metaphor is what we would now call a lexicalised metaphor. The MME explains that this bilateral connection between these categories has been strong since the period of OE – which is to say, that this type of metaphor is conventionalised and therefore conceptual.<sup>115</sup>

Deignan explains that the process behind moving from the linguistic to the conceptual is subjective, which many scholars note is the main difficulty with CMT.<sup>116</sup> Deignan outlines Steen’s five-step method for analytically explicating the assumptions linguists use to arrive at conceptual mappings of metaphorical expressions. Using Steen’s method, we can see that

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<sup>112</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 339.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Fleogan’, *DOE Online*.

<sup>114</sup> It should be noted that at the time of this research, the MME and the MMOE search functions (even in advanced search mode) do not pick up any or all instances of *fleon* or *fleogan* in the system, even though they can be found manually. This means that this search is unable to find any evidence metaphors that may exist with these terms but are unknown to the author. The author searched for spelling variants, as well as ‘flight’, ‘flee’, ‘fly’, and ‘fle’ in the MME and MMOE.

<sup>115</sup> The MMOE suggests that this was a weak connection in the OE period but is strong in the MME: “Card: Section ‘1N’, Category ‘1N04 Rate of movement and swift movement’ selected with Section ‘1E’ expanded, strength: both.” *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2021), <[http://mappingmetaphor.arts.gla.ac.uk/map-oldenglish/drilldown/?letter=1N&changeBoxSelected=1N04\\_Rate\\_of\\_movement\\_and\\_swift\\_movement&expand=1E&viewChange=y&strength=both&changeViewOpt=changeCard](http://mappingmetaphor.arts.gla.ac.uk/map-oldenglish/drilldown/?letter=1N&changeBoxSelected=1N04_Rate_of_movement_and_swift_movement&expand=1E&viewChange=y&strength=both&changeViewOpt=changeCard)> [accessed 1 June 2021]; “Card: Connections to / from ‘1E09’, Category ‘1N04 Rate of movement and swift movement’ selected, strength: strong.” *Mapping Metaphor with the Historical Thesaurus* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2021) <[https://mappingmetaphor.arts.gla.ac.uk/mapenglish/drilldown/?subCat=1E09&changeBoxSelected=1N04\\_Rate\\_of\\_movement\\_and\\_swift\\_movement&viewChange=y&strength=strong&changeViewOpt=changeCard](https://mappingmetaphor.arts.gla.ac.uk/mapenglish/drilldown/?subCat=1E09&changeBoxSelected=1N04_Rate_of_movement_and_swift_movement&viewChange=y&strength=strong&changeViewOpt=changeCard)> [accessed 1 June 2021].

<sup>116</sup> Alice Deignan, ‘From Linguistic to Conceptual Metaphors’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 102. See also: Elise Stickles, Oana David, Ellen K. Dodge, and Jisup Hong, ‘Formalizing Contemporary Conceptual Metaphor Theory: A Structured Repository for Metaphor Analysis’, *Constructions and Frames*, 8.2 (2016), 166–213, <doi:10.1075/cf.8.2.03sti> [accessed 1 June 2021].

whether *fleah* here is meant to be FLEE or FLY does not actually alter the implied meaning: that Cato killed himself by moving quickly out over the top of the wall. However, the underlying metaphor behind each use would be slightly altered, as would the associative connotations for the word choice, which is the sort of information this thesis is concerned with. For instance, if we were to take *fleah* here as *fleogan*, FLY, here using Steen's updated Five-Step method:

| Steps  | Analysis  |
|--|---|
| Text   | <i>he eode to þære burge weallum and fleah ut ofer</i><br><br>He went to the city wall and <i>flew</i> out over   |
| 1. Identification of metaphor-related words        | <i>fleah</i>  |
| 2. Identification of metaphor-related propositions | P1 (WENT HE WALL)<br>P2 (MOD WALL CITY)<br>P3 (FLEW HE WALL)<br>P4 (MOD WENT QUICK)<br>P5 (MOD WENT OVER)<br><br>Metaphorical-related propositions:<br>P3 (FLEW HE WALL)<br>P4 (MOD WENT QUICK) |
| 3. Identification of open metaphorical comparison  | SIM {F, x, y<br>[F (WENT)]t<br>[FLEW (x, y)]s}  |
| 4. Identification of analogical structure          | SIM<br>[WENT (from BURGE)]t<br>[FLEW (HE, WALL) s}  |
| 5. Identification of cross-domain mapping          | Target < Source Domain<br>RAPID MOVEMENT < FLY<br>Possible inferences<br>FLY ><FLEE <sup>117</sup><br>RATE OF MOVEMENT AND SWIFT<br>MOVEMENT < BIRDS  |

Table 1: Steen's Method with Fly

<sup>117</sup> >< denotes a bilateral connection.

The MME attests this strong bilateral connection from the OE period onward, with examples such as ‘flight’ and ‘fly’:

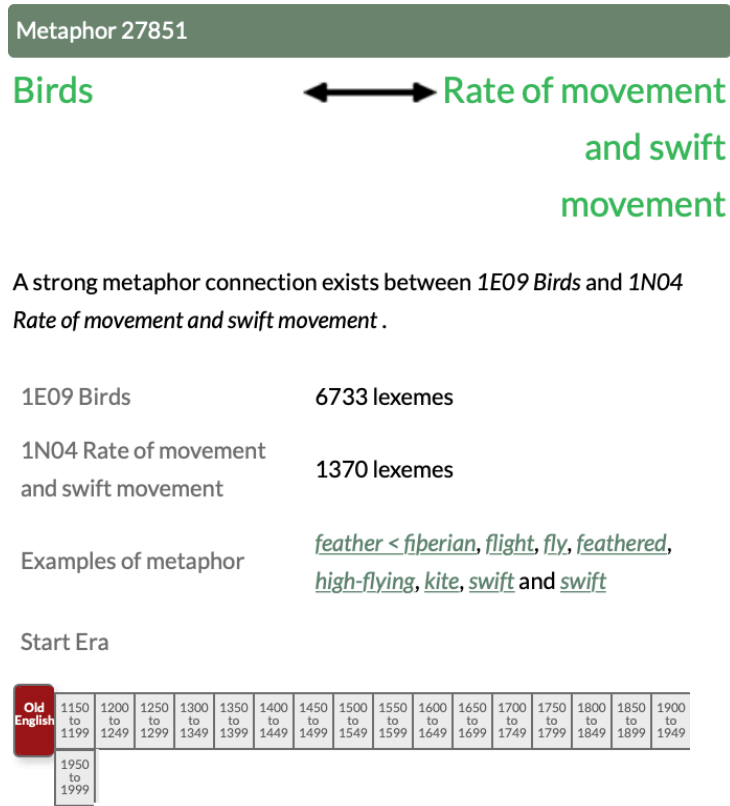


Figure 9: MME Fleogan<sup>118</sup>

*Fleogan* is also used describe the movement of *angels*, and arguably, given its associative connotation with birds and angels, could be seen as a euphemism for Cato’s self-killing act.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, using *fleah* as FLEE gives us a more negative conception of the event:

| Steps | Analysis   |
|-------|--|
| Text  | <i>he eode to þære burge weallum and fleah ut ofer</i> |

<sup>118</sup>“Card: Section ‘1N’, Category ‘1N04 Rate of movement and swift movement’ selected with Section ‘1E’ expanded, strength: both.”

<sup>119</sup> The first several meanings for *Fleogan* given by the DOE specify the flight of birds, then insects, dragons, and other creatures (A.1.a-c). Sense A.1.d. is used for the flight of ‘angels, demons, souls, etc.’, though angels and souls are more frequent. ‘*Fleogan*’, *Dictionary of Old English A-I Online*.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | He went to the city wall and <i>fled</i> out over  |
| 1. Identification of metaphor-related words        | <i>fleah</i>   |
| 2. Identification of metaphor-related propositions | P1 (WENT HE WALL)<br>P2 (MOD WALL CITY)<br>P3 (FLED HE WALL)<br>P4 (MOD FLED QUICK)<br>P4 (MOD FLED OVER)<br>Metaphorical-related propositions:<br>P3 (FLED HE WALL)<br>P4 (MOD FLED QUICK)  |
| 3. Identification of open metaphorical comparison  | SIM {F, x, y<br>[F (WENT)]t<br>[FLED (x, y)] s}  |
| 4. Identification of analogical structure          | SIM<br>[WENT (from BURGE)]t<br>[FLED (HE (FLEER), CITY (FLED FROM))] s}  |
| 5. Identification of cross-domain mapping          | Target < Source Domain<br>MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION<br>< INACTION<br>RATE OF MOVEMENT AND SWIFT<br>MOVEMENT < INACTION<br>Possible inferences<br>FLY >> FLEE<br>MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION<br>< INACTION<br>RATE OF MOVEMENT AND SWIFT<br>MOVEMENT < INACTION |

Table 2: Steen's Method with *Flee*

The MMOE attests a strong connection in the OE period from MOVEMENT IN A SPECIFIC DIRECTION onto INACTION. For example, ‘running’ in PDE can mean ‘to not act’. It also attests a weak connection between the closely related RATE OF MOVEMENT AND SWIFT MOVEMENT onto INACTION, which is upheld by *fleogan* ‘to fly’.<sup>120</sup> Which is to say that swift movement or movement away are mapped onto the idea of not doing something, like staying alive to fight Caesar. By choosing to *flee* the city, the author implies that Cato chose INACTION

<sup>120</sup> OE metaphors 938 and 2118 in the MME.

instead of choosing to stand up and fight his foes. This could be seen as a dysphemism if read in this way.

*Flee* is also used in reference to the metaphor connection: 1N03: Progressive Movement → 1B26 Death, underlying the overall conceptual metaphor: DEATH IS A JOURNEY. As with *gefaran*, *fleon* can metaphorically extend into the domain of DEATH, which is to suggest that someone ‘fled their life’. The MMOE does not give any examples of terms in context, however the OED gives an archaic meaning of flee v as ‘to depart this life’, which is clearly being used to map progressive movement onto death: *Hu sal we liue quen þu will fle?* (How shall we live when you will flee?).<sup>121</sup> Although this example is from c. 1400 in the *Cursor Mundi*, the MMOE has found other examples of *fleon* in this same sense which make up the weak connection between these two domains.

Both the MMOE and MME take their data from the HTE and TOE. In the introduction, this thesis noted that the TOE is dependent on Bosworth-Toller and Hall and has not yet been updated to reflect new information gained from the DOE. Ultimately, this means that the MMOE is dependent wholly on the definitions in the Bosworth-Toller and Hall dictionaries, as with the TOE. It appears the project took up Hall’s definitions for *fleon* and *fleogan*, both being ‘to fly, to flee’ which affects the reading and understanding of some of the attested metaphors.<sup>122</sup> For example:

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<sup>121</sup> “flee, v.” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, June 2021), [accessed 2 June 2021] [www.oed.com/view/Entry/71387](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/71387).

<sup>122</sup> Hall, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 95.

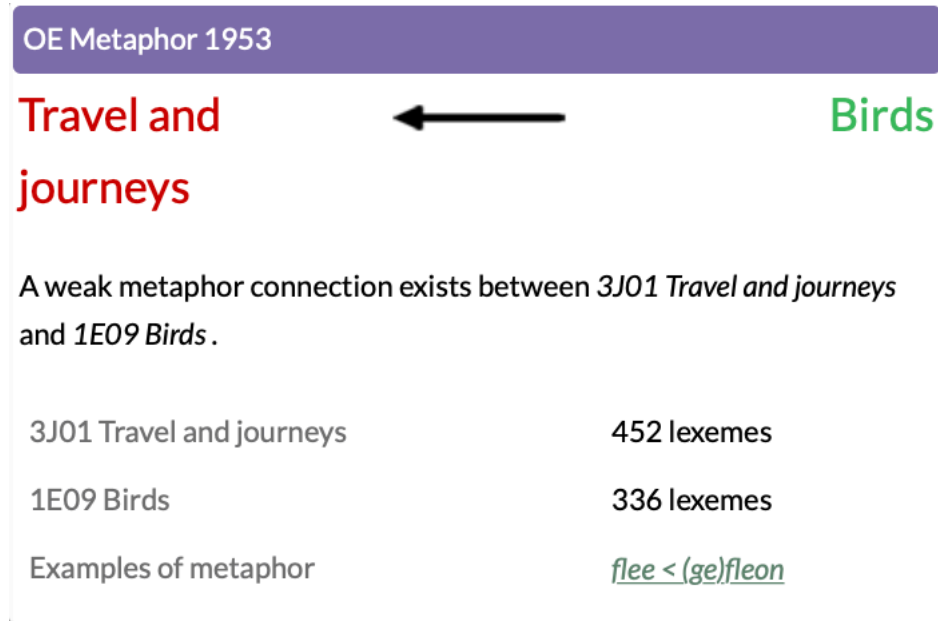


Figure 10: MMOE: *Birds* → *Travel*

In OE Metaphor 1953, *gefleon* (to flee) is given as an example of the metaphor connection between TRAVEL AND JOURNEYS and BIRDS. It is likely that this weak connection comes from the sense of someone being ‘put to flight’ where the senses of the two blur. Although *fleon* and *fleogan* are semantically similar, the associative connotations each has are distinct: Angels fly to heaven, and fugitives flee.<sup>123</sup>

While both *fleon* and *fleogan* can be used in these ways, the DOE clearly shows a preference for each term to be used in these senses.<sup>124</sup> It is entirely possible that *fleah* was chosen here because of its ambiguity, both in its metaphoric sense, literal sense, and denotation. Enigmatic language is a huge part of OE literature, and it is entirely possible that the fun of this line is to play on these different ideas: Cato fled from Julius Caesar and a noble death; he flew like a bird over the wall to his death; flew like an angel into heaven; fled his living body, etc.

<sup>123</sup> See ‘Fleogan’, Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*; ‘Fleon’, Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> ‘Fleogan’, *Dictionary of Old English Online*; ‘Fleon’, *Dictionary of Old English Online*.

Given the wordplay here, it should be noted that it is entirely possible that this enigmatic word choice is a joke. Wilcox explains in the first ever book on humour in early medieval England that ‘humor is often hard to spot and difficult to interpret’.<sup>125</sup> Despite the significant challenge in finding humour in literature from over a thousand years ago, it is clear that wordplay was the most pervasive type of written humour in the period.<sup>126</sup> Hordis and Hardwick purport that ‘scholars often miss the pervasive presence of comedy’ in the English Middle Ages because we expect it to be missing.<sup>127</sup> The few scholars who have looked at humour in the period, have found it at most to be far from self-evident.<sup>128</sup> T.A. Shippey considers humour in early medieval England to be a ‘tradition of wisdom finding grim amusement in folly’, while Wilcox concludes that the humour ‘inclines to grim wordplay of a particularly subtle sort’.<sup>129</sup> This sort of wordplay is exactly what we see here with the many meanings of *fleah*. Shippey explains that the grim wordplay of the period depends ‘on the contrast between an obvious meaning and a deeper one, and demanding awareness of that contrast for full effect’. The obvious meaning would be that of Cato’s physical movement out over the wall – his self-killing choice, while the deeper one would be the added contrast of being put to flight by Caesar, whom Cato did not want to see again, which is then physically played out with a comic idea of him flying literally over the city wall. Although there is certainly no way of putting this issue to rest, it is important to note that the ambiguity here, almost certainly intentional, may be humorous.

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<sup>125</sup> Jonathan Wilcox, ‘Introduction’, in *Humor in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>126</sup> T.A. Shippey, “‘Grim Wordplay’: Folly and Wisdom in Anglo-Saxon Humor”, in *Humor in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), p. 33; Shari Horner, “‘Why Do you Speak so Much Foolishness?’: Gender, Humor, and Discourse in Ælfric’s Lives of Saints”, in *Humor in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), p. 127.

<sup>127</sup> *Medieval English Comedy*, ed. by Paul Hardwick, and Sandra Hordis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>128</sup> Martha Bayless, ‘Humour and the Comic in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Medieval English Comedy*, p. 13.

<sup>129</sup> Shippey, ‘Grim Wordplay’, p. 33.

Bayley explains that ‘jokes and humour poke and prod the parameters of acceptable thought’ by putting the spotlight on certain topics, like fleeing certain death through self-killing, and garnering a response ‘which either reinforces conservative views, or opens the way for subtle shifts in cultural thinking’.<sup>130</sup> Although the text uses *fleah* here, which may liken Cato to a bird, an angel, or a fugitive, his self-killing finishes with what is clearly a negative sentiment: *þæt he eall tobærst* (that he completely burst). This clearly dark note caps the topic, reinforcing conservative views about SELF-KILLING that we may have expected to find. It may even contain its own humour. In Cato’s attempt to avoid a gruesome end, he flies/flees over the city wall, so that he completely burst.<sup>131</sup> *Tobærst* comes from the verb *berstan* ‘to burst, break’, and is modified in meaning very little by the prefix *to-*.<sup>132</sup> The verb *berstan* is used to describe both waves ‘breaking’ on the shore (*wægas burston* in *Exodus*), as well as bones breaking/bursting in *Beowulf* (Beo A4.1): *fingras burston; burston ban-locan*.<sup>133</sup> *To-berstan* keeps this meaning, as well as being chosen more often to describe ‘eruptions’ of sores, as with the death of Herod in Ælfric’s homilies.<sup>134</sup> Yet another compound of *berstan*, *ætberstan*, means ‘to break away, escape, avoid capture’; perhaps *toberstan* is a pun on this. Either way, the passage supplies us with a positive description of self-killing, and then immediately wrecks that by describing the goriness of the body after this end.

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<sup>130</sup> *Medieval English Comedy*, ed. by Paul Hardwick, and Sandra Hordis, p. 9.

<sup>131</sup> Hall defines *toberstan* as ‘to burst, go to pieces, break asunder’, Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 294.

<sup>132</sup> Compare *toberstan* ‘to burst asunder’ or ‘to break out [with]’, with *berstan* ‘to burst, break, fail, fall’:

‘Toberstan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/30597>> [accessed 16 October 2021];

‘Berstan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/3872>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, See *Exodus* 483; Thorpe’s *Beowulf*, lines 1525; 1640.

<sup>134</sup> ‘To-berstan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/30597>> [accessed 21 August 2021]. It is also used in the leechdoms to describe this sort of disease.



## Conclusion

The combination of euphemistic and dysphemistic language in Cato's case is perplexing and could point to the Compiler or his scribes' split opinion on self-killing. This dual approach is like the enigmatic way King Sigferþ's death is described. In both cases, the verbs have an intricate lexicographical history, and their interpretations and resulting translations encode and reinforce our understanding of self-killing perceptions.

By translating King Sigferþ's death as 'committed suicide' we were positioned to assume neutrality on behalf of the chronicler and scribe(s). What we found, however, was that the term was likely chosen because of its ability to simultaneously obscure and reinforce the act of self-killing. Moreover, as with the cases of Wolo, the young woman of Tours, and monk in *The Life of St. Oswald*, the literal act of falling is clear, though the intent to kill is not. This leaves the reader to come to their own conclusions about the deceased's intent, which as we saw, could have been left to the reader to obscure the method of King Sigferþ's death, allowing him a proper burial. King Sigferþ's death, while likely a self-killing, is not recorded in a way that clarifies or emphasises intent. Cato's death, however, is recorded in a way that emphasises intent, and is punctuated by the gory result of such a choice.

Ultimately, this chapter has shown that falling as a method of death can easily obscure the self-killer's agency, and thus put the intent of the act into question. This is not the case when a weapon is mentioned, which may be why it was taken out of Cato's hands in Orosius' *History*.

## Chapter Five: Falling on One's Sword

There are three instances in the corpus where someone intransitively *falls* onto/upon their weapon. Scholars have used this phrase as the PDE idiom in some translations of classical texts. The idiom was not in use in OE, and evidence from the previous chapter emphasises that *feallan* can be synonymous with *attack*. This chapter builds upon the previous and investigates the language and embedded perceptions which occur in these three episodes where a person is said to *feallan uppon* their weapon.

### Who Falls on Their Sword?

The DOE lists two instances of falling upon one's sword in OE under *feallan*: Hyrtacus' self-killing in the *Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem* (ÆCHom II, 37, (B.1.2.40.1.EM)), and the self-killing of Malchus, Margaret's executioner in the *Old English Lives of St. Margaret*.<sup>1</sup> These instances are also cited by the OED.<sup>2</sup> However, in giving examples of someone falling on their weapon, the DOE omits the most famous example of someone falling on their sword in another of Ælfric's homilies: *Saul and the Witch of Endor*.

### Ælfric

This section analyses Ælfric's rhetorical choices by comparing his translations to their Latin exemplars. In doing so, this section argues that Ælfric uses *feallan* as a double-entendre to preach that those self-killers go to hell. Of course, none of Ælfric's self-killers were ever innocent to begin with.

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<sup>1</sup> 'feallan', *DOE Online*. *The Lives of St. Margaret* are in three texts with different short titles: LS 14-16, and B3.3.14-16.

<sup>2</sup> 'fall, v.' *OED Online*.

## Saul

A high percentage of the instances of *falling upon a weapon* in the OED are from English translations of Saul and his armour-bearer's deaths from the biblical tradition.<sup>3</sup> I have found no commentary suggesting that 'falling upon one's weapon' was a common Israelite self-killing practice.<sup>4</sup> Whether it was ever a common practice or not, Saul's death is a popular classical and medieval narrative.<sup>5</sup> There are multiple accounts of Saul's death in OE in addition to translations of the Bible. Ælfric's *The Second Sunday After the Lord's Epiphany* (ÆCHom II, 4 (B1.2.5)) gives a brief synopsis of Saul's hatred of David and eventual self-killing, while the homily *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (ÆHom 30 (B1.4.30)) details Saul's descent into madness and eventual death.

*Saul and the Witch of Endor* is an addition to Ælfric's *De Auguriis* which condemns superstition, witchcraft, and magic.<sup>6</sup> The first three added lines to *De Auguriis* explain that the

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<sup>3</sup> Saul and the Witch in the Bible: 1 Samuel, 28; Saul's deaths: 1 Samuel, 31, and 2 Samuel, 1. 'Fall' V, OED, sense '26.B' The first four instances include three of Saul's death in OE and MidE.

<sup>4</sup> See: Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 271. See also: Andrew Key, 'The Concept of Death in Early Israelite Religion', *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 32.3 (1964), 239–47.

<sup>5</sup> Saul's death even seems to have been replicated in Plutarch's literary rendition of the death of Brutus. Both narratives offer contradictory accounts of their methods of death. In 1 Sam. 31, Saul is said to fall on his weapon, but in 2 Sam. 1, Saul is said to have been assisted by a Amalkite. Brutus' death in Plutarch mirrors Saul's, and these accounts are likely where the supposed tradition of 'falling upon one's sword' comes from. Brutus and Saul both try to get one of their servants to thrust them through with a weapon after being defeated on the battlefield, and both had done some previous moral wrong. Neither are killed by the first person they ask, and both their servants' despair for being asked. After this, both Saul and Brutus are said to fall upon their weapons, and both are afterwards said to have been killed by another person. Whether they fell on their swords or not, it is possible that the connotations the idiom has of shame and failing in battle would be known to an OE reader because of Saul and/or Brutus – not because the method of death was historically a common practice. For the Death of Brutus see *Brutus*. 52.5: Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives: Dion and Brutus Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus*, 6, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (London: Heinemann, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> For more in the Twelve Abuses in OE see: E. A. McIntyre, 'Early-Twelfth-Century Worcester Cathedral Priory, with Special Reference to the Manuscripts Written There' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 1978), pp. 36–37; Elaine M. Treharne, 'The Production and Script of Manuscripts Containing English Religious Texts in the First Half of the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 27; Margaret Laing, 'Multidimensionality: Time, Space and Tratigraphy in Historical Dialectology', in *Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology*, ed. by Marina Dossena and Roger Lass (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 72–73.

texts will be more specific to the magic of witches and the unwise deluded by them.<sup>7</sup> The closing lines, which are wholly Ælfric's creation, condemn those who practice magic to hell.<sup>8</sup> The text exists in two manuscripts with probable Worcester origins: Oxford Bodleian Hatton 116, produced sometime between c. 990 and 1002, and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 178, dated c. 1000–1050.<sup>9</sup>

The story of *Saul and the Witch of Endor* centres on Saul's desire to ask Samuel whether he will be killed in battle with the Philistines. In Ælfric's homily, the witch seeks Saul out and convinces him that Samuel has come back from the dead to tell him that he will soon be joining him in death.<sup>10</sup> In the biblical tradition, it is unclear who speaks to Saul: the devil, the witch, or Samuel.<sup>11</sup> In Ælfric's homily, it is certainly the devil.<sup>12</sup> Clayton summarises that 'pre-eminent among the biblical suicides is that of Judas, the only New Testament case, and in the Old Testament we find Abimelech and Samson in the book of Judges, Achitophel in II Samuel, Zimry in I Kings, Saul in I Chronicles, and Ptolemy Macron and Razias in II Maccabees'.<sup>13</sup> While she argues that there is no explicitly negative comment on these self-killings in the Bible,

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<sup>7</sup> 'We spræcan ær be wiccan, nu wille we eow secgan sum þing swutolicor be heora scincræfte and be þam drymannum þe bedydriað þa unsnoteran' (We spoke before about witches, now we will speak something more clearly of their magic and of those magicians who delude the unwise). Mary Clayton, 'Ælfric's *De Auguriis* and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 178', in *Latin Learning and English Lore (Volumes I & II): Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 379.

<sup>8</sup> 'Deofolgild and drycræft, wiccecræft and wiglunga synd swyðe andsæte urum Hælende Criste, and þa ðe þa cræftas begað syndan Godes wiðersacan, and hy soðlice belimpað to þam swicolan deofle, mid hym æfre to wunigenne on þam ecum witum.' (Devil-worship and magic art, witchcraft and auguries are very repugnant to our Savior Christ and those who practise these arts are the adversaries of God and they truly belong to the treacherous devil, to dwell with him forever in eternal punishments). Clayton, 'Ælfric's *De auguriis* and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 178', p. 379.

<sup>9</sup> Elaine M. Treharne, 'The Production and Script of Manuscripts containing English Religious Texts in the First Half of the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 27; *Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 178: Old English Homilies. Benedictine Rule in Latin and Old English.*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Stanford University, *Parker Library on the Web*.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Hayes, *Divine Ventriloquism in Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 107.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107–8.

<sup>13</sup> Clayton, 'Suicide in the Works of Ælfric', p. 341.

‘the majority are clearly to be read as the appropriate bad ends of characters whose deeds are not condoned’.<sup>14</sup> Clayton attributes Saul’s demise to the act of consulting the Witch of Endor, and in doing so, abandoning God.<sup>15</sup> Ælfric’s concluding lines expressly state that those who practise magic ‘syndan Godes wiðersacan, and hy soðlice belimpað to þam swicolan deofle, mid hym æfre to wunigenne on þam ecum wutum’ (are God’s adversaries and they truly belong to that deceitful devil to forever dwell with him in those eternal punishments).<sup>16</sup> Given that Ælfric concludes his homily in this way, it is clear that he condemns Saul for consulting the Witch, as Clayton argues. Comparing the Latin exemplar and Ælfric’s homily illuminates the reading Ælfric promotes in his version, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*:

Saul þa syððan æfter þære deoflican gesihðe gewende to hys fyrde fram þære wiccan huse, and þa Philiste[i] fuhtan fæstlice þæs on merigen wið Saul þone cyning, and ofslogan hys fyrde and hys þry suna, and he sylf þa feoll uppon his wæpne and gewat swa of life to þam swicolan deofle, swa swa he him ær sæde.<sup>17</sup>

(Saul then after that diabolical vision went to his army from the house of that witch, and the Philistines fought strongly the next morning against the king, Saul, and slew his army and his three sons, and then he [Saul] himself fell upon his weapon and so departed from life to that deceitful devil, as he [the devil] said to him before).

It would seem as though describing Saul’s self-killing with a phrase like *fell upon his sword*, which is now a euphemism for *killed himself*, would be cutting Saul a break. Rhetorically, ‘falling’ is not as forceful, voluntary, or grotesque as ‘kill’ or ‘stab’. I argue above that in the case of King Sigferþ, *feallan* was meant to be enigmatic, possibly to hide the fact that a noble

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>16</sup> The OE here is from Clayton, ‘Ælfric’s *De Auguriis* and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 178’, p. 379.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 354.

self-killer was buried on church grounds. Although *feallan* may be an enigmatic death verb, Ælfric is not enigmatic about Saul's self-killing in *The Second Sunday After the Lord's Epiphany*, where he uses *cwellan* to describe it.<sup>18</sup> As there was not a cultural phenomenon of self-killing using a method of placing a sword against the abdomen and falling forward onto it, we must assume that the verb *feallan* has some rhetorical significance for Ælfric in this instance – but what is it?

One assumption would be that Ælfric is closely translating the Vulgate. Sure enough, Murray suggests that the biblical account makes it crystal clear that Saul 'fell on his sword' – except he quotes the Latin *irruere*.<sup>19</sup> The Vulgate states:

totumque pondus proelii versum est in Saul et consecuti sunt eum viri sagittarii et vulneratus est vehementer a sagittariis dixitque Saul ad armigerum suum evagina gladium tuum et percute me ne forte veniant incircumcisi isti et interficiant me inludentes mihi et noluit armiger eius fuerat enim nimio timore perterritus arripuit itaque Saul gladium et inruit super eum quod cum vidisset armiger eius videlicet quod mortuus esset Saul inruit etiam ipse super gladium suum et mortuus est cum eo mortuus est ergo Saul et tres filii eius et armiger illius et universi viri eius in die illa pariter.<sup>20</sup>

(And the whole weight of the battle turned on Saul: and the archers came after him, and he was vehemently wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armourbearer:

Unsheathe your sword and strike me so that you and not the uncircumcised come and kill

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<sup>18</sup> Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham, *Sermones catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric: in original Anglo-Saxon, with an English version*, trans. by Benjamin Thorpe (London: Printed for the Ælfric Society, 1844-46), p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Murray, *The Curse on Self-Murder*, p. xv. It should be noted that this is the same verb used to refer to the attack of the Philistines on Saul in the Vulgate.

<sup>20</sup> This version uses *inruit* instead of *irruit* but they are the same. Jerome, *Vulgate*, 'Samuel, 1, chapter 31, verses 3-6' (Web: *Bible Foundation and On-Line Book Initiative*, 2019) <<http://ldf.fi/corsproxy/http/www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection=Perseus%3Acorpus%3Aperseus%2Cauthor%2CVulgate>> [accessed 13 September 2021].

and mock me and the armour bearer was unwilling to seize [his sword] for he was very frightened, so Saul took his sword and rushed upon it. As soon as the armour bearer saw this because he saw that Saul was clearly dead, he too rushed his sword upon himself and consequently died with him. Therefore, Saul died and his three sons, and that armour bearer, and all his men on that day together).

While Murray defines *irruere* as ‘fell’, Lewis and Short define *irruere* as ‘to embrace eagerly’ or ‘to rush; or force one’s way into’.<sup>21</sup> It would seem as though Ælfric is not directly translating the Vulgate. The Greek Septagint uses ἐπιπίπτω, or *epipipto*.<sup>22</sup> Liddel and Scott say *epipipto* [a compound of the preposition *epi* ‘on/upon’ and *pipto* ‘I fall’] means either literally or metaphorically *I fall upon*, potentially specifically ‘in a hostile sense, attack, assail’ even in terms of misfortunes.<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew Bible uses נָפַל *nafal*, meaning ‘to fall’.<sup>24</sup> Like *epipipto*, *nafal* also means ‘attacked’ in a biblical setting, as well as being a verb for violent deaths, or figurative RUIN.<sup>25</sup> As in PDE, *feallan* is sometimes contextually synonymous with ATTACK. Here, it is likely that the verbs are all cognitive synonyms; they have equivalent truth conditions and are mutually entailed. The Greek and Hebrew entail MOTION FORWARD and/or DOWNWARD and are equivalent with truth conditions for ATTACK. While FALL and ATTACK have different rhetorical and figurative implications, Ælfric was likely not using *feallan* as a euphemism in *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, because *feallan uppon* is a cognitive synonym with ATTACK. This becomes clearer when we compare the Vulgate with the OE homily.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis and Short, ‘irruo’, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 1003.

<sup>22</sup> Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 651.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 656–58.

<sup>25</sup> This is like the PDE semantic field of FALL.

None of the three deaths (Saul's in OE and Latin and the armour-bearer in Latin) are described with verbs entailed for DIE. In the Vulgate, Saul asks the armour-bearer to *percuto*, -ere 'strike' so that he is the one to *interfico*, -ere 'kill' him and not the uncircumcised men. After Saul rushes upon his sword so that he dies, the armour-bearer must *vido*, -ere 'see' that Saul is *mortuus* 'dead'. Then, Saul 'inruit etiam ipse super gladium suum' (took his sword and he himself rushed upon it) and is stated to be *mortuus*. In this short passage, it is stated three times that Saul is dead, once when he does the act, once when the armour-bearer looks at him and checks, and finally in the conclusion. Clearly, *irruo*, -ere does not entail DIE, even when it is stated that the rush/attack is onto one's own sword.

The lack of entailment for DIE is echoed in Ælfric's choice of *feallan*. While the phrase *fell upon his weapon* would likely connote death to a PDE reader, Ælfric follows it up with 'and so left this life' (*gewat swa of life*). Thus, clarifying that 'he sylf þa feoll uppon his wæpne' is a method of self-killing, with equivalent truth conditions to his previously used *hine sylfne acwealde*. Clearly, *feallan* does not entail KILL or DIE. This matches the truth conditions of the proposed cognitive synonyms, *irruere*, *epipeptokenai*, and *nafal*. In this sense, they all denote ATTACK.

Although *feallan* matches similar truth conditions to these verbs, Ælfric's version is clearly not a direct translation of the Vulgate. Ælfric makes several changes to the text to make Saul's death less sympathetic, and ultimately, condemns him to hell. In the Vulgate, the death of Saul's three named sons occurs in Samuel 1:31, verse 2: 'inrueruntque Philisthim in Saul et filios eius et percusserunt Ionathan et Abinadab et Melchisue filios Saul' (and the Philistenes rushed at Saul and his sons and struck Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchisua, Saul's sons).<sup>26</sup> Their

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<sup>26</sup> Jerome, *Vulgate*, 'Samuel, 1, chapter 31, verses 3-6' (Web: Bible Foundation and On-Line Book Initiative, 2019).



deaths are used to ramp up the tension in the passage and highlight that ‘the whole weight of the battle is turned onto Saul’.<sup>27</sup> In Ælfric’s homily, the death of Saul’s sons is in the same sentence as Saul’s self-killing. This may suggest a causal relationship: Saul’s sons died, and so Saul killed himself. Ælfric uses the conjunction ‘and’ and does not include an adverb such as the commonly used *forþon* (so) or *for þam þe* (because) to signal that clause A caused clause B.<sup>28</sup> It is common for Ælfric and other OE writers to co-ordinate independent clauses, as indeed it is for the Vulgate, so this is not unusual. Although the significance of stating Saul’s death and the death of his sons in one sentence may be weakened by the lack of adverb, it is still possible that it would be read with escalating tension in both languages, the tension rising as each of Saul’s problems stack up insurmountably.

In the Vulgate, self-killing is not Saul’s first choice. He’s described as being surrounded and severely wounded by archers. In the Vulgate, as well as the original Hebrew, the death of the sons comes before the archers turn and gain on Saul. There, emphasis is placed on the archers’ ability to wound Saul: ‘et consecuti sunt eum viri sagittarii et vulneratus est vehementer a sagittariis’ (and the men armed with bows came after him, and he was vehemently wounded by the archers). Jerome uses *vulneratus + est*, which is the perfect passive indicative of *vulnerare*, meaning ‘to wound/injure/harm, pain/distress; inflict wound on’.<sup>29</sup> Ælfric chooses to omit the attack on Saul, save to say that the Philistines fought strongly. As this alone is not enough to suggest that they are winning, Ælfric explains that the Philistines ‘slew his [Saul’s] entire army’ (*ofslogan hys fyrde*), and his sons – but they do not so much as wound Saul. Ælfric’s Saul beats them to the punch.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The Hebrew uses *וַיִּפְּצֵם*, or *way·ya·hel* for ‘he was wounded’.

In the Latin, not only is Saul surrounded and wounded, but he is also not alone. Saul's first thought is not to kill himself, but to order his armour-bearer to run him through with his sword. When the armour-bearer is too 'scared' (*perterritus*) to do so, then and only then does Saul take the matter into his own hands. In the Vulgate, Saul's self-killing is a matter of taking control of his own death. Once Saul is dead, the armour-bearer also pierces himself with his sword, conveyed both times by *inruere*. Scholars studying Saul's self-killing do not seem to engage with why his armour-bearer killed himself after refusing to harm Saul.<sup>30</sup> The armour-bearer is omitted entirely from Ælfric's version, along with the set-up where Saul is closed in on, wounded, and likely afraid like his armour-bearer. By omitting this context, Ælfric shifts the motivation for Saul's self-killing to his disastrous defeat (and perhaps specifically the death of his sons) – not his impending doom. Nearly all Ælfric's self-killers kill themselves for the same reason, and Ælfric does not portray their deaths as any more heroic than Saul's.<sup>31</sup>

Ælfric's choice of *feallan* is likely motivated by the metaphorical connotation *feallan* has with the downward JOURNEY TO HELL. As the previous chapter on *of-feallan* outlined, *feallan* is sometimes used as a metaphor for the JOURNEY TO HELL, using the underlying conceptual metaphors BAD IS DOWN and DEATH IS A JOURNEY. For example, in the *Letter to Sigeward*, by Ælfric, Ælfric uses the phrase 'ac he feol þa adun to deofle' (but he fell then down to the devil) which uses both conceptual metaphors.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Ælfric's lengthier explanation of Saul's death using *feallan* articulates Saul's slip away from God, and towards the devil, whom

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<sup>30</sup> Murray and Clayton do not engage with him. Nor, to name a few, do Barbara Green, 'How the Mighty Have Fallen: A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement*, 365 (2003); Pnina Galpaz-Feller, 'Let My Soul Die with the Philistines' (Judges 16.30)', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 30.3 (2006), 315–25.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>32</sup> *Letter to Sigeward 'On the Old and New Testament'* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 343. Found in S. J. Crawford, *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch* (London: Early English Texts Society, 1922), pp. 18–33, 39–51.

he is explicitly said to go to. While the use of *feallan* instead of a clearer, or more violent killing word could equate to euphemistic use here, it is abundantly clear that Ælfric does not think Saul's soul is saved by God. It is likely that he is putting a spin on what could be a euphemism, by using *feallan* with all its negative charges to relay that Saul's journey is downwards to hell.

Saul is not the only one who journeys to the devil after 'falling' on his own weapon. Ælfric uses a similar type of rhetoric when describing the self-killing of Hyrtacus. There, it is not his omission which amplifies his reading, but his addition.

### **Hyrtacus**

Hyrtacus falls on his sword in the *Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem* (*Homily for the Feast of St. Matthew*), which is another of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies, Series II* (*ÆCHom II, 37 (B1.2.40)*). The homily exists in five manuscripts from c. 975 onwards.<sup>33</sup> It tells the story of Hyrtacus, the brother of the good Christian King of Ethiopia, King Æglippus.<sup>34</sup> In the homily, Hyrtacus wishes to marry Æglippus' daughter, Ephigenia. Unfortunately, Ephigenia has vowed chastity and presides over 200 holy virgins. To win her over, Hyrtacus orders Matthew to persuade Ephigenia on the value of marriage. Matthew does as he is instructed. In front of the holy virgins, Hyrtacus, and his followers, Matthew soliloquises his opinions on the divine institution and sanctity of marriage; except, instead of persuading Ephigenia, Matthew exclaims in front of Hyrtacus and his followers, that it would be sacrilegious for her to marry

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<sup>33</sup> These are Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 343, written in the second half of the twelfth century, with a possible Worcester origin; Cambridge University Library MS. Gg. 3. 28, composed c. 975–c. 1025; Cambridge University Library MS. li. I. 33, written in the second half of the twelfth century, origin unknown; Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS. 367, copied in the twelfth century by a single scribe most likely in the south-east of England; British Library Ms. Cotton Vitellius D XVII, written c. 1000, with unknown origins. See Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, pp. xlv–xlvi, lvi–lvii.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 13.

Hyrtaeus. Hyrtaeus storms off in anger. When he is gone, the virgins request to be consecrated. Matthew consecrates the 200 virgins and Ephigenia. Just as he finishes, one of Hyrtaeus' henchmen stabs him in the back.

After Matthew is martyred, Ephigenia gives all her wealth to the church. This does not deter Hyrtaeus, whose proposals grow more and more violent by the hour. First, he sends the wives of noblemen to convince her, but they fail. Then, he sends demons to kidnap her, but they cannot. Finally, in a show of anger, he engulfs her house in flames. The angel St. Matthew comes to Ephigenia and cheers on her efforts before the wind shifts and Hyrtaeus' palace becomes engulfed in flames instead. Everyone inside the palace perishes, except for Hyrtaeus and his son:

Him wære swa-ðeah betere þæt he forburne þonne he ætburste; forðan ðe his ancenneda sunu sona awedde, and þine sylfne gestod seo miccle coðu þe læcas hatað *elefantinus morbus*, mid ðaere he wæs ofset fram ðam hnolle ufan oð his fotwylmas neoðan. He geseah ða þæt hine ne mihte nan læce gehælan. and sette his swurdes ord togeanes his innoðe. and feol him onuppon. þæt him ðurheode. Rihtlice swa þæt he him ætforan underfenge. æt his agenum handum. þæt þæt he don het þam halgan apostole æt his bæce.<sup>35</sup>

(Nevertheless, it would be better for him that he burned than that he escaped; because his only begotten son immediately went mad, and the great disease that the doctors call *elefantinus morbus* fixed him, with which he was beset from the head above as far as the soles of his feet below. He saw then that no doctor could heal him and set the point of his sword towards his innards and 'feol him onuppon', so that [it] pierced through him,

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<sup>35</sup> Ælfric, *Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part Containing the Sermones Catholici*, ed. by Benjamin Thorpe, 2 vols (London: Ælfric Society, 1846), p. 480.

rightly, so that he [Hyrtacus] undertook by his own hands what he had previously commanded to do behind the back of that holy apostle).

This is the first self-killing mentioned as an example of ‘falling upon one’s sword’ in the history of English outside of narratives of Saul. Here it is apparent that the sword pierces Hyrtacus’ body. He does not merely ‘fall on it’, but he falls ‘þæt him ðurheode’ (so that it pierced him). Again, this emphasises that *feallan* is not entailed for DIE as the effect of the sword needs to be stated explicitly. Moreover, *feallan* as a killing verb lacks intent and culpability in the way that PIERCING does not. While it is clear that Hyrtacus killed himself (he set the whole thing up) Ælfric adds that Hyrtacus dies at ‘his agenum handum’ (his own hands).

Ælfric’s source not only lacks this specific comment, but the verb *feallan*. As Godden explains, for the story of Matthew’s preaching in Ethiopia, Ælfric uses a widely disseminated Latin legend which was printed in multiple versions.<sup>36</sup> None of those versions represents exactly what Ælfric used. The closest seems to be the version by Fabricus, though it is necessary to invoke readings from Mombritius and Atenolfi, as Fabricus’ text lacks certain passages or references in a number of places.<sup>37</sup> Although it is evident that Ælfric was using a text that was quite conflated, Ælfric’s version is succinct and focuses first on the defeat of the two wizards, Zaroos and Arphaxat, and then on Hyrtacus’ attempt to marry his predecessor’s daughter. Godden synthesises the three Latin texts into one, and while Ælfric follows along, his text is not purely translation:

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<sup>36</sup> Godden, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary, and Glossary* (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 2000), p. 606.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 606; anon., *Passio Matthaei*, in *I testi medioevali S. Matteo l’evangelista*, ed. by G.T. Atenolfi (Rome 1958), pp. 58–80; anon., *Passio Matthaei*, in Fabricus, II 636–68; anon., *Passio Matthaei*, in Mombritius 1910, II 257–63.

Ipsium autem hyrtacum elephantiae vulnera a capite usque ad ultima pedem vestigia ligaverunt. Quod cum medici curare non posset, ipse in gladium ponens, illi incubuit, digno supplicio: ut quo a tergo apostolum Domini percusserat, ipse a recto seipsum stomacho perforaret.<sup>38</sup>

(but the wounds of elephantia bound that same Hyrtacus from the head all the way to his last footsteps. When no healer could cure that, putting himself onto his sword, he pressed upon it, in a fit punishment: just as he had pierced the Lord's apostle from the back, [he] would pierce himself in the stomach from the front).<sup>39</sup>

The Latin does not use a word for FALL to describe Hyrtacus' death, choosing *ponens*, the present active participle of *pono*, *-ere* 'to put down, set down, put, place, set, fix, lay'.<sup>40</sup> The Latin versions follow this with 'he did press upon' (*illi incubuit*) using the perfect active indicative form of *incubo*, *-are* 'to lie in a place or upon a thing' or secondarily 'to press upon, weigh upon, be a burden to'.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the Latin uses *percusserat* for what Hyrtacus did to Matthew, and *perforaret* for what he does to himself. *Percusserat*, from *percutio*, *-ere*, 'to strike, thrust through, pierce', and *perforaret* from *perforo*, *-are*, 'to bore through, pierce through, perforate'.<sup>42</sup> While Ælfric was clearly following the structure of the text and the content of the sentences, Ælfric added the emphasis on Hyrtacus' 'own hands'. The Latin versions argue that Hyrtacus' self-killing act is 'fit punishment' (*digno supplicio*) for killing Matthew. Ælfric omits this clause but uses the adverb *rihtlice* 'rightly' to keep this judgment. Ælfric's version sticks

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<sup>38</sup> Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction*, pp. 612–13.

<sup>39</sup> This is a literal, not idiomatic, translation of the Latin to show how Hyrtacus' death is worded without engaging in literary interpretation, but it does re-order words so that it still makes enough sense to a modern reader.

<sup>40</sup> 'pono', Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 1306.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 929.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, pp. 1336, 1340.

closely to the original while adding more emphasis on Hyrtacus' culpability in his death act by emphasising the *own handedness*. Moreover, Ælfric is the only one to use FALLING here.

There is a comparative version of this text in the OE *Martyrology*, but that version does not include comments about the punishment, nor use the verb *feallan*. The OE *Martyrology* is a collection of OE manuscripts which were likely composed between c. 800 and 900.<sup>43</sup> While the text was written before Ælfric's, Godden suggests that Ælfric seemed to know very little, if anything, about this other version. The text for the *21<sup>st</sup> of September* (Mart 5 (Kotzor) B19.5)) sticks closer to the Latin by referencing that Hyrtacus positioned his sword *upweard* (upward) before thrusting it through his chest:

Onð ða sona æfter Matheus þrowunge þa forborn ðæs cyninges heall mid eallum his spedum, ond his sunu awedde, ond he sylf ahreofode ond tobærst mid wundum from ðam heafde oð ða fet. Ond he asette his sweord upweard, ond ða hyne sylfne ofstang.<sup>44</sup>  
(And then immediately after Matthew's passion the King's hall with all his wealth burned, and his son went mad, and he himself became leprous and burst open with wounds from head to feet. And he set his sword upwards and then pierced himself [with that]).

Though Ælfric likely did not read the anonymous OE *Martyrology*, the scribes were working from the same Latin versions as Ælfric. The *Martyrology* stays closer to the Latin by saying first that *he asette* (he set) the sword up and then *ofstang* (stabbed/pierced/bore) himself through.

Unlike Ælfric's version, it is abundantly clear who the agent of the action is: Hyrtacus. The OE

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<sup>43</sup> Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, p. 3. Texts in the OE *Martyrology* can be found with the short titles of either Mart 1 (Herzfeld-Kotzor) B19.1 or Mart 2.1 (Herzfeld-Kotzor) B19.2.1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

includes the nom. pronoun *he*. The lack of nom. pronouns in Ælfric's version of the death act is not due to OE language norms.

Additionally, the anonymous *Martyrology* version does not use *feallan*. It employs the OE verb *asette* (set) and the adverb *upweard* (upward), which is synonymous with the Latin *pono, -are* 'to set/put'. The *Martyrology* also uses *ofstang* which is a cognitive synonym of the Lat. *perforaret*. This calls Ælfric's diction into question, as the choice does not seem to be based on direct translation from the Latin, but on his own opinion. Ælfric's choice of *feallan* is likely motivated by the connotation it has with Hyrtacus' JOURNEY TO HELL. As with the death of Saul, Ælfric chose to use *feallan* not because it is an enigmatic death verb, but because to him it connotes the downward motion of self-killers' souls. Ultimately, his translation and rhetorical choices highlight his negative opinion of self-killing and self-killers.

Of course, Ælfric is not the only OE writer to use *feallan* for a self-killing.

### **Anonymous**

This section analyses the anonymous OE descriptions of Malchus' death in the *Passion of St. Margaret*. It highlights nuanced perceptions of self-killing by comparing different versions of the OE alongside the Latin. In doing so, this section shows that *feallan* is not always a negative self-killing verb.

### **Malchus**

*The Life of Saint Margaret* is one of three saint's homilies that are not a part of the Ælfric corpus, the others being *The Life of St. Giles* (LS 9 (Giles) B3.3.9) and *The Life of St. Nicholas* (LS 29



(Nicholas) B3.3.29).<sup>45</sup> It is not surprising that Ælfric omitted the homily, given that the executioner seems to kill himself and then journey to God; a story that clearly does not fit with what Ælfric wishes to promote.

The text is extant in two different OE versions by two different scribes. One is in the anonymous *Passio Beate Margarete Uirginis et Martyris* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 303, and the second is in the composite version of the anonymous *Old English Life of St Margaret* in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii.<sup>46</sup> Both were likely derived from the Latin *Passio S. Margaretae* in a group of Latin texts referred to as BHL no. 5303, otherwise known as the Mombritus version of the legend.<sup>47</sup> As Clayton and Magennis explain, ‘the Legend of St. Margaret in the West can be traced back to the late eighth century, the date of the earliest extant Latin manuscript containing a version of her *passio*’.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the anonymous OE *Martyrology* includes a similar tale of the *Saint Marina*, but there is no FALLING.<sup>49</sup>

According to the legend, the martyrdom of Margaret/Marina took place in Antioch and is typically associated with the persecution brought about by Diocletian and Maximian’s rules (c. 305–313). Literary evidence for the veneration of St. Margaret begins at the end of the eighth century and becomes increasingly popular from there.<sup>50</sup> In late early medieval England there is

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<sup>45</sup> Mary Richards, ‘Texts and Their Traditions in the Medieval Library of Rochester Cathedral Priory,’ *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 78, no. 3 (1988), p. 90. As said before, the lives of St. Margaret can be found under three OE short titles: LS 14-16 and B.3.3.14-16.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 134, 170.

<sup>47</sup> Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Marina is the name of the saint in the Eastern Church, as well as in some Latin accounts prior to the ninth century. Clayton and Magennis suggest that Marina is the Greek name. See: Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 3.

bountiful evidence of liturgical celebrations of St. Margaret in varied sources such as calendars, masses, relics, and vernacular compilations of saints' lives.<sup>51</sup>

*The Legend of St. Margaret* begins when Margaret's mother dies, and Margaret is filled with the holy spirit. Her pagan father, Theodosius, hates her and gives her to her foster mother to raise. At fifteen, Margaret entrusts her virginity to God. One day, while out caring for her foster mother's sheep, the prefect Olibrius sees her and desires her as his wife, if she is a free woman, or as his concubine if she is not. Olibrius has his soldiers snatch her. As she is taken away, Margaret calls for Christ's aid. The soldiers tell Olibrius that she is a Christian, and Olibrius throws her in prison in disgust and rage. When she does not convert to his god at his demands, Olibrius grows angry and threatens to hurt her; however, Margaret prays to Christ and survives his torments, only to be confined in a darker, bleaker prison. Upon entering, Margaret makes the sign of the cross, just in time for an enormous dragon to enter from the darkest corner of the prison, breathing fire. Before she can utter a word, the dragon swallows Margaret whole.

Inside the dragon's belly, Margaret makes the sign of the cross. As she does, the dragon's belly is sliced open in the sign of the cross she made, releasing her uninjured. Seeing what happened to his brother, a devil appears next to her and asks her not to beat him. Mercilessly, the blessed Margaret grabs the devil by the hair, throws him to the ground, and shatters all his bones. She shouts at him to 'leave her virginity alone' and a Christ-dove applauds her from above. The dove tells Margaret to ask the devil who he is and what he does, and the devil laments being unable to maim Margaret. The devil tries another trick on her, but fails, and is then swallowed up by the earth below.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

The next day, Olibrius orders Margaret to be bound and placed in a leaden vessel filled with water, but Margaret prays to God and her chains are broken, allowing her to float to the top. In doing so, she converts several onlookers, and Olibrius orders all the new Christians to be killed. Then, he orders Margaret's execution. Her executioner, Malchus, asks her to have mercy on him because he sees Christ within her. Margaret asks for a moment to pray, and Malchus gives it to her. She prays for anyone reading her passion to have their sins blotted out, and anyone mindful of her name at the time of his judgment to be delivered from punishment. The Christ dove returns and tells her that she was mindful of everyone in her prayer and says that she will have everything she asked for and more. After her prayer she tells Malchus to take up his sword and put her to death, but Malchus does not wish to. Margaret orders him to do it so he may join her in paradise. What happens next differs between manuscripts and is the topic of some debate.

The *Passio Beate Margarete Uirginis et Martyris* resides in a large collection of homilies and saints' lives in Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 303. Most of the texts in the manuscript are by Ælfric who specifically omitted any version of this passion in his homilies and sermons.<sup>52</sup> This OE version is the only one where Malchus asks for permission to execute Margaret and not for forgiveness. Malchus does not want to kill Margaret and must be talked into it by the saint, who tells him he will have no part in the kingdom of heaven if he does not kill her. Falling to his feet in MS 303 (LS14 (MargaretCCCC 303) B3.3.14), Malchus asks for her to pray for him: 'for min Drihten hit wat, þæt ic hit unwillende do, þæt ic æfre þas dæda gefremme' (for my Lord knows it, that I do it unwilling, that I ever commit these deeds).<sup>53</sup> Margaret then prays to God and says: 'Drihten leof, forgif þu him ealle þa synne þe he gefremeð

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>53</sup> The OE is taken from Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 170.

hæfð' (Beloved Lord, forgive him all the sins that he has committed). *Fremman* is in the imperative mood, and not subjunctive, which may discount further sins. Despite this, after killing Margaret, Malchus falls on his sword and still journeys to heaven:

and seo eadiga fæmne Margareta hire sawle Gode agef and Malcus on hire  
swiðran uppan his swurda feol, and his sawle Godes ængles underfeongan and þurh þæra  
eadigra fæmne bene Gode betæhton.<sup>54</sup>

(And the blessed maiden Margaret delivered up her soul to God and on her right  
side Malchus fell upon his sword, and god's angels received his soul and through the  
Virgin's prosperous prayers committed [it] to God).

Here, the preposition upon (*uppan*) is specified as in the previously analysed self-killings. Most likely, this indicates that Malchus pierced himself with his sword, thus killing himself; however, there is no second verb to suggest how he died specifically. This version uses *feallan* as the only action verb which does not literally entail DEATH, though it may connote it metaphorically.

Despite his self-killing, God's angels take Malchus' soul to heaven. Whether Margaret's prayers saved him from journeying to hell because he was a heathen, or because he killed himself is unclear in this version. What is clear, is that despite killing a saint and himself, Malchus is granted entrance into heaven. Clearly, not everyone shared Ælfric's opinion on self-killing and self-killers.

There are two main Latin versions of this text which were known in early medieval England: *Passio S. Margaretae*, in Paris Bibliotheque Nationale 5574 (P), and the *Casinensis* legend (Cas).<sup>55</sup> The two main Latin versions do not include Malchus' self-killing (the P version,

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<sup>54</sup> Again, the OE from Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 16–23.

part of the *Mombritus* version, and the Cas. version are included in this thesis).<sup>56</sup> In the Latin P version, *Passio S. Margaretae*, the executioner does not fall *on his sword*, but falls *with the blow* he strikes, because he is killed by an act of God:

Tunc questionarius cum Dei timore adtulit gladium suum et in icto uno percutiens amputavit capud beatissimae Margaritae, et oravit dicens, ‘Domine, ne statuas <hoc> mihi in peccatum.’ Et tremens percussor cecidit cum percussorio suo ad dexteram partem beate Margaritae.<sup>57</sup>

(Then the questioner, with fear of God, drew his sword and in a single strike cut off the most blessed Margaret’s head. Then he prayed, saying ‘Lord, do not set this against me as a sin’. And trembling, the executioner fell with his own blow on the right side of the blessed Margaret).

Here, ‘with his own blow’ (*cum percussorio suo*) indicates that the executioner did not pierce his own body after killing Margaret. The same sentence is used, with a slightly altered order, in another Latin version.<sup>58</sup> This version omits the necessity for reading the act as a self-killing. Yet, despite not killing himself, Malchus does not in this version explicitly go to heaven – rather, his death reads more obviously as a divine punishment. While *cum* could refer to falling *with* the sword instead of blow (which explicitly denotes no death), it could be in the instrumental case (grammatically pointing to the fact that Malchus fell *by means of* his weapon), but its use does not clearly denote a stabbing even if this were the only possible meaning. The use of this

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<sup>56</sup> For background on the Latin versions see Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, pp. 7–23.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216–17.

<sup>58</sup> The Paris, MS. B.N. Lat. 17002 version follows the above: ‘Et tremens percussor cum percussori suo ad dexteram partem cecidit beatissime virginis’ (the executioner fell with his sword on the right side of the blessed Margaret). See Elizabeth Francis, *Wace: La Vie de Sainte Marguerite* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Edouard Champion, Editeur, 1932), p. 71.

preposition therefore obscures the self-killing act. The scribe or author additionally erases any mention of Malchus' entrance to heaven.

Although Malchus asks God to not set the sin of killing Margaret against him, this version does not make it clear if he kills himself, or if an act of God punished him for killing Margaret. All that it says is that he *cecidit*. *Cecedit* is the third person perfect active indicative form of *cado*, *-ere* 'I fall' or, 'I cease' or die.<sup>59</sup> Arguably, *cadere* may entail DIE, though the method is unclear. How did he kill himself if he does not fall onto or into his weapon? Did he just die? The ambiguity here may point to the fact that this author did not want to save Malchus from killing Margaret and leaves the reader to assume that God took his life as punishment. Subsequently, the author blurs the boundary between self-killing and God's judgment. Later legends split between following this Latin version and the Cas. The *Middle English Katherine Group* found in MS Bodley 34 has Malchus fall but specifies that he falls 'from fear': 'Ant feol of fearlac adun on hire riht halve' (and from fear he fell down on her right side).<sup>60</sup> Whether this is supposed to mean he dies from fear is debatable, yet arguably, it does not equate to a self-killing.

The Cas. version does not include Malchus' death at all. After Margaret prays, the text reads: 'erexit se ab horatione, et amputates est capud ieus ab spiculatore. Et orauit speculator, dicens, "Domine, ne statuas michi hoc peccatum". Et post haec uenerunt angeli super corpus beatissimae martiris Marine' (he roused himself at the speech, and her head was cut off by the executioner. And the executioner prayed, saying 'Lord, do not hold this sin against me.' And

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<sup>59</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, pp. 258–59.

<sup>60</sup> *Seinte Marherete*, Bodleian Library, MS 34 (ff. 18<sup>r</sup>–36<sup>v</sup>); Emily Huber, Elizabeth Robertson, *The Katherine Group MS Bodley 34: Religious Writings for Women in Medieval England* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2016).

after this an angel came above the body of the blessed virgin Marina).<sup>61</sup> Later versions copy this version of the tale, including the Codex Ashmole 61.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, the OE self-killing in MS 303 seems to be an outlier, not just in Malchus' journey to heaven, but in his self-killing.

The OE *Life of Saint Margaret* in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii, follows the Latin P model (LS16 (MargaretCot.Tib.A.iii) B.3.3.16). However, it follows MS 303 in adding that Malchus' death is a self-killing. The Tiberius (T) specifies that Margaret prohibits her executioner from entering Paradise, and that Malchus does in fact *pierce* himself with his sword:

Se cwylra þa mid gefyrhto genam his swurd and hire heafod ofasloh and  
 gehwyrfde hine sylfne and cwæþ: 'Drihten, ne sette þu me þis on synnæ',  
 and hine sylfne mid his swurde ofastang and gefeol to þære eadegan fæmnan  
 swyþran healfe.<sup>63</sup>

(Then the executioner took hold of his sword with trepidation, and he struck off her head and he turned and said, 'Lord do not set this against me as a sin.' And he pierced himself with his sword and fell on the right side of the holy maiden).

In the Latin (P and Cas) and in T, Malchus asks for forgiveness from God only *after* he has executed Margaret. These versions still include a protest from Malchus prior to killing Margaret, but they do not ask God for anything. Unlike the Latin P, T makes it very clear that Malchus killed himself by giving a much clearer self-killing statement: 'hine sylfne mid

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<sup>61</sup> The Latin is taken from Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 233.

<sup>62</sup> *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. by George Shuffelton, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008); nor is it in John Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*, composed sometime between 1415 and 1426: John Lydgate, *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete* (Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2003) <<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/reames-middle-english-legends-of-women-saints-lydgate-lyfe-of-seynt-margarete>> [accessed 20 August 2021]. Nor does it appear in the stanzaic life of Saint Margaret in Cambridge University Library MS Addit. 4122 from the second half of the thirteenth century.

<sup>63</sup> Clayton and Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 134–36.

his *swurde ofastang*'. The form of the verbs *ofasloh* and *ofastang* in this passage is odd: the simplex forms of these verbs are *slean* and *stingan*. Each is well attested with the prefix *of-* and with the prefix *a-*, but their appearance in Clayton and Magennis' edition suggests that both elements are prefixed at once. This is unlikely, and accordingly the DOEWC renders *of* as a preposition in its transcription of their edition, giving 'hire heafod of asloh' (straightforwardly meaning 'cut her head off') and 'of astang'; it explains the latter form as the unique attestation of a prepositional usage of *astingan*, meaning 'to pierce, run through, stab to death (oneself acc.)'. However the text should be edited here, the overall sense is clear: after killing Margaret, Malchus runs himself through. Though T follows the Latin closely, Malchus' death is amended to make it perfectly clear that his death was not an act of God, but a wilful decision by Malchus. As well as making clear that Malchus killed himself, the T version has him ask for God's forgiveness (which he evidently thinks worth his while despite Margaret's prior insistence that he will not share Paradise with her): before stabbing himself, Malchus turns and asks the Lord to not reckon *bis* against him as a sin, but it is not clear where Malchus turns or what *bis* is. Does he turn to God, or somewhere else? Does Malchus seek forgiveness for his past sin of beheading Margaret, or his impending sin of self-killing?<sup>64</sup> Either way, Malchus is not explicitly said to be saved, though he clearly killed himself; this version does not send him to heaven, nor does it erase the self-killing, or send him to hell. Overall, it does not seem to be sure of what to do with Malchus and his self-killing. By keeping the self-killing clear but not stating what happens to Malchus after, the T version leaves the question open for debate: is his self-killing a sin? If it is a sin, is it unforgiveable?

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<sup>64</sup> *Gehweorfan* is also used as a self-killing verb. See Appendix A.



The anonymous OE *Martyrology* includes the *Passio, 7 July: Marina*, which copies the method of death, but does not include this statement (Mart5 (Kotzor) B19.5)). There, the text says that: ‘Pa wæs Sancta Marina for Criste beheafdad, ond se cwellere sona hine selfne ofslog mid ðy ilcan sweorde’ (Then was Saint Marina beheaded for Christ, and the killer immediately slew himself with that same sword).<sup>65</sup> There, it is also unclear as to whether Malchus (there unnamed) journeys to God. In the Marina legend, he does not grant Marina time to pray, nor does he protest killing her. Given the plethora of texts in the *Martyrology* which end with murderers dying grisly deaths as punishment for killing the saints, it is more likely that Malchus’ self-killing in the Marina legend serves not as recompense, but violent retribution. Both *ofslean* and *astingan* are typically used for violent stabbings.<sup>66</sup> The use of these verbs in the versions of the texts that not only leave out Malchus’ journey to God, but also make his self-killing explicit, likely point to a negative conception of self-killers and self-killing. However, T leaves this question explicitly open by having Malchus ask God to not count the act against him.

The OE versions want to show that Malchus killed himself, though it is not clear where they got this idea from. It is possible that *cado, -ere*, connoted DEATH to OE readers so strongly that they felt the need to explain why Malchus died, by his own sword or by God’s divine punishment. Later Middle English versions omit the death and self-killing. Either because they did not feel as though his death and self-killing were necessary, or because they did not fit the rhetorical model the authors wanted to promote. Clearly, self-killing and going to heaven posed a quandary for some authors, readers, and scribes.

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<sup>65</sup> Rauer, *The Old English Martyrology*, p. 134.

<sup>66</sup> The DOE web corpus and a comparative analysis of their uses in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle shows this.

## Conclusion

All these different emendations show variations on perceptions of self-killing and self-killers that are clearly more nuanced than Ælfric's – even while using the same verb. fundamentally, *feallan* is not a negatively connoted self-killing verb, even though it can metaphorically refer to a JOURNEY TO HELL. While it may metaphorically connote DEATH, it can do so euphemistically or neutrally, all depending on the author's opinion. Ultimately, *feallan* leaves room for ambiguity in volition, as well as secondary connotations, which allow writers to impart their opinions on self-killing even while following an exemplar.

The chapter explained that the PDE idiom 'fall on your sword' was not in use in OE, and where *feallan* is used in tandem with a weapon, it extends to mean ATTACK – not KILL. This is because, as that section showed, the phrase at this time did not entail DIE. Moreover, it includes many interesting extensions of meaning through metaphor that are erased when a translator chooses to render it 'to kill'. This chapter suggested that the idiom is a modern invention and has no origin in the pre-modern period.

Not surprisingly, this section saw Ælfric perjure *feallan* for Saul's death in his homilies, maximising the opportunity to press his view that no matter how outwardly violent the method of death is, self-killers go to hell. While this chapter served as witness to *feallan* and *of-feallan* being used negatively, the comparison of the many versions of Malchus' death in the OE *Lives of St. Margaret* showed that *feallan* does not carry a negative connotation by itself. In doing so, this chapter highlighted the importance of an interdisciplinary linguistic approach to semantic data.

Finally, the chapter explained that Ælfric omitted this text (*The Life of St. Margaret*) from his corpus, which likely is due in small part to Malchus' self-killing and entrance into heaven. Such a tale and moral clearly did not match Ælfric's values.

## Chapter Six: Poison

This section seeks to outline the availability and connotations of poison in early medieval England before going on to discuss the perception of self-poisoning in the OE *History of the World*. In doing so, it hopes to answer a few related questions: can we assume that self-poisoning was an uncommon self-killing method in early medieval England with the evidence we have? Was there a gendered component to this method of self-killing? What led people to choose this method and how was it seen?

### Availability of Poison in Early Medieval England

Poison as a self-killing method is only discussed in the OE *History of the World*, where it abounds. There are five mentions of self-killings carried out this way, and only one where the perpetrators are conveyed as immoral and excessive. As the *History of the World* takes place outside of the British Isles, it may seem as though poison was not available as a self-killing implement in early medieval England. This is not the case.

A lot of texts on the history of poison and medicine leave out the early medieval period in favour of covering classical Greek and Roman sources and then jumping to the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> This paints a false picture about the lack of poison in early medieval England. Although scholarship on available poisons in early medieval England is lacking, available evidence clearly shows that poison was available and on the mind of peoples in early medieval England.

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<sup>1</sup> Eugenie Nepovimova, and Kamil Kuca, 'The History of Poisoning: From Ancient times until Modern ERA,' *Archives of Toxicology*, 93.1 (2018), 11–24; Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, and Jon Arrizabalaga, *It All Depends on the Dose, The History of Medicine in Context* (Florence: Routledge, 2018); Frederick Gibbs, 'Medical Literature on Poison, c. 1300–1600', in *Toxicology in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Philip Wexler (London: Elsevier, 2017).

The OE *Penitentials* (Conf 4 (Fowler) B11.4.2)) mention poisoning, both in reference to what happens if someone practices *attorcraeft*, and in an extended simile comparing healing a poisoning to confession:<sup>2</sup>

Ne mæg æni læce wel lacnian ær ðæt attor ute sy ne ni man eac dædbote wel tæcan þam ðe andettan nele, ne æni man ne mæg synna buton andetnesse næ gebetan þe ma þe se mæg wel hal wurðan þe unlibban <gedrucen> hæfð buton he þæt attor swiðe aspiwe.<sup>3</sup>

(Any doctor can not cure well before that poison is out; nor can anyone in addition offer penance well to one who does not want to confess. Nor can anyone repent their sins without confession any more than he might become in good health who has drunk poison unless he spews out that poison swiftly).<sup>4</sup>

Here, poison is mentioned three times and two different terms for it are used: *attor* and *unlybba*. In the above quotation, it seems as though *unlybba* could refer to concrete POISON, while *attor* could refer to all manners of POISON: literal or metaphorical. The idea of *attor* is interesting itself because in OE it refers to many different things, and only one of them would be recognisable as POISON to us. According to the DOE, *attor* can refer to ‘venom, a torment of hell, poison,

<sup>2</sup> *Attorcraeft* is included in the ‘OE Introduction’ to Frantzen’s online penitential database. See Allen Frantzen, ‘OE Introduction’ in *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database* <<http://www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/?p=txhdoei>> [accessed 18 November 2020]. The relevant manuscripts are Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 190, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201; Brussels, Biblioteque Royale, MS Bx 8558-63; London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 121 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 482.

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201: *Old English Religious and Legal Texts, many by Wulfstan*, p. 121. <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/cr485km1781>> [accessed 4 December 2020].

<sup>4</sup> See Allen Frantzen, ‘OE Introduction’ in *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database* <<http://www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/?p=txhdoei>> [accessed 18 November 2020]. This example is from Canon 55.07.01 of the *OE Handbook of the Confessor*, which can be found in six manuscripts from the early eleventh century: (B) Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, 8558–63, s. xi<sup>1</sup>, of southeastern origin; (C) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 265, s. ximed, found at Worcester; (D) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 201, s. xi<sup>med</sup>, found at Winchester; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A.iii, s. xi<sup>med</sup>, found at Canterbury; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121, s. XI<sup>¼</sup>, at Worcester; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 482, s. xi<sup>med</sup>, at Worcester.

contagion/infection, morbid secretion/pus, bile, evil’, and even ‘temptation’.<sup>5</sup> The DOE has not yet reached either *lybba* or *unlybba*, but it would seem to refer to a bad drug, venom, poison, morbid secretion/pus, bile, and evil liquid. The use of *attor* as metaphor for torment or temptation does not equate to an intimate knowledge of poisons (i.e., how poison works, what poisons are, and where they come from). However, as with *poison* in PDE, the use of *attor* and *unlybba* points to a cultural awareness of POISON – at least in the abstract.

This abstract cultural awareness is echoed in Ælfric’s homilies. Although Ælfric does not write about a self-poisoning, he does mention poison as a would-be murder weapon in several homilies. For example, in Ælfric’s *Life of St. Benedict* (ÆCHom II, 11 B1.2.12), other monks and townspeople attempt to kill Benedict with poison multiple times by poisoning his drink and his food.<sup>6</sup> In that text, Ælfric uses *unlybba* to refer to poison, though in *Saint Maur* (ÆLS (Maur) B1.3.7)), he uses *atire* to describe the metaphorically ‘poisonous’ effects of *cancor* (cancer).<sup>7</sup> While Ælfric makes this denotative distinction between the two, it is not taken up consistently across the board. *Attor* and its variations are more frequently used. This could be because it lent itself more to the metaphorical than the physical. Alternatively, *attor* could be the more precise term, as *unlybba* is the opposite of *lybb* (medicine/drug).<sup>8</sup>

*Attor* derives from the PG \**aitra-*, which meant ‘poison, pus’. Cognates developed from this word across Germanic languages to refer to POISON (ON *eitir*, Far. *eitur*, Elfd *ietter*, OS *ettar*, and OHG *eitir*, *eittar*), though others derived from PG \**aitra-* mean PUS (Du. *Etter*, WFri. *atter*,

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<sup>5</sup> ‘attor, ator’, in *Dictionary of Old English A-H online* <<https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/>> [accessed 20 October 2020].

<sup>6</sup> Ælfric, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, ed. by Malcolm Godden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Ælfric, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat (London: Early English Text Society, 1912), pp. 164–65: ‘Maurus gemette ænne man eft / se wæs yield ge-tawod and hine æt se cancor / and / his weleres wæron awlætte mid ealle / and eat his nose for-numen mid atire / þa bletsode maurus þone mann feorran / and he sona wearð wundorlice gehæled’.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Lybb’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/21916>> [accessed November 18, 2020].

*etter*, and OHG *aitar*, *eittar*).<sup>9</sup> The PG term is formally close to OCS *jadra* n.pl. ‘embrace, bosom’, and is derived from the PIE root *\*h<sup>2</sup>eid-* ‘to swell’, cf. *\*aita-*.<sup>10</sup> It is likely that *pus* and *poison* were derived from ‘to swell’ because of the swelling caused by suppuration.<sup>11</sup> Seemingly then, the terms for POISON in OE are derived from PG terms for what the item does to the body: causes it to swell or slow.

POISON in OE is then different from what we would call *poison* now. Of course, *atter* as a noun is now nearly entirely obsolete. The OED explains that it stopped being used literally for poison/venom especially that of reptiles by the early thirteenth century. It continued to be used figuratively for bitterness/bile or literally for ‘corrupt matter, pus, from a sore, ulcer, etc.’ through until the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> This usage points to a long-standing connection between *attor* and PUS over POISON. As *atter* dropped out of use by MidE in favour of the Anglo-Norman *poisoun*, it seems likely that it referred to BAD FLUID and not PUS, as BAD FLUID denotatively covers anything from PUS to BAD DRINK, CORRUPT MATTER, and VENOM. Defining *attor* as BAD FLUID (a definition made clearer through its etymology) allows us to discuss what POISON was and meant to the peoples of early medieval England.

The herbal remedies include a large number of cures for various poisons, as does Bald’s *Leechbook*.<sup>13</sup> Demaitre explains that there were numerous antidotes to poison in the Old English medical texts, which probably indicated an ‘imperfect knowledge of what was really toxic’.<sup>14</sup> He adds that poisonous snakes were common due to the plethora of leechdoms for bites of adders

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<sup>9</sup> Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, pp. 14–15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Pus*, a Latin borrowing into English, has retained this sense as it is ‘a fluid product of inflammation’. See “Pus”, *WordNet* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2010); ‘pus, n.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, September 2020) [accessed 19 November 2020].

<sup>12</sup> ‘atter, n.’, *OED Online* [accessed 13 November 2020].

<sup>13</sup> Bald’s *Leechbook* has a whole list of short titles beginning with Lch II, B21.

<sup>14</sup> Luke Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine: The Art of Healing from Head to Toe* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013), p. 35.

and snakes, noting that their efficacy is ‘doubtful’. Cockayne himself notes that the ‘Saxons’ had access to flora not native to England at the outset of his preface, along with native plants.<sup>15</sup> Some of this was cultivated after the Romans, as they brought and left agricultural improvements. Linda Voigts explains that the mention of ‘Mediterranean plants not found today north of the Alps’ is used as an argument for the lack of understanding and use for the medical texts.<sup>16</sup> However, she rightly goes on to explain that ecclesiastical exchange brought herbs and spices west, including sending the necessary ingredients with recipes to England from Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, exchange of goods was not restricted to dry herbs, but seeds as well.

There is evidence that climatic conditions during the period were warmer and more temperate than the present day. Voigts evidences the thirty-eight vineyards in England recorded in the Domesday Book, the evidence of cultivation in Redesdale, Northumbria for at least two hundred years from c. 1000, and the plant distributions like that of the strawberry tree, which ‘defy explanation’.<sup>18</sup> Voigts does not argue that Mediterranean plants grew wild in England at this time, but compellingly points to their cultivation in monastic herb gardens. While this would not account for Mediterranean and Levantine poisons and venomous snakes in England, non-native plants could be obtained either through cultivation or trade. While I find it doubtful that the frequency of concern for poison and snake bites coincides with the likelihood of being poisoned or bitten by a venomous snake, I do not subscribe to the idea that there was no poison or possibility of being poisoned in early medieval England. Aconite grew wild, and could be obtained or grown, along with other indigenous poisonous plants like hemlock, and

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<sup>15</sup> Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine*, p. ix. ‘Sweet Apples’.

<sup>16</sup> Linda E. Voigts, ‘Anglo-Saxon Plant Remedies and the Anglo-Saxons’, *Isis*, 70.2 (1979), 250–68 <[www.jstor.org/stable/230791](http://www.jstor.org/stable/230791)> [accessed 21 August 2021] (p. 252).

<sup>17</sup> Voigts, ‘Anglo-Saxon Plant Remedies’, p. 260. Famously, Elias III, patriarch of Jerusalem sent gifts as well as letters to King Alfred. These gifts included recipes for some of the chapters at the end of Book II of Bald’s *Leechbook*, as well as the Levantine ingredients necessary to go about making them.

<sup>18</sup> Voigts, ‘Anglo-Saxon Plant Remedies’, pp. 261–62.

Mediterranean and eastern poisons could be accessed through trade for those with the money to afford it.

This may have been how Eadburh, King Offa's daughter, found the poison with which she kills her husband. The Latin *Life of King Alfred* explains that Eadburh 'more paterno tyrannice vivere incepit' (began to live tyrannically like her father) and poisoned everyone that loved her husband (*veneno eos necabat*).<sup>19</sup> Eventually, she accidentally poisons her husband, Beorhtric, and is sent into exile.<sup>20</sup> The *Life of King Alfred* does not address how Eadburh came to be in possession of a poisonous substance, but it is clear that the poison is a deadly drink. This text is not recorded in OE, but was written by a Welsh monk named Asser, around the time of the events it describes. Thus, it is one of the few texts that was written during the period it describes. Still, Eadburh's poisoning happened around a hundred years prior to Asser's writing, and Alfred's reign. Moreover, it is not mentioned in the *Chronicle*, which Asser uses as a source.<sup>21</sup> Despite the lack of entry in the *Chronicle*, there is an entry in the Reichenau *Liber Vitae* dating between c. 825 and 850 which mentions an 'Eadburg' as an abbess of a Lombard convent, giving Asser's *vita* 'plausibility'.<sup>22</sup> Stafford and Nelson assume that Asser's Eadburh story explains the downgrading of West Saxon king's wives from queens to wives, as well as

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<sup>19</sup> Asser, *Asser's Life of King Alfred: Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. by William Henry Stevenson and Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Asser, *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> 'Her Beorhtric cyning forþferde 7 Worr aldormon; 7 Ecgbryht feng to Wesseaxna rice; 7 þy ilcan dæge rad Eþelmund aldorman of Hwiccium ofer æt Cynemæresforda, þa mette hine Weoxstan aldorman mid Wilsætum; þær wearþ micel gefeoht, 7 þær begen ofslægene þa aldormen, 7 Wilsætān namon sige.' (Here King Beorhtric died and Worr his aldormon; and Ecgbyrht took the kingdom of Wessex; and that same day aldorman Ethelmundor of the Hwiccas rode over to Kempford, there aldorman Weoxstan with the people of Wilshire met him; there was a big fight, and there both of the aldermen were slain, and Wiltshire took the victory).

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173: The Parker Chronicle, f. 11'.

<<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/wp146tq7625>> [accessed 9 December 2020].

<sup>22</sup> Janet L. Nelson, 'Eadburh [Eadburga] (fl. 789–802), queen of the West Saxons, consort of King Beorhtric' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004

<<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8380>> [accessed 9 December 2020].



discrediting those Eadburh supplanted.<sup>23</sup> Stafford explains that contemporary justifications cannot be accepted at face value but does not make any attempt to reconcile Eadburh's poisoning as fact or fiction more than adding 'alleged'. With the evidence, it is impossible to say whether Eadburh was wicked, or if she did poison anyone, let alone her husband accidentally. However, poisoning as a murder method has historically been weaponised by anti-women rhetoric.<sup>24</sup>

### Women and Poison

The connection between women and poison may relate to their connection to domestic sphere, magic, or both. In *Piers Plowman*, accusations of poisoning are placed not on women, but on the handlers of food and drink: 'Brewesters and baksters, bochiers and cokes – For these are men on this molde that moost harm wercheth To the povere peple that parcelmele buggen. For thei poisons the peple pryveliche and ofte' (brewers and bakers, butchers and cooks; for these are the people who do most harm on this earth to the poor folk who buy piecemeal, since they often poison them secretly).<sup>25</sup> As women were the main producers of food, accusations of poison may

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<sup>23</sup> Nelson, 'Eadburh'; Pauline Stafford, 'The King's Wife in Wessex 800–1066', *Past & Present*, 91.1 (1981), 3–27 (p. 4) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/91.1.3> > [accessed 8 December 2020].

<sup>24</sup> There is a complicated and rich history of linking women to poisoning in a rhetoric from Ancient Greece to the modern day which I cannot begin to account for here. It is made more complicated by the lack of scholarly attention to the rhetorical conspiracy, in tandem with the pop-culture linkage between poison/witchcraft and women. Below, I give only a small portion of the social history of poison which puts women at the forefront of the conversation, in terms of accusations. For poison and women in ancient times, see: Esther Eidinow, *Envy, Poison and Death: Women on Trial in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Athelstan's laws include the death sentence for those who commit murder through witchcraft, as Rabin explains in Andrew Rabin, 'Capital Punishment and the Anglo-Saxon Judicial Apparatus: A Maximum View?' in *Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Jay Paul Gates and Nicole Marafioti, *Anglo-Saxon Studies*, 23 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), p. 189. For the association of a 'bad' female medicine see: Pauline Ripat, 'Roman Women, Wise Women, and Witches', *Phoenix*, 70.1 (2016), 104–28 (pp. 104, 128, 231–32) [accessed 9 Dec. 2020]. For the connection between women and poison throughout time: Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'Women's Weapons: A Re-evaluation of Magic in the *Íslendingasögur*', *Scandinavian studies*, 81.4 (2009), 409–36; Henri Bresc, 'Knives and Poisons: Stereotypes of Male Vendetta and Female Perfidy in Late Medieval Sicily, 1293–1460', in *Murder in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Trevor Dean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 41–59 (pp. 58–59); Pompa Banerjee, 'Hard to Swallow: Women, Poison, and Hindu Widowburning, 1500–1700', *Continuity and Change*, 15.2 (2000), 187–207.

<sup>25</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (London: Dent and Dutton, 1978), p. 26; Ann Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink: Production, Processing, Distribution and Consumption* (Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2006), p. 361.

have been disproportionately cast on them. It is of course, hard to say whether or not this was ever warranted, or if it was mainly used as a rhetorical tool to subjugate women. More research needs to be done on the social history of poison and women, which is, alas, tangential to the aims of this thesis. What is pertinent, however, is the connection between poison and magic, which may have contributed to the rhetorical ties to women and poison.

*Unlybba*, one of the other OE terms commonly translated as poison, comes from the PG \**lubja-* n., which meant ‘herb, potion’.<sup>26</sup> Most cognates with OE *lybb* mean something like ON *lyf* ‘medicine, healing herb’ or EIfd. *lyv* ‘remedy’. Others like the Go. *lubja-leisei* and OHG *luppi* meant ‘witchcraft’ or ‘poison’ without the addition of a negative prefix. Kroonen explains that the concept of PG \**lubja-* was closely associated with magic, which may be why it becomes negative in some languages and cultures. Magic was also apparently thought to be an aspect of cheese-making as OHG derives *kasi-luppa*, and OE *cies-lyb* ‘rennet’.<sup>27</sup> A look at the many compound words Bosworth and Toller list for *lybb-*, *-lybb*, and *-lybba* outlines the connections between magic, cheese, and purgation, as they include everything from *cies-lyb* ‘cheese-drug, rennet’ to *lyb-corn* ‘a grain of purgative effect’. The other compounds are entirely magical:

*lyb-lac* – Sorcery, witchcraft, the art of using drugs or potions for poisoning or magical purposes.

*lyb-cræft* – Magic, witchcraft

*lyb-læca* – A sorcerer

*unriht-lyblac* – Sorcery

Clearly, there was a connection between magic and herbs which was both feared and revered in early medieval England. This same connection is what links poison and magic; the fear that

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<sup>26</sup> Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, p. 341.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

someone out there, a spurned lover maybe, is going to use their magic and poison you in the night. As we have discussed that *atter* is not the POISON we think of in PDE, but BAD FLUID, poisoning someone with magic did not necessarily mean getting them to ingest literal poison but doing something to turn the fluid in them bad, such as causing them to fall ill.

Crawford draws upon similar ideas to suggest that many passages in the *Leechbooks* ‘attribute all disease to the attacks of supernatural beings’.<sup>28</sup> Hall explains that *ælf* seems to be particularly associated with ‘nocturnal assaults by supernatural beings, internal pains and cutaneous ailments or wounds’ in *Leechbook III*, which, as a whole, is concerned with diabolical threats and ailments in general.<sup>29</sup> So while all diseases were not thought to have been caused by supernatural attacks, there was a fearful predilection for magical/supernatural aetiology. Despite the magical connection, Crawford notes that no particular attention is given to magical women over men in the *Leechbooks*, though Alfred’s laws highlight women who are ‘wont to practise enchantments’.<sup>30</sup> Hall notes that the lack of corresponding OE word to *nympha* seems to suggest that ‘female *ælfe* had a low cultural salience’ for peoples of early medieval England, which suggests that supernatural beings were either a male dominated cultural phenomenon, or that there was no gendered component to them in the cultural zeitgeist.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, there is no particular attention paid to women self-poisoning or poisoning people over men in the OE *History of the World*. This is consistent with modern self-poisoning rates. A modern study done across Europe compiled suicide intent data from 5,212 participants and concluded that the most utilised method of attempted self-killing is intentional drug

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<sup>28</sup> Crawford, Jane, ‘Evidences for Witchcraft in Anglo-Saxon England’ *Medium Aevum*, 32. 2 (1963), pp. 99–116 <doi:10.2307/43627040> (p.105).

<sup>29</sup> Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 104–5.

<sup>30</sup> Crawford, ‘Evidences for Witchcraft’, pp. 106, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Hall, *Elves*, p. 87.

overdose, and that male self-killing attempts using this method are rated as SSA (Serious Suicide Attempt) more frequently than females.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in 2018, suicide by poisoning was the second most common method of suicide, accounting for 17.9% of male suicides and 36.2% of female suicides.<sup>33</sup> Self-poisoning as a self-killing method has gone down since 2001 in England and Wales, which is likely related to restrictions imposed on the availability of drugs used in an overdose.<sup>34</sup> Overall, men kill themselves at a higher rate than women, so while the percentage of women utilizing this method is higher than men, it does not mean that more women kill themselves using this method than men.

While we can assess the rates at which the genders poison themselves now, there are many issues with assessing frequency of self-poisoning in early medieval England. These limitations and problems are discussed in general in the introduction to this thesis. While we do not have many statistics from the pre-modern period, a temporal study on suicide by Kyla Thomas and David Gunnell suggests that ‘self-poisoning also increased in popularity from the 1860s (5% of suicides) to the 1990s (22% of suicides)’.<sup>35</sup>

Though real-world frequencies of all the self-killing methods analysed in this thesis are impossible to do more than speculate on, self-poisoning is one of the most elusive to pin down. There is the same problem with the classification of self-poisoning and self-killing in early

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<sup>32</sup> A. Freeman, and Mergl, R., Kohls, E. *et al.*, ‘A cross-national study on gender differences in suicide intent’ *BMC Psychiatry* 17. 234 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-017-1398-8>> [accessed 7 December 2020]

<sup>33</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Suicides in the UK: 2018 Registrations* (2019) <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2018registrations>> [accessed 7 December 2020]

<sup>34</sup> A study by Cambridge University investigated the factors which contribute to choosing hanging as a suicide method in the UK, with accessibility and ease cited as the main reasons. Lucy Biddle, Jenny Donovan, Amanda Owen-Smith, John Potokar, Damien Longson, Keith Hawton, Nav Kapur, and David Gunnell, ‘Factors Influencing the Decision to Use Hanging as a Method of Suicide: Qualitative Study’ *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 197.4 (2010): 320–25.

<sup>35</sup> Kyla Thomas and David Gunnell, ‘Suicide in England and Wales 1861–2007: a Time-trends Analysis’, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 39.6 (2010), 1464–75 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyq094>> [accessed 2 December 2020].

medieval England as there is now: self-killings, and especially self-poisonings may be recorded as accidental deaths. This is due to social and cultural factors which sway coroners' opinions on whether a suicide narrative can be reconstructed with evidence post-mortem, which is (and was) greatly impacted by religion and taboo. This same issue is also what causes accusations of poisoning to be so heavily swayed by conspiracy and rhetoric. How can we decide whether something was an accident vs a crime? Whether or not there is a criminal narrative.

In present day, men are more likely to be classed as accidental death by drug overdose instead of suicide by overdose/poison because of a lack of self-killing narrative.<sup>36</sup> Again, it is impossible to say whether or not this was the same in early medieval England, however, it is likely that the lack of self-killing recordings in the period had to do with a lack of ability or interest in considering a post-mortem self-killing narrative. What we are left with, then, is the literary references to self-poisonings (as with all the other texts and methods in this thesis). Specifically, for self-poisoning, however, navigating and proclaiming a death as a self-killing by poison would be nearly impossible at the time, as intent needed to be proved for it to be considered a self-killing.<sup>37</sup> Whereas, with self-hangings or stabbings, there is a clear intent to die, poisoning could be blamed on others, a mistake, or magic. This makes self-poisoning particularly well placed for conspiracy theories and rhetorical attacks.

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<sup>36</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Deaths Caused by Suicide by Quarter in England* (2020) <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathscausedbysuicidebyquarterinengland>> [accessed 9 December 2020].

<sup>37</sup> The same is true in the modern day, though to a different extent. The Samaritans 2019 report explains that when narrative verdicts cannot clearly show that an individual intended to take their own life, then the death is coded as a hard-to-code narrative verdict which is coded at large as an accidental death. This system could lead to it looking as though suicide rates are going down when they are not. Moreover, it shows the murkiness of even modern-day self-killing verdicts. Samaritans, *Suicide Statistics Report 2019* (2019), p. 23.

## Self-Poisoning in Old English Literature

### Women and Sorcery

Although we have five mentions of self-poisoning in the OE corpus, they are all written by the same author, in the same text, and happen to people other than those of early medieval England. This is not uncommon; most of the self-killings written about in OE are not contemporary, and yet, they do tell us something about contemporary early medieval thoughts about self-killing even when they omit it, as we can read contrapuntally. For instance, even Ælfric would not write about self-poisoning. Why not? Why mention all the other sordid details of a self-killing and omit poison? Why is self-poisoning only mentioned in the OE *History of the World* if poisoning as a murder method abounds in early medieval English texts? Is it likely that no one poisoned themselves? Why do none of the other famous classical self-poisonings get translated or adapted into OE? Most importantly, what do these five self-killings tell us about the Compiler's thoughts on self-poisoning?

To give answer to some of these questions, let us turn to the first mention in the *History of the World*, Book Three, Chapter Seven when:

sume Romana wif on swylcum scinlace wurdon and on swylcum wodum dreame

þæt hy woldon ælcne mann, ge wif ge wæpned, þæra þe hy mihton, mid atre acwellan,

and on mete oððe on drince to gepicganne gesyllan. [...]

þa wæron ealle þa wif beforan Romana witan gelaðode – þara wæs III hund and LXXX

and þær wæron genydde þæt hy þæt ilce þigedon þæt hy ær oðrum sealdon,

þæt hy þærrhyte deade wæron beforan eallum þam mannum.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> In Book Three Chapter Seven: *The Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius*, trans. by Malcolm Godden (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 164.

(Some Roman women got into such a kind of magic and mad passion that they wanted to kill everyone they could, women and men, with poison, and to put it into food or drink for them to swallow... Then all those women – three hundred and eighty of them – were summoned before the Roman senate and forced to [consume] the same [thing] that they gave to others, with the result that they immediately fell dead in front of everyone).<sup>39</sup>

While the substance here is not mentioned by name (only *atre* is used), it resembles PDE POISON: it is a deadly ingredient which can be *geþicganne* (taken) with *mete* (food) or *drince* (drink). In this mass self-poisoning, the Roman women are sentenced by the senate to kill themselves in the same way they had killed their victims. No additional terms for poison or drink are used, only ‘þæt ilce’ (that same [thing]), which tells us that the Compiler either did not know any other terms for poison in OE or did not feel as though they fit with what was being said. What is more, none of the self-poisoning instances in the *History of the World* use any form of *lybba*, even when referencing magic.

Here, the women are said to have become involved in *scin-lac* ‘magic, necromancy, sorcery’ to the point of *wodum dreame*. The noun *wod*, from which the adjective *wodum* here derives, can refer to madness, or the insane, and *dream* can refer to joy, passion, and the like.<sup>40</sup> In the Latin, this is written as ‘incredibili rabie et amore scelerum Romanae matronae exarserunt’ (the Roman women blazed with incredible madness and love of calamity).<sup>41</sup> Orosius’ *History* uses *rabies* in its ablative singular form six other times, all in reference to men either being

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<sup>39</sup> Godden, *History of the World*, p. 165. The first half of the translation is my own. However, from the ellipses, the rest is Godden’s with only one word that I have emended. Godden chose to translate *þigedon* as ‘drink’ which I changed to ‘consume’ as it could also mean ‘take’. Additionally, where he adds ‘poison’, I add ‘thing’ because there is no word for poison in the line, only the mention of the ‘ilce’ or ‘same’ which needs a noun.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Wod, adj.’ Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*; *Ibid.*, ‘Wod n.’; *Ibid.*, ‘Dream n.’.

<sup>41</sup> The Latin is taken from: Paulus Orosius, *Pauli Orosii Presbyteri Hispani Adversus Paganos Historiarum* (Thorunii, 1857), p. 82. Translation from Fear, *Orosius*, p. 122.

incredibly cruel, angry, or violent in battle.<sup>42</sup> *Wod* has similar, but not exact, connotations; the OE *History of the World* only uses *wod* and its derivatives in this one instance, emphasising the madness of the women's deeds here.<sup>43</sup> After killing an unknown number of people (whose gender is unspecified), the Roman women are called before the senate and forced to kill themselves in the same way that they killed their victims: *mid atre* ('with poison').

Ultimately, this passage highlights that self-killing may have been seen as a just punishment for murder. We cannot say whether the Compiler thought forced self-killing a just end for those in his time or not, but we can say that he did not see fit to erase or amend it. He did, however, add the part about the women putting the poison into victims' food and drinks. In the Latin, it merely says that 'it was indeed a foul and pestilential year and its slaughtered victims were piled up in heaps on all sides. But everyone in their simple credulity still believed that this was caused by a corruption in the air, until a slave-girl came forward and gave compelling evidence'.<sup>44</sup> This seems to be voicing the exact fear that his contemporaries had with women and magic: that they will secretly poison your food and drink.

Ælfric links the domestic sphere to women, magic, and poison in his homily *De Auguriis* (ÆLS (Auguries) B1.3.18)). There, he claims that some women enchant the drinks of their wooers or do 'some wickedness' to their drinks.<sup>45</sup> In the same homily, Ælfric connects sorcery with *brywlace* 'brewing', which was a women's field at the time, and done in the home.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In the battle between Darius and Alexander, it is said that 'all rushed at their enemies' swords in a blind frenzy' where 'frenzy' here is a translation for *rabie*. Tiberius is said to have incredible 'seething frenzy of lust and cruelty' where *rabie* is translated as *frenzy*; Nero's 'wild cruelty'; The Jews' 'wild rage'; Licinius' 'sudden madness'; The Huns' sudden 'anger': Fear, *Orosius*, pp. 135, 326, 334, 344, 370, 382. Paulus, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, pp. 93, 260, 266, 274, 295, 304.

<sup>43</sup> DOEWC search.

<sup>44</sup> Fear, *Orosius*, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> *Sumne wawan*. Walter William Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* (London: Trübner and Company, 1850), p. 374.

<sup>46</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 370; *The Oxford Companion to Beer*, ed. by Garrett Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 848.



Moreover, he connects witches and health, explaining that the ‘fulan wiccan’ (‘foul witch’) gets her knowledge from the devil.<sup>47</sup> Of course, it is unlikely that witches were blamed for self-poisoning. However, in a landscape where food and drink could befall some wickedness, the construction of a self-killing narrative post-mortem becomes even more unlikely, especially if the victim was male, which was the prime target for witches.

While domesticity and poison may be associated with women in medieval England, it was not the case in ancient Rome. There, poisonings and self-poisonings abounded and had no care for gender. Although there are few instances of self-poisoning in the OE *History of the World*, the Compiler does include two by men and one without the mention of gender. Ultimately, it seems as though self-killing by poison was not construed in the same gendered way as murder by poison in early medieval England.

### Poison as Defeat

There does seem to be a connecting thread between the five self-poisonings included in the OE *History of the World*: all the self-poisonings are defeatist. For instance, in Book Four, Chapter Ten, the consul Quintus Fulvius took control of Capua: ‘on þære tide Quintus Fulvius se consul geegsade ealle þa yldestan menn þe on Campina wæron, þæt hy hi sylfe mid attre acwealdon’ (At the same time the consul Quintus Fulvius terrified all the most senior people in Campania so that they killed themselves with poison).<sup>48</sup> Here, the men are *geegsade* ‘terrified’ of Fulvius and what he will do to them now that he has taken over. Rightly so, it seems, as in the Latin, he puts everyone in the senate to death that does not kill themselves even though the Roman senate

<sup>47</sup> *Fulan wiccan*. Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, p. 372.

<sup>48</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, pp. 276–77. Translation and OE from Godden here as I agree with the translation completely.

forbids it.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, *ge-egsian* is an addition by the Compiler and is a word mostly extant in Ælfric's works, the *History of the World*, and the *Pastoral Care*.<sup>50</sup> We must ask ourselves, why might the Compiler have felt the need to include the emotional response of the senators? The most straightforward answer would be that he felt their response (killing themselves with poison) would not make sense to his audience any other way, possibly because there were so many of them and they were in a position of power.

A similar thing happens to two of the other self-poisonings. In Book Four, Chapter Eleven, it says: 'On þære ilcan tide Hannibal his agnum willan hine sylfne mid attre acwealde' (At the same time Hannibal killed himself with poison of his own will).<sup>51</sup> Again, the Compiler takes it upon himself to amend the self-poisoning. In this case, he added 'his agnum willan'. In the Latin, it says, 'cum a Romanis reposceretur, ueneno se necauit' (he killed himself with poison when the Romans demanded).<sup>52</sup> There, it is because he has lost the battle and has to die at the court of King Prusias, according to the Roman's decree. The Compiler seems to be making a statement here about self-killing intentionally or not: no one can be forced to kill themselves if they do not agree. Instead of being put to death or killed, Hannibal takes it upon himself to fulfil the decrees of the court in the Latin version. In the OE, the Compiler simplifies the process and places the entire burden onto Hannibal by adding 'his agnum willan' and removing any mention of force.

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<sup>49</sup> 'At vero in Hispania ambo Scipiones a fratre Hasdrubalis interfecti sunt. In Campania Capua capta est a Q. Fulvio proconsule; principes Campanorum veneno mortem sibi consciuerunt; senatum omnem Capuae etiam prohibente senatu Romano Fulvius suppliciiis necavit.' (Meanwhile in Spain, the two Scipios were killed by Hasrubal's brother, and in Campania, Capua was taken by the proconsul Fulvius. The leading men of Campania resolved to poison themselves to death, Fulvius, as punishment, put all the senate of Capua to death despite the Roman Senate forbidding [it].) Latin from: Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 141.

<sup>50</sup> See 'ge·egesian, ge·egsian', in *Dictionary of Old English*; 'ge·egesod, ge·egsod' in *Dictionary of Old English*.

<sup>51</sup> Here, the translation is my own and the OE is from Godden: *History of the World*, Godden, p. 290.

<sup>52</sup> Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 148.

In Book Five, Chapter Fifteen, the people of Spain who opposed Augustus' reign were besieged in a fortress. The Compiler explains that, because of this siege, 'hi sylfe sume ofslogon, sume mid attre acwealdon, sume hungre acwælan' (some killed themselves: some killed themselves with poison, and some died of hunger).<sup>53</sup> This may be the kindest portrayal of self-poisoning, as the alternative given is dying of hunger. Again, the Compiler changed this section, but in this case, he condensed the Latin and took out the explicit reason for self-killing: 'ad voluntariam mortem seruitutis timore concurrir' (voluntarily took their own lives for fear of slavery).<sup>54</sup> The Compiler obviously did not feel as though it was necessary to mention fear of slavery, even though he previously used *ge-egsian* for another self-poisoning. Given the brevity afforded to this section, it is likely that this erasure is desultory. Still, the Compiler chose to discard both the mention of fear and the explicit 'will' the people had when they took their lives. It is especially interesting, given that the Compiler added these exact points to two of the previous self-poisonings. His changes around self-killing, therefore, do not seem to indicate a desire to avoid the topic, nor a desire to expand on it and profess any specific opinion. Possibly more tellingly, the Compiler seems to treat self-killing the same way he does other murders. I discuss his overall rhetorical position in more detail at the end of this thesis in Chapter Nine, when we have investigated more of his source material in depth.

All the self-poisonings so far (and including Cleopatra) are by people who have been defeated or caught. The Roman women were caught by the senate and sentenced to death; the senators were terrified by what Quintus Fulvius was going to do to them (put them to death); Hannibal was defeated and sentenced to death, and all the Spanish people opposed to Augustus were surrounded. In some of the examples, the Compiler goes out of his way to make the defeat

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<sup>53</sup> Godden, *History of the World*, p. 346.

<sup>54</sup> Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 247.

and own handedness of the poisonings apparent, and in all of them, he uses the phrase *mid atre acwellan*.

The construction *mid atre acwellan* is entirely of the Compiler's design and not copied from the Latin. It is used in all the self-poisonings in the OE Orosius except the Cleopatra episode in Book Five, Chapter Thirteen. *Attre* is placed syntactically before *acwellan* (the kill verb), putting it at the forefront of the reader's minds. Of course, as the Compiler is translating from Latin which places the verb at the end of the clause, it could be that the Compiler was sticking to this form here. However, these exact clauses 'killed with poison' are not present in the Latin for these self-killings. Therefore, it seems most likely that the Compiler put together the sentence based on his own preferences for what to stress.

None of the Compiler's self-poisonings deviate from this model, articulating a preference by the Compiler for putting the method before the result. This is to say that the important thing in the sentence, that poison was used to kill someone, is placed first for all the self-killings. Thus, the Compiler is emphasising the method of killing over the act of self-killing. Moreover, he emphasises the volition of the victim/agent, and points out their emotional state, and frames the act as a choice one can make in the face of death or slavery. None of these self-poisonings are written in an especially negative way. Even the women who got into sorcery are not explicitly framed or named as evil, only insane. While all the agents have been defeated, they are not rhetorically positioned as 'losers'. Of course, the Compiler is toeing a fine line between discussing Rome and Romans as the founders of Christianity, and therefore sanctified by God, and as corrupt pagans swayed by the will of the devil.

Given the emphasis at each turn for putting the stress on poison before killing, it seems likely that self-poisoning and poisoning in general was seen as a step worse than self-killing

itself. This may account for why no one but the Compiler mentions self-poisoning in the OE corpus, even though they had the means both in terms of poison and in terms of texts to copy and translate which include the act.<sup>55</sup> The near erasure of self-poisoning except by one OE author highlights self-poisoning's position as a great and terrible taboo: something only pagans with no other recourse than death would turn to to hasten their end.

Of course, the final self-poisoning in the OE *History of the World* is not treated so much as taboo, but as a painless and preferable end to the same sad fates that were presented to the other self-poisoners. The difference, besides Cleopatra's iconic status, was that Cleopatra did not take poison, but had someone bring her a snake which bit her. The Compiler may have gotten away with treating her self-killing as painless because there was no access to the *Ipnalis* snake in early medieval England, or because she was a powerful woman. The fate of her companion Anthony is not at all painless.

In Book Five, Chapter Thirteen, after Anthony loses in battle, Cleopatra sees the writing on the wall and orders her burying place to be dug. She gets into her death bed, and:

þa het heo niman upnalis þa nædran and don to hire earme, þæt heo hi abite, forþon þe  
 hiere þuhte þæt hit on þam lime unsarast wære. Forþon þe þære nædran gecynd  
 is þæt ælc uht þæs þe hio abit sceal his lif on slæpe geendian. And heo forþam

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<sup>55</sup> Many of Ælfric's sources include self-poisonings – especially Roman sources. Seneca the Younger in Tacitus' *Annals* comes to mind, though his attempt is unsuccessful. See L. Dyson Stephen, 'The Portrait of Seneca in Tacitus' *Arethusa*, 3.1 (1970), 71–83 <[www.jstor.org/stable/26306995](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26306995)> [accessed 10 Dec. 2020]. According to Kaufman, 'Poison was also commonly employed throughout Roman times for suicidal purposes': he explains that Livy 'adds that it was the custom of kings to keep poison in stock, against the uncertainties of fortune' and that Pliny explains that many people ended their lives with poison if 'an incurable malady has rendered existence intolerable. The most excruciating pains, according to this author, are those attendant upon strangury, those arising from maladies of the stomach, and those caused by disorders of the head; it was more generally in these cases that patients were tempted to commit suicide. Elagabalus had poisons at hand with which to kill himself, if need arose, since it had been prophesied that he would die a violent death'. David B. Kaufman, 'Poisons and Poisoning among the Romans', *Classical Philology*, 27.2 (1932), 156–67 (pp. 160–61).

dyde þæt heo nolde þæt hi man drife beforan þam triumphan wið Rome weard.<sup>56</sup>

(Then she called for the *ipnalis* snake, and had it put to her arm, that it might bite her, because she thought that [a bite] on that limb was the most painless, because the snake was of the kind that every creature that the snake bites shall end his life in sleep. And she did it that way because she did not want to be dragged before them in triumph towards Rome.)

This self-killing is constructed in a way that makes self-killing seem like a rational and understandable choice. Cleopatra does not want to be dragged in triumph to Rome, which is likely understandable to the Compiler's audience as a horrible fate, and so she has a snake bite her so that her life ended in sleep. Out of all the self-killings considered in this thesis, the *ipnalis* bite sounds the most pleasant.

Unsurprisingly, the Compiler has made some changes to the Latin. The *ipnalis* is not mentioned in the Latin, nor is the method of death described as 'ending in sleep'. The Latin does include Cleopatra's resolve to not be dragged in triumph towards Rome as her reason for constructing her own death.<sup>57</sup> However, it is certainly not made out to be a painless death in the way the Compiler designs. In the seventh century, Isidore of Seville mentions that the *ipnalis* (here *hypnalis*), is a type of asp, 'so called because it kills by means of sleep (cf. ὕπνος, "sleep").

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<sup>56</sup> Godden, *History of the World*, p. 342.

<sup>57</sup> 'deinde imminente Caesare turbataque ciuitate idem Antonius sese ferro transuerberauit ac semianimis ad Cleopatram in monumentum, in quod se illa mori certa considerat, perlatus est. Cleopatra postquam se ad triumphum seruari intellexit, uoluntariam mortem petens, serpentis, ut putatur, morsu in sinistro tacta brachio exanimis inuenta est, frustra Caesare etiam Psyllos admouente, qui uenena serpentum e uulneribus hominum haustu reuocare atque exsugere solent' (When Caesar was menacing him and the city was in a state of turmoil, Anthony stabbed himself with a sword and was carried half dead to the tomb, where Cleopatra, resolved on death, had concealed herself. Cleopatra, realizing that she would be spared to grace the triumphal procession, sought a voluntary death. She was found dead, having been bitten on her left arm, it is believed, by the fangs of a serpent). Taken from: Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 244.

Cleopatra held this snake to herself and thus was overcome by death as if by sleep'.<sup>58</sup> The Compiler did get some of his extra information from sources such as Isidore and may have felt it pertinent to add exactly how Cleopatra died, as the Latin does not say. Still, in adding the specific snake and supposed feeling of this death, this self-killing is made out to be painless and romantic; the type of self-killing which could be romanticised and idealised. Specifically, the Compiler has added that being bitten on the arm is known to be *unsarast* which is the negative form of *sar* (pain), and a superlative. It is the least painful or most unpainful way to die and that is an addition by the Compiler. Maybe he had a soft spot for Cleopatra, or maybe the Compiler felt as though choosing your own exit in the face of a gruesome death was acceptable. Either way, the Compiler has chosen to portray Cleopatra's death here as the most painless, quick, and sleep-like end in the OE corpus of self-killings. Especially in contrast to Anthony's self-stabbing, Cleopatra's death could be held up as the epitome of good self-killings. What it lacks is ease of access.

The *ipnalis* is only mentioned this one time in the OE corpus.<sup>59</sup> The asp, *aspis*, is mentioned in the *Pastoral Care* four times, and in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* once.<sup>60</sup> Although poison was accessible in many forms, venomous snakes were not. This may be why there is a difference in treatments of these two types of self-poisoning. Whereas self-killing by poisonous substance is still treated as unspeakable, self-poisoning by venomous snake is held up as a sort of good death, likely because it was impossible to replicate in early medieval England.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 256.

<sup>59</sup> This fact was created through a DOEWC search for 'ipnalis', and variant spellings and pieces: hypnalis; hipnalis; pnal; ipnal.

<sup>60</sup> 'aspide', *Dictionary of Old English Online*.

<sup>61</sup> The distinction between poison and venom here is my own and not something I think was held as an idea in early medieval England. It is used here for clarification for the reader.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, self-poisonings likely were something early medieval people in England did but proving that they killed themselves with poison post-mortem would have been nearly impossible at the time (and to reconstruct now). This chapter outlined the availability of poison in early medieval England and proved that access to it was possible through trade, agriculture, and the foraging and gardening of indigenous flora. It explained that self-poisoning was an uncommon self-killing method at the time; however, the rarity of poisoning as a self-killing method was likely due to the impossibility of toxicology reports to confirm the death as a poisoning, instead of an illness or act of God. Although we have no way of knowing the percentage of actual instances of poisoning or self-poisoning at the time, we can conclude that poisoning was, and is, rhetorically positioned as a women's method of murder, but not as a gendered method of self-killing. Although there are few instances of self-poisoning in the OE *History of the World*, the Compiler does include two by men, one by a woman (Cleopatra), and one without the mention of gender. Ultimately, it seems as though self-killing by poison was not construed in the same gendered way as murder by poison in early medieval England.

While this thesis did not have the time or space to discuss reasonings for self-killings in detail, it does explain that all the self-poisonings are clearly positioned as the result of some form of defeat. Rhetorically, self-poisonings in OE (as in PDE) are positioned as a painless method of death. Whether that is true or not is an entirely different issue.<sup>62</sup> As self-poisoning is positioned rhetorically as painless, it is also typified as the death one might choose to give themselves in lieu of being murdered, sold as a slave, or taken hostage in some other form. Ultimately, this may be

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<sup>62</sup> Modern studies have gone into the problems with this in-depth, as there is a disconnect from how painful some methods of suicide are and how they are portrayed in the media. Many people choose methods like hanging because it is portrayed as quick and painless and are then shocked by the actuality of it.



why Ælfric avoided discussions of self-poisoning. He may have also believed in it as a painless method, and therefore did not want to draw further attention to a method that the *History of the World* Compiler described as like going to sleep.

## Chapter Seven: Self-Immolation

Self-immolation in OE literature is relayed as an emotional reaction to grief, distress, and fear. Three self-immolations are referenced in the OE version of *History of the World*, and one self-immolation is mentioned by Ælfric of Eynsham in *The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria* (ÆLS (Chrysanthus) B1.3.33)). The act of self-immolation is one of the few methods women are recorded to have used in OE, along with hanging and poisoning. However, I have found no evidence of self-immolation having a gendered connotation to tenth-century writers in England. All the self-immolations mentioned, in fact, are not contemporary accounts, and none of them take place in Britain.

It is likely that self-immolation is something foreign and Other to the OE writers and readers. We must acknowledge the unknowable here: although the only remaining record of self-immolation in OE is temporally, geographically, and culturally different than the peoples writing about it, that does not mean that no one in early medieval England killed themselves by burning themselves alive. The written record rhetorically positions self-immolation as something Other: it only happens to pagan peoples. There is a good reason for this. Hoggett explains that the archaeological evidence for cremation ceases in early medieval England with the advent of Christianity. He argues that cremation remained an ‘anathema for Anglican Christians until the nineteenth century, for in more recent times it was seen to prevent the possibility of resurrection’.<sup>1</sup> There was a similar cessation of cremations in the late Roman period, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Rik Hoggett, ‘Charting Conversion: Burial as a Barometer of Belief?’, in *Early Medieval Mortuary Practices*, ed. by Sarah Semple and Howard Williams, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 14 (Oxford: Oxford School of Archaeology, 2007), p. 197.

population became Christianised and the resultant Christians began to inhume their dead.<sup>2</sup> Carver argues that the Sutton Hoo burial complex and other cremations after the advent of Christians in early medieval England, were overly political statements of pagan defiance. Hoggett adds that cremation became ‘a totemic pagan rite’ as it was fundamentally at odds with early Christian ideology.<sup>3</sup> Cremation practices in the literature were circulated in early medieval England, as with the self-immolations of women in early Icelandic sagas, or the practice of burning halls as a form of attack, which is alluded to in *Beowulf* (as the burning of Heorot) and the beginning of the *Finnsburg Fragment*.<sup>4</sup> Both examples, while circulated in Christian early medieval England, are rooted in pre-Christian oral tradition.<sup>5</sup> Thus, nothing in the extant record points to cremation or self-immolation as an early medieval English practice. Instead, the record positions cremation and self-immolation as something pagan, and Other. Although the method of self-killing is recorded only as something other peoples do, that does not mean it is always negatively treated.

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<sup>2</sup> Cremation ceased in more groups than just the Romans as Christianity spread across early medieval Europe. While it may be overly simplistic to suggest a clear cut off between ‘pagan’ cremation and ‘Christian’ inhumation, the disparity and dislike on behalf of the Christians for anything but inhumation is agreed upon by most scholars who research funerary practices from late antiquity through to the early medieval periods: Jon Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999); Robert A. Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain: A Survey of Grave Treatment and Furnishing A.D. 43–410* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1991); David Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003); David Petts, *Pagan and Christian: Religious Change in Early Medieval Europe* (Bristol, Bristol Classical Press, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Hoggett, ‘Charting Conversion’, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the self-immolations of Signý and Brynhildr in the Northern traditions of the Volsunga Saga, and Guðrún in some versions of *Atlakviða*, see: Kirsi Kanerva, ‘Female Suicide in Thirteenth-Century Iceland: The Case of Brynhildr in *Völsunga Saga*’ *Viator*, 49.3 (2018), 129–54; for some comments on the burning of Heorot and the *Finnsburg* fragment, see: Norman E. Eliason, ‘The Burning of Heorot’, *Speculum*, 55.1 (1980), 75–83.

<sup>5</sup> For the seminal application of oral-formulaic theory to *Beowulf*, see Francis P. Magoun, ‘Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry’, *Speculum*, 28.3 (1953), 446–67. For more on the development of the original theory, see John Miles Foley, *Oral-formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (London: Garland, 1985), and more recently Karl Reichl, *Medieval Oral Literature* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2011) and Paul Acker, *Revising Oral Theory: Formulaic Composition in Old English and Old Icelandic Verse* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

### Hasdrubal's Wife

The first, and most straightforward, is the self-immolation of the wife of King Hasdrubal in the *OE History of the World*. The OE in Book Four Chapter Thirteen states that: ‘se cyning Hasterbal hine sylfne acwealde, and his wif mid hyre twam sunum hi sylfe forbærnde for þæs cyninges deaðe’.<sup>6</sup> (The king Hasdrubal killed himself, and his wife with her two sons burned herself [to death] because of the king’s death.) King Hasdrubal killed himself, likely because he did not want to face a disastrous defeat at the hands of Scipio Africanus.<sup>7</sup>

The wife of Hasdrubal is not given a name in any of the sources, but she is presumed to be from Iberia.<sup>8</sup> The OE only mentions Hasdrubal’s wife at the time of her death. Compared with the Latin original and Greek sources, the OE is lacking. It omits the ironic mention of the temple of Aesculapius, the god of health and healing. This is the temple in which the deserters and Hasdrubal’s wife and children burn to death. It is not the only time that the OE Compiler chose to omit an episode of self-killing in the temple of Aesculapius – Paulus Orosius included this twice.<sup>9</sup> It is probable that the Compiler thought the irony would be missed by a tenth-century audience. In the Latin, Paulus Orosius says that:

rex Hasdrubal se ultro dedit. transfugae, qui Aesculapii templum occupauerant, uoluntario praecipitio dati igne consumpti sunt. uxor Hasdrubalis se duosque filios secum uirili dolore

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<sup>6</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, pp. 296–97.

<sup>7</sup> It seems clear that self-killing to avoid disastrous defeat in battle may have been a contentious subject at this time. More research in this area would be beneficial in the future.

<sup>8</sup> Lauren Hammersen, ‘Indigenous Women in Gaul, Britannia, Germania, and Celtic Hispania, 400 BC–AD 235’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Bangor University, 2017), p. 107.

<sup>9</sup> Fimbria dies by his own hand in the temple of Aesculapius, which is mentioned in the Latin in Book 6, 2.11. Fear, *Orosius*, p. 267. A few other instances of self-killing or deaths occur outside Pagan temples, but they do not carry the same irony.

et furore femineo in medium iecit incendium, eundem nunc mortis exitum faciens nouissima regina Carthagini, quem quondam prima fecisset.<sup>10</sup>

(The king, Hasdrubal, voluntarily surrendered. The deserters who seized the temple of Aesculapius voluntarily threw themselves headlong into the fire and were destroyed.

Hasdrubal's wife with manly pain and womanly fury hurled herself and her two sons into the middle of the same fire. And so, the last queen of Carthage went to death in the same act as did the first).

The Latin references the self-immolation of Elissa (Dido), but neither the Latin nor the Old English versions mention Elissa's self-immolation when they discuss the creation of Carthage.<sup>11</sup> This is possibly because Carthage is known to Paulus Orosius and the Compiler as the conversion and birthplace of many great theologians.<sup>12</sup> To mention her self-killing at the birth of Carthage would certainly colour readings of Carthage as pagan and negative. Orosius avoids condemning Carthage in this way, much as he does with Rome, by suggesting that it was not wholly bad, though it was ruled without Christian morality.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to omitting Dido's self-killing, Orosius' version does not mention that Hasdrubal kills himself. It only says that he 'voluntarily gave up' (*ultra dedit*). *Do* can mean 'to put to death' as well as 'surrender' which is likely what would happen to Hasdrubal by surrendering.<sup>14</sup> Though it insinuates Hasdrubal's coming death, Orosius' version does not have

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<sup>10</sup> Paulus Orosius, *Pauli Orosii Presbyteri Hispani Adversus Paganos Historiarum* (Harvard: Sumptibus Ernesti Lambeccii, 1857), p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 236, Fear, *Orosius*, p. 163.

<sup>12</sup> Cyprian, St. Augustine, Tertullian, etc... By the time Orosius was writing, Carthage was known as the archiepiscopal seat of Northern Africa. See Matthew Bunson, 'Carthage', *Encyclopaedia of the Roman Empire* (New York: Facts on File, 2002), 97–98.

<sup>13</sup> Orosius explains that God put in place the four great empires which have dominated history (Carthage included). When he details the history of Carthage, Orosius' aim, according to Van Nuffelen, is to make his readers tear up, which they would only fail to do if they are pagan. See Peter Van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 47, 70–72.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis and Short, *Latin*, pp. 604–5.

him kill himself outright. Therefore, Hasdrubal's wife is not clearly killing herself because of her husband's self-killing in the Latin. Instead, Orosius says she does so because of her 'manly pain and womanly fury' (*uirili dolore et furore femineo*).

*Furor*, according to Lewis and Short, refers to a 'raging, raving (in sickness or violent passion) rage, madness, fury'.<sup>15</sup> The term is related to the root *furo*, from which *furia* 'fury, rage' and the name for the three goddesses of vengeance, the *furiae*, derive.<sup>16</sup> Thornton argues that the noun *furor* 'usually has negative connotations' though concedes that the verb is more complex.<sup>17</sup> Braund and Gilbert explain that human *furor* can be so excessive and have such negative moral implications in classical literature, that even the Furies do not get involved.<sup>18</sup> Braund and Gilbert's study on classical anger stops short of investigating what they call 'outside influence' which engenders anger, which means that much of their focus does not look at *furor*, or madness/frenzy.<sup>19</sup> Malegam similarly points to the 'madness' aspect of *furor* in his article on anger in medieval conversion narratives. There, he explains that *furor* typically describes the state of the possessed person when they are being exorcised.<sup>20</sup> It is likely that Orosius uses *furor* in the sense of 'fury/anger' and calls upon its connection to the Furies and 'madness' through the addition of *femineo*. This is not the only time Orosius uses such a description, which helps us understand what sort of connotations the phrase would have for him, and in addition, what it means for the Compiler to have omitted it.

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis and Short, *Latin*, p. 797.

<sup>16</sup> De Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin*, p. 252; Lewis and Short, *Latin*, p. 796.

<sup>17</sup> Susanna Braund, and Glenn W. Most, *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, Yale Classical Studies, 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 256.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 266.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 281.

<sup>20</sup> Jehangir Yezdi Malegam, 'Evangelic Provocation: Location of Anger in Medieval Conversion Narratives', *Literature Compass*, 13.6 (2016), 372–88 (p. 21).

In Book Five Chapter Sixteen, there is a series of self-killings by Cimbrian women in Gaul at the end of the Cimbric war. The men lose in battle, and then their wives take up arms and fight back against the Romans. When they lose, they kill themselves instead of being captured. Orosius explains that the women acted with ‘manly strength/virtue’ (*ui uirili*).<sup>21</sup> One woman had even ‘placed a noose around the necks of her two sons and attached it to her feet, so that when she flung herself down to be hanged, she dragged her children to their doom with her’.<sup>22</sup> While violent, it is not as visceral as the description of what the Romans were doing to terrify them: stripping the skin and hair from their heads and leaving them disgraced by this dishonourable sort of wound’.<sup>23</sup> The methods of death are explicitly called ‘*multa ac miserabilia mortis genera*’ (many and pitiful forms of death), but the women are commended afterwards for having ‘*ui uirili*’ (a man’s strength) to slaughter themselves and their children.<sup>24</sup> *Ui*, from *vis*, typically means ‘strength, physical or mental; force, vigour, power, energy, virtue’.<sup>25</sup> By rounding up the explanation of the deaths with this positively connoted noun, Paulus Orosius seems to be commending the Cimbrian women for their self-killing acts, merging it with what are seen as acts of bravery. This section on the death of the Cimbrian women is omitted in the OE.

Returning to the death of Hasdrubal’s wife in Book Four, Chapter Thirteen, the Latin is likely conflating the idea of escaping slavery through self-killing as a kind of positive route. While Orosius does not discuss the morality of self-killing, it seems as though he was comfortable with it if one had a good reason to do so, to escape slavery or worse treatment for

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<sup>21</sup> Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 182.

<sup>22</sup> Fear, *Orosius*, p. 237.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 182.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 1997.

instance. As Hasdrubal's wife and the Cimbrian women do the 'manly' thing and kill themselves instead of enduring this fate, the text commends them.

The OE, by comparison, does not. It includes the idea that Hasdrubal's wife would be taken as a slave, but only because prior to Hasdrubal's demise, the OE says that Scipio fought against Carthage for six days until 'þa burhware bædon þæt hy moston beon heora underþeowas, þa hy bewerian ne mihton' (the citizens asked that they might be their slaves, as they could not defend themselves).<sup>26</sup> While this is less clear than the Latin, it alludes to the fact that Hasdrubal's wife killed herself so as not to become a slave. While the cause is still the same, the Compiler did not choose to retell the self-killing as a noble end.

Both the Latin and OE versions are more succinct than their classical counterparts. Polybius, one of Orosius' sources, calls Hasdrubal 'an empty-headed braggart and very far from being a competent statesman or general' and goes on to list his incompetencies in battle.<sup>27</sup> Appian, another of Orosius' sources, states that Hasdrubal switches sides and this is what causes Hasdrubal's wife to kill herself and her children. He states that she turned to Hasdrubal and called him:

ὦ μαρὲ καὶ ἄπιστε καὶ μαλακώτατε ἀνδρῶν, ἐμὲ μὲν καὶ τοὺς ἐμοὺς παῖδας τόδε τὸ πῦρ θάψει· σὺ δὲ τίνα κοσμῆσεις θρίαμβον ὅτῃς μεγάλης Καρχηδόνος ἡγεμῶν; τίνα δ' οὐ δώσεις δίκην τῷδε ᾧ παρακαθέζῃ; τὸσαῦτ' ὄνειδίσασα κατέσφαξε τοὺς παῖδας, καὶ ἐς τὸ πῦρ αὐτούς τε κατέαυτὴν ἐπέρριπεν.

(Oh traitor, most effeminate of men, this fire will entomb me and my children. Will you, the leader of great Carthage, decorate a Roman triumph? Ah, what punishment will you

<sup>26</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 298.

<sup>27</sup> Polybius, "Histories, Book 38", ed. by H. J. Edwards (*Penelope.Uchicago.Edu*, Web. 2020) <[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/38\\*.html#7](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/38*.html#7)> [accessed 21 August 2021].



not receive from him at whose feet you are now sitting.” Having reproached him thus, she slew her children, flung them into the fire, and plunged in after them. Such, they say, was the death of the wife of Hasdrubal, which would have been more becoming to himself).<sup>28</sup>

Appian’s version clearly commends Hasdrubal’s wife. Both Orosius and the Compiler use Appian as a source, but both authors omitted this detailed scene, opting instead for less and less noble ends. I will focus on two possible reasons for this: the first, is that this scene was emended to make self-killing in general less noble, and the second, to make women seem less noble than men. I find it more likely that the OE Compiler, was comfortable with the idea of a noble self-killing, but uncomfortable with a wife being stronger and more virtuous than her husband; especially by taking on a role in which he is supposed to have.

The Compiler also chose to omit the end of the Cimbrian war, which depicts women fighting for their homes and then gruesomely taking their own lives. The war is depicted in a short summary and explains merely that two hundred thousand Gauls (Cimbri, Teutons, and Ambrons) were killed, including their leader, and eighty thousand were captured.<sup>29</sup> Of course, the Compiler may have other reasons for shortening this section; however, it is telling that he chose to omit the few sections from the Latin, famous as they were, which detail noble, yet bloody, female self-killings. One could argue that he was troubled by women killing themselves, and yet, he has the most recorded female self-killings in the entire corpus found by this thesis. It seems more likely, then, that the Compiler disagreed to some degree with women upstaging men in battles, and/or taking on their roles.

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<sup>28</sup> Appian, *The Foreign Wars*, trans. by Horace White (New York: Macmillan, 1899), p. 52. Also, Appian, *The Foreign Wars*, ed. by L. Mendelssohn (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879), *Perseus Tufts Online*, <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0229%3Atext%3DPun.%3Achapter%3D19>> [accessed 21 August 2021].

<sup>29</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 324.

## Sardanapalus

The second of the self-immolations seems to point to anxiety about transgressing gender roles in the OE Compiler's choice of omission. Again, the Compiler keeps the self-killing of Sardanapalus intact in Book One, Chapter Twelve, but omits the more outrageous bits of role swapping.

Scholars now know that Sardanapalus is a legend and not a historical individual.<sup>30</sup> Those who assume that there is some fact to the legend seem to think that Sardanapalus is a conflation of three Assyrian kings: Ashurbanipal, Šamaš-šuma-ukin, and Sîn-šar-iškun.<sup>31</sup> The name Sardanapalus is of Greek origin, like the legend of Sardanapalus himself.<sup>32</sup> The Greeks had their very own version of the world, which included different names for some of the Middle Eastern peoples. Along with the name change, the Greeks tended to view Mesopotamian kings as 'dull and effeminate despots who had led their empires to ruin'.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, this was not the view of the Assyrians at the time nor after. Rosa argues that the subversion of gender roles was a way for the Greeks to express their opinions on the cultural differences between them and the Assyrians.<sup>34</sup> Certain word choices highlight the Greeks' opinions on the shifting legend of Sardanapalus, which is the version the Compiler was familiar with. Diodorus is the first extant text which mentions Sardanapalus and his effeminate behaviour, which many Greeks and

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<sup>30</sup> Carla Pomarè, 'Sardanapalus, or, Romantic Drama Between History and Archaeology', *DQR Studies in Literature*, 55 (2015), 225–78 (pp. 255, 278). *ProQuest* <<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1750977329>> [accessed 23 Sep. 2020].

<sup>31</sup> Maria de Fatima Rosa, 'The Legend of Sardanapalus: From Ancient Assyria to European Stages and Screens', in *Intelligence, Creativity and Fantasy*, ed. by Mário S. Ming Kong, Maria do Rosário Monteiro, and Maria João Pereira Neto, Proceedings of the 5th International Multidisciplinary Congress (London: CRC Press, 2020), p. 328.

<sup>32</sup> Matt Waters, *Ctesias' Persica and Its Near Eastern Context* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> De Fatima Rosa, 'The Legend of Sardanapalus', p. 327.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

Romans afterwards copy until the legend of Sardanapalus that we see in Orosius comes to be. Loehr suggests that Polybius' use of *ἔρασθαι* (love) is a sign of undue bias by the historian. In the case of Sardanapalus, it points to Polybius' emotional response to Sardanapalus' possible love for other men.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, while there is likely little truth to the legend, the tale, diction, and syntax tell us a lot about the different peoples writing and circulating it.

For example, the death of Sardanapalus undergoes several omissions and emendations in the OE that erase and muddy Sardanapalus' reason for killing himself. In the Latin, it is clear why he decided to end his life:<sup>36</sup>

Anno ante urbem conditam LXVIII nouissimus apud Assyrios regnauit Sardanapallus, uir muliere corruptior: qui inter scortorum greges feminae habitu purpuram colo tractans a praefecto suo Arbato, qui tunc Medis praeerat, visus atque exsecrationi habitus, mox etiam excitis Medorum populis ad bellum provocatus et victus ardenti pyrae se iniecit. exin regnum Assyriorum in Medos concessit.<sup>37</sup>

(64 years before the foundation of the city, Sardanapulus, the last king of the Assyrians reigned, a man more corrupt than women. Arbatus, his prefect, who was then governing Media, saw him among a crowd of prostitutes dressed as a woman and working purple on a distaff, and cursed him. The Medes rebelled, forcing the king to fight them and on his

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<sup>35</sup> Regina Marie Loehr, "Emotions in Polybius' 'Histories'", *Doctoral Thesis* (Santa Barbara: University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017), *ProQuest*. p. 80 [accessed 23 Sep. 2020].

<sup>36</sup> There are three mentions of Sardanapalus in the Latin Orosius: 12.2 p. 62 'For since the kingdom of the Assyrians lasted for 1,160 years down to the time of Sardanapulus, was ruled by almost 50 kings' and 2.2 p. 74: 'For a long time the kingdom of the Assyrians stood with its power unshaken, but when Arbatus, whom some call Arbaces, the governor of the Medes and himself a Mede, slew his king, Sardanapulus, in Babylon, he handed over both the name of the kingdom and its power to the Medes'. See: *Orosius: Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. by A. T. Fear, *Translated Texts for Historians*, 54 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> Book 1 Chapter 19; Fear, *Orosius*, p. 67.

defeat, he cast himself onto a blazing funeral pyre. From that time the kingdom of the Assyrians passed into the hands of the Medes.)<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, Sardanapalus killed himself because he was defeated by Arbatus. However, his defeat came about because Arbatus saw him crossdressing among prostitutes, possibly insinuating that Sardanapalus enjoyed the female position in sex (i.e., being penetrated).<sup>39</sup> This causes Arbatus to betray Sardanapalus. The idea of their leader being penetrated (and enjoying it) is too much for Arbatus to bear. We are, as readers, supposed to understand this as the ultimate corruption for Sardanapalus, who is ‘more corrupt’ than women. As with many of the pagan self-killings, Sardanapalus’ self-killing is a choice between a death of his own choosing, or one chosen for him. The OE expands on Sardanapalus’ corruption, but omits the line about Arbatus seeing him dressed as a woman among prostitutes:

Ær ðæm ðe Rome burh getimbred wære feower and syxtig wintra, ricsade Sardanapolus, se cyning, in Asiria, þær Ninus se cyninge ærest ricsade, and Sarðanapolus wæs se siðmesta cyninge, þe on þæm lande ricsode. He wæs stiðe furðumlic man, and hnesclic, and swyðe wræne, swa þæt he swiðor lufade wifa gebæra, þonne wæpned-manna. Þæt þa onfunde Arbatus his ealdor-man, þe he geset hæfde ofer Meðas þæt land, he ongan sirwan mid þam folce þe he ofer wæs, hu he hine beswican mihte, and aspeon him fram ealle, þa þe he ondred þæt him on fylste beon woldon. Þa se cyning þæt onfunde, þæt him man geswicen hæfde, he ða hine sylfne forbærnde; and syððan hæfdon Mæðe onwald ofer Asirie.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Men in ancient Rome could be put into the category of *cinaedus* (not-men) depending on their preference for a particular kind of penetrating activity. See: Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, 2nd edn, Ancient Cultures (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p. 281; Todd W. Reeser, *Setting Plato Straight: Translating Ancient Sexuality in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2016).

<sup>40</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 86.

(Sixty-four winters before the city of Rome was built, the King Sardanapalus ruled in Assyria, where Ninus was first the King, and Sardanapalus was the last king who ruled in that land. He was a very indulgent man, and effeminate, and very lascivious, so that he more loved the demeanour of women than men. Then when Arbatus, his ealdor-man, whom he had set over the land of the Medes, found this out, he [Arbatus] began to plot with the people that he was over, how he might deceive him [Sardanapalus], and entice him from all those who he dreaded might support him. When the king found out that he [Arbatus] had deceived him, he [Sardanapalus] then burned himself; and afterwards the Medes became rulers over Assyria)

The OE description explains that Sardanapalus was ‘a very indulgent man, and effeminate, and very lascivious’ (*stiðe furðumlic man, and hnesclīc, and swyðe wræne*). *Furðumlic* is a *hapax legomenon*, meaning that it is only recorded once, and its meaning is the topic of some debate. The DOE summarises that it may be a corruption of *fordomlic* ‘very glorious/powerful’ or, less probably, of *fordemedlic* ‘deserving condemnation’.<sup>41</sup> It explains that the word is interpreted as ‘luxurious’ or ‘extravagant’ through what it calls an ‘implausible association with *furpum*’. The implausible association comes from an unattested adjectival sense of ‘excessive’ or ‘remarkable’, using the ON *furðuligr* ‘wonderful, wondrous’, which is only attested in much later texts. Although it is less likely that *furðumlic* is a corruption of *fordemedlic* from spelling alone, a comparison with the Latin makes this more likely than *fordomlic*. The Latin explains that Sardanapalus was a man more corrupt than a woman (*uir muliere corruptior*) which makes *fordemedlic* ‘deserving condemnation’ a more likely translation than ‘very glorious’, but only if the OE similarly looks harshly upon Sardanapalus.

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<sup>41</sup> ‘fordemedlic’, *Dictionary of Old English: A to H online*.

The second adjective describing Sardanapalus in the OE is yet another crux. The DOE copies Bosworth and Toller in the assumption that *hnesclīc* means ‘soft, effeminate, unmanly’ and only cites two instances where that is true, one of which is this description of Sardanapalus.<sup>42</sup> While it is certainly possible that *hnesclīc* has this meaning, it seems more likely that it means ‘soft’ or ‘delicate’, and that the assumption of ‘effeminate’ when applied to a man is a lapse into literary interpretation by scholars pressing their own cultural assumptions of masculinity onto the text. When not applied to a man, the DOE suggests that the derived adverb *hnesclice* means ‘of catering to one’s stomach: tenderly, luxuriously’ or ‘of tolerating faults / sins: indulgently, leniently’. Bosworth and Toller and Hall give ‘nesh’ as a reflex of and definition for *hnesce*, *hnesclīc* and *hnesclice*, which the OED explains can mean ‘easily yielding to temptation; inclined to lust or wantonness’.<sup>43</sup> This is likely how lexicographers reached the conclusion that *hnesclīc* means ‘effeminate’ when applied to a man, and that *hnesce* means ‘delicate’, ‘weak’, or ‘lustful’ when applied to a woman. As the adjective is not frequently applied to men, I find it probable that there is little difference in denotative meaning. *Delicate*, *weak*, or *lustful* would certainly apply to Sardanapalus, with the inferred assumption that he is being categorised as UNMAN-LIKE – though UNMAN-LIKE for the early English does not correspond with *unmanly* to readers of this thesis, nor does the concept of a man in general.<sup>44</sup>

The Lat. does explain that Arbatus, his prefect, saw Sardanapalus ‘among a crowd of prostitutes in women’s dress working purple on a distaff’ (*inter scortorum greges feminae habitu*

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<sup>42</sup> ‘hnesc-lic’, *Dictionary of Old English: A to H online*.

<sup>43</sup> ‘hnesce, adj’, Bosworth-Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/19362>> [accessed 8 September 2021]; Hall, *A Concise Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon*, p. 188; ‘nesh, adj., n., and adv.’ *OED Online* <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/126236?rskey=wJlr64&result=1&isAdvanced=false>> [accessed 8 September 2021].

<sup>44</sup> Early medieval masculinities are themselves the topic of multiple academic tomes and vast discourses. For an introduction to the topic, see: Dawn M. Hadley, *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 1998); Clare A. Lees, Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara, *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

*purpuram colo tractans*). A distaff is known to symbolise the female sex, and the colour purple would have symbolised nobility. Certainly, no prostitute could afford to wear purple. The mention of these two combined is enough to point to Sardanapalus' deviant gender and likely sexual behaviour.

The OE does not include this specifically, but the use of *hnesclīc* may be a summary of Sardanapalus' cross-dressing and deviant behaviour which is described in the Latin. Of course, following both cruxes, there is another adjective which could be read as indicating deviant sexual behaviour. The OE says 'he was a very indulgent man, and effeminate, and very lascivious' (*he wæs stiðe furðumlic man, and hnesclīc, and swyðe wræne*). *Wræne* commonly glosses the Latin *lascivus* or *petulans*, meaning 'lascivious/lustful' or 'insolent/wanton' respectively, and can be used for both men and women.<sup>45</sup>

Instead of copying the Latin and suggesting that Sardanapalus was caught cross-dressing in purple with some prostitutes, the OE condemns him with the comment: 'swa þæt he swiðor lufade wifa gebæra, þonne wæpned-manna' (so that he more loved the demeanour/state of women than men). *Ge-bæru* is defined by Bosworth and Toller as 'bearing, state, habit or disposition of body or mind, manner, conduct, behaviour, demeanour, manners in society, society [...] gestus, habitus, mores, consortium, consuetudo'.<sup>46</sup> The OE states that Sardanapalus' preference for women's *ge-bæru* is what Arbatus finds out. Clark suggests that it is probable that the secular assumption was that it was acceptable to be the penetrator in a sexual activity with both men and women, but that 'passivity and effeminacy were strongly stigmatised'.<sup>47</sup> Thus,

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<sup>45</sup> Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, pp. 1058, 1396.

<sup>46</sup> 'ge-bæru', *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, <<https://bosworthtoller.com/13575>> [accessed 8 September 2021].

<sup>47</sup> David Clark, 'Attitudes to Same-Sex Activity in Anglo-Saxon England: earg, the Penitentials, and OE bædling', in *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 19.

engaging in sexual relations with a member of the same sex was not stigmatised, but receiving penetration or taking the ‘passive’ role in sex, was.<sup>48</sup> While Sardanapalus does not strictly kill himself because he was discovered to enjoy either the company of women, dressing as a woman, or having sex in the female position (i.e., being a bottom), it *is* what turned Arbatus against him. It is this betrayal that causes Sardanapalus to immolate himself. There is a plethora of queer readings we could apply to this, but they would be mere speculation, and more telling of us than of the Compiler. Whether *ge-bæru* points to Sardanapalus’ gender performance or his sexual preference, or both, is not clear. What is certain, is that the Compiler chose to reduce Sardanapalus’ clearly deviant gender performance and implied sexual deviance to a few specific terms. The terms he chose were likely not frequent, as we have no extant record of them.

That could point to the fact that the Compiler did not know what to say about it, and simultaneously, did not want to spend long explaining Sardanapalus’ lurid behaviour. Instead of omitting it entirely, which could point to the Compiler finding the whole thing unspeakable, the Compiler reduced the scene to a general statement on what Sardanapalus enjoyed: *being a woman*; whether that means physically, performatively, intellectually, or sexually, we can only guess. Someone may later do a study on the Compiler’s specific responses to gender performance and deviant sexuality which would shed a greater light on his perception. For now, this thesis will only focus on what is said around the self-killings, and what we can infer from them.

Sardanapalus’ death is mentioned three other times in the OE *History of the World* (more than in the original Latin). All three use the verb *ofslean* to explain what happens to Sardanapalus, and do not suggest that it was a self-killing. *Ofslean* is used for self-killings, or

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<sup>48</sup> Clark, ‘Attitudes to Same-Sex Activity in Anglo-Saxon England’.



murders, especially violent ones.<sup>49</sup> Using it to describe a self-immolation is not necessarily out of the ordinary, though one would typically expect the author to explain that the character slayed himself. Instead, we are told the Assyrian empire fell ‘after their King Sardanapalus was killed (*æfter ðæm þe mon hiora cyninge ofsloh Sarðanopolum*), and an explanation of how ‘it was never without war until Sardanapalus was slain’ (*hit na buton gewinne næs, oþ þæt Sarðanopolim ofslegen wearð*).<sup>50</sup>

The third time his death is mentioned, the Compiler says not only that Sardanapalus was killed, but that Arbatus killed him: ‘Arbatus Meða ealdor man Sarðanopolum Babylonia cyninge ofsloh’ (Arbatus, governor of the Medes, killed Sardanapalus, the King of Babylon).<sup>51</sup> This could be because the legend is based on multiple historic people with different deaths, which results in a differing account of the legendary king. Or it could be due to the fact that the Compiler felt that Sardanapalus’ self-killing was simultaneously his own choice *and* a murder by Arbatus. The Compiler may have seen both to be true: that Sardanapalus killed himself because of Arbatus’ betrayal, and that Arbatus’ betrayal was what killed Sardanapalus. By saying that Arbatus *ofsloh* Sardanapalus, the Compiler is equating Sardanapalus’ death with other grisly murders. *Ofslean* is only used to refer to especially negative killings, including self-murders, and its use here may refer to the fact that the compiler felt that Arbatus shared the blame for Sardanapalus’ self-killing. Alternatively, the Compiler may have conflated different deaths because there were three kings on whom Sardanapalus is based, and therefore, competing accounts in the Greek and Latin sources.

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix A. Once in Book One Chapter Eight (Godden, *History of the World*, p. 72), and twice on the same page in Book Two Chapter One (Godden, *History of the World*, p. 100).

<sup>50</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 100; 70.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

While other explanations may be equally valid, based on the way the Compiler treats gender roles as strict and immovable, it seems plausible that the Compiler felt as though self-killing and being murdered were equally valid ends for the deviant Sardanapalus. He metaphorically jumped into the fire by dressing as a woman or enjoying anal sex, or both, which is what the Compiler insinuates when he says that Sardanapalus loved the *ge-bæru* (bearing/disposition/state) of women. We, as readers, are left to interpret whatever that means. The Compiler leads us to the worst conclusion our minds as readers can offer, by saying that *this* is what caused Arbatus to turn on Sardanapalus.

### **The Numantians**

The final mention of self-immolation in the OE Orosius is in Book Five, Chapter Three, when a group of people kill themselves as their city burns to the ground:

þa wæron þa burhware to þon fagene and to þon bliðe þæt hi feohtan moston, and gemang þam gefean hi hi sylf mid ealað oferdrenctan and ut yrnende wæron æt twam geaton. On þære byrig wæs ærest ealogeweorc ongunnon, forþon þe hi win næfdon. On þæm swicdome wearð Numentia duguð gefeallen. Se dæl þe þær to lafe wearð forbærndon ealle þa burh, forþon þe hi ne uðon þæt heora fynd to heora ealdan gestreonon fengon, and æfter þam hi hi sylfe on þam fyre forspildon.<sup>52</sup>

(Then were the citizens joyful and glad that they were able to fight, and amid their joy drowned themselves with ale and ran out of the two gates. In that city was ale-making first begun, because they did not have wine. By that offence was the strength of Numantia to fall. The ones who were left burned the city down, because they would not

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<sup>52</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, pp. 310–12.

allow their enemies to capture their ancestral treasures, and after that they destroyed themselves in the fire).

Self-killing as a final form of bravery/autonomy in the face of defeat is a common theme in *History of the World* and other self-killing sources. While the Compiler does not call the Numantians ‘courageous’ or outright applaud their behaviour, he explains that Scipio and the other Roman senators were frightened by the fall of the Numantians because they were a great and powerful people. The Compiler uses the self-killing of the Numantians to call out to the reader (through the voice of an old Numantine man) and say that the Numantians were ‘strong as long as they preserved among themselves their resolution and their unity’ but when they stirred up trouble they died.<sup>53</sup> The text treats them as a cautionary tale though their self-immolation does not seemingly compound their ‘fall’. It may instead show that they were doubly the cause of their undoing; they overindulged themselves in beer, fought among themselves, and eventually burned themselves alive.

This is the only time *forspillan* is used in the self-killing corpus for a successful self-killing. It is also aptly put, because *forspillan*, unlike other terms for SELF-KILLING, does not mean ‘kill’ but ‘destroy’. The DOE defines it as ‘to destroy [...] to bring to ruin or damnation, degrade utterly, ruin, damn’; Bosworth and Toller also gloss it with the Latin *perdere*, ‘to make away with, destroy, ruin, squander, dissipate, throw away, waste, lose’.<sup>54</sup> The TOE gives *forspillan* as a term for SELF-KILLING, possibly under the assumption that it ‘destroys’ the soul.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 313.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis and Short, *Latin*, p. 1337; ‘forspillan’, Bosworth Toller, web.

<sup>55</sup> See TOE: “05.06|07 (v.) Destruction, dissolution, loss, breaking: To destroy.” *A Thesaurus of Old English*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2020), [accessed 9 October 2020] <<http://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/category/?id=8178>>; “10.02.01|04 (v.) Loss, deprivation: To lose.” *A Thesaurus of Old English*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2020), [accessed 9 October 2020] <<http://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/category/?id=15369>>; “10.03.08.01|03 (v.) Over liberality, waste of money: To waste, squander.” *A Thesaurus of Old English*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2020), [accessed 9 October 2020] <<http://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/category/?id=15547>>.

The only other time it is found to refer to SELF-KILLING by this thesis was in the same text of the OE *History of the World*, when Darius thinks about ‘destroying’ himself in battle.<sup>56</sup>

According to the DOE, *forspillan* can also mean ‘to use up extravagantly, consume wastefully, waste, squander’ as well as ‘lose’; the TOE places the sense ‘waste, squander’ under the overall category of ‘over liberality’. In the case of the Numantians, this additional meaning is significant. The Numantians destroyed themselves in the fire after getting very drunk (*oferdrencton*).<sup>57</sup> The use of ‘ofer-’ as a prefix here adds an immoral component to the drinking: they drank to excess. This excessive drinking caused them to *forspillan* (‘waste’ or ‘destroy’) their lives and city when they did not need to.

While the Numantians are classified by the Compiler as ‘spirited’ (*modes*), which typically carries positive connotations, the choice of *forspillan* here clearly denotes that the Compiler did not commend their actions. *Forspillan*, while not a violent self-killing term, is negative given its connotations with ‘waste’. While the Compiler seems to consider killing oneself because of a defeat in battle a positive trope, when alcohol, rashness, and an excessive joy in fighting is involved it is a wasteful and destructive thing to do. Ultimately, the Compiler’s views on self-immolation are tied to circumstance. The Numantians did not need to kill themselves; it was wasteful.

## Hercules

The final self-immolation in the OE corpus is in Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* (ÆLS (Chrysanthus) B1.3.33)). As with *Orosius*, the self-immolation discussed in Ælfric does not take place contemporaneous to the time in which Ælfric was writing. Instead, as in the OE *History of the*

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<sup>56</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 188.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

*World*, the self-immolation takes place in classical pagan literature, though this time, it is a reference to practices in ancient Greece from the perspective of a Christian in classical Rome.

The *Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria* can be found in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies Series III* in three manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 9; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 354; and Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P 7.<sup>58</sup> In the *Passion*, Chrysanthus is a well-read Roman who converts to Christianity. After converting, he begins to preach Christianity to the people of Rome. His father locks him away in prison so that the emperor does not kill him for treason. In an attempt to turn him from God, Chrysanthus' father orders five maidens to bed him. Chrysanthus prays to God to give him strength, and any girl sent to his room immediately falls asleep so as not to tempt him. When his father hears of how his plans were foiled, he decides to send Daria, a noble, well-spoken pagan maiden, to speak to Chrysanthus. He promises her that she may have Chrysanthus as a husband if she can successfully turn him away from God. Daria goes to Chrysanthus, who gives her a speech about the lack of good and holiness in the Roman pantheon, in both the heroes and the gods. He mentions how Saturn ate his children, Jove married his sister, and Hercules killed a lot of people and then, as Chrysanthus says, consumed himself in flames:

oððe hwylc halignyss wæs on þam hetelan ercule þam ormætan ente. þe ealle acwealde his nehburas. and forbærnde hine sylfne swa cucenne on fyre. siððan he acweald hæfde men. and þa leon. and þa micclan næddran?<sup>59</sup>

(Or what holiness was in that hateful Hercules, the excessive giant, who killed all his neighbours, and consumed himself alive in the fire after he had killed men and that lion and that great serpent?)

<sup>58</sup> Cambridge Corpus Christi MS 9 is just in Latin.

<sup>59</sup> Ælfric and Walter W. Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1900), II 384.

While Ælfric's audience should know of Hercules, it is unclear whether or not they are supposed to be aware of the context of his self-killing.<sup>60</sup> More research needs to be done on which texts circulating in early medieval England considered or discussed the death of Hercules. Although Ælfric did not have access to it, it is helpful for present purposes to sketch the Classical tradition of the death of Hercules with reference to the *Trachiniae*, a tragedy by Sophocles (430 B.C.E). In it, Hercules is mortally wounded after wearing a poisoned cloak given to him by his wife Deianeira. When Deianeira met Hercules, she was being attacked by the centaur Nessus. Hercules killed Nessus to stop him from raping her. As he lay dying, Nessus took an interest in Deianeira's love life and gave her a dying 'gift': he told Deianeira that if she ever needed to win Hercules back, she could smear the blood on the dart that killed Nessus onto some clothes for Hercules to wear, and it would bring him back to her.

When Hercules left Deianeira to perform a series of labours, he promised to be back in fifteen months. However, after fifteen months he had not returned, and Deianeira heard that he had been sleeping with the beautiful Iole. To win him back, she sent Hercules a shirt/cloak with Nessus' blood on it, thinking it would save their relationship. As it was a gift from his wife, Hercules dons the cloak, and it immediately burns him. He tries to take it off but finds that it is magical, and the blood stains are seared to his skin. After trying in vain to remove the cloak that is burning him, he instructs his son, Hyllus, to cremate him:

ἐνταῦθά νυν χρὴ τοῦμὸν ἐξάραντά σε

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<sup>60</sup> The peoples of early medieval England considered Greek to be one of the holy trinitities of sacred languages, with Latin and Hebrew. As Timofeeva points out, in Old English, references to the Greeks abounded in terms of nomenclature, including Hercules, for naming road distances as *stadiums*. Olga Timofeeva, 'Bide Nu Aet Gode Aetic Grecisc Cunne: Attitudes to Greek and the Greeks in the Anglo-Saxon Period', *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 51.2 (2016), 5–29. For more on the reception of Greek theatre in the medieval period, see Carol Symes, 'Ancient Drama in the Medieval World', in *Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*, ed. by Betine van Zyl Smit (Chichester: Wiley, 2016), pp. 97–130; A. H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

σῶμ' αὐτόχειρα καὶ ξὺν οἷς χρήζεις φίλων.  
πολλὴν μὲν ὕλην τῆς βαθυρρίζου δρυὸς  
κείραντα, πολλὸν δ' ἄρσεν' ἐκτεμόνθ' ὁμοῦ  
ἄγριον ἔλαιον, σῶμα τοῦμὸν ἐμβαλεῖν,  
καὶ πευκίνης λαβόντα λαμπάδος σέλας  
πρῆσαι.<sup>61</sup>

Then, you must carry my body there after raising it up in your own hands, aided by as many of our friends as you require; and when you have cut many a branch from the deep-rooted oak and chopped down many a sturdy wild-olive, you must lay my body on them and with a flaming pine-torch burn it. And let no tear of mourning show itself there.<sup>62</sup>

Hyllus agrees to prepare the pyre but does not go through with lighting it. In the Sophocles version, the play ends just before Hercules dies. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Hyllus is uninvolved, and one of Hercules' men lights the pyre for him, but it is Hercules who piles the wood together.<sup>63</sup> These are the only three ancient texts which cover Hercules' death, and it is only in the Sophocles version that Hyllus is instructed not to shed a tear for Hercules.

In Ælfric's version, Chryathanus makes no mention of Hercules' morbid state when he mentions his self-killing in the list of negative actions or traits of the Roman pantheon of gods. Once again, it seems that Ælfric's stance on SELF-KILLING is abundantly clear and harsh. It also suggests that some contemporaries may have felt that SELF-KILLING to end elongated pain would be preferable, and even noble, which may be why Ælfric did not include any mention of the shirt

<sup>61</sup> Sophocles, *The Trachiniae of Sophocles*, ed. by Richard Jebb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 43.

<sup>62</sup> Sophocles, *Sophocles. Vol 2: Ajax. Electra. Trachiniae. Philoctetes*, trans. by Francis Storr (London: Macmillan, 1913), p. 353.

<sup>63</sup> Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. by Henry T. Riley (London: Bell, 1889), p. 312.

or tragic position Hercules found himself in. After all, Ælfric's stance on marriage was just as pointed as his stance on SELF-KILLING and the heathen gods.<sup>64</sup> It may be that he omits the mention of the unfaithful Hercules because his argument may have lost some of its rhetorical force if there was a debate among the people about the acceptability of EUTHANASIA or ASSISTED SELF-KILLING, which seems likely given its history is connected to that of SELF-KILLING.<sup>65</sup> Given Ælfric's stance on chastity inside and outside the sanctity of marriage, the circumstances of Hercules' downfall may be considered just as villainous and deserved as the actions of Herod or Hyrtacus if the audience was familiar with the intricacy of his end. Of course, by ignoring the circumstances of Hercules' self-killing, Ælfric emphasises not the morality of Hercules' infidelity (in a tale concerned with two Christians remaining virginal in their marriage) but the bloodiness of his actions. The emphasis of Ælfric's allusion to Hercules' self-killing is on his excessive and hateful nature, as well as the fires that he voluntarily allows to consume him.

Chrysthanus' argument to Daria relies on the unholiness of Hercules. He is rhetorically positioned by Ælfric as the worst of the pagan heroes. This is clearly articulated with the use of *hetelan* which Ælfric uses to describe Hercules. Closely translated, *hetelan* means *hateful*, but connotatively carries the idea of *despicable* (i.e., someone who Ælfric's late tenth/early eleventh-century English audience would/should find immoral and horrible). He also describes Hercules

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<sup>64</sup> For more on Ælfric and the sanctity of marriage as well as marriages of holy men see: Robert K. Upchurch, 'For Pastoral Care and Political Gain: Ælfric of Eynsham's Preaching on Marital Celibacy', *Traditio*, 59 (2004), 39–78; P. Jackson, 'Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the *Life of St Æthelthryth*, Lines 120–30', *ASE*, 29 (2000), 235–60.

<sup>65</sup> This is an area where more research needs to be done. As with self-killing, there is a lack of research in this area in the period of study for this thesis. However, Ferroul discusses physicians who provoke death in the Middle Ages, and considers medical intervention which provokes death in an injured or sick person as *euthanasia*: Yves Ferroul, 'The Doctor and Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick, Studies in the Humanities: Literature (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 31–51 (pp. 32–33). Some work has been done on pre-modern euthanasia, including in the Middle Ages. See: Costas Tsiamis, et al., 'The 'Endura' of The Cathars' Heresy: Medieval Concept of Ritual Euthanasia or Suicide?', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55.1 (2016), 174–80; Kyriaki Mystakidou and others, 'The Evolution of Euthanasia and Its Perceptions in Greek Culture and Civilization', *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 48.1 (2005), 95–104; David C. Thomasma, 'Assisted Death and Martyrdom', *Christian Bioethics*, 4.2 (1998), 122–42.



as *ormæte* (excessive or immense). If *ente* is to be taken literally, then *ormætan* could be read as ‘immense’ in physical size. However, the Romans are implicitly referred to as *entas* in the often-cited OE poem *the Ruin*, not for their size, but for their greatness and great works. It is therefore likely that *ormæte* refers to Hercules’ excessive bloodlust and not his size as he is not called a giant by Sophocles.<sup>66</sup>

As with the Numantians, the mention of Hercules’ self-immolation is compounded by his other excesses. The self-immolation is not the negative act that he perpetrates, but the final confirmation of his excess. To Ælfric, Hercules’ self-immolation is the just end for someone whose bloodlust cannot be satiated. The use of *siððan* and polysyndeton create a sense of order that culminates with Hercules’ self-immolation. In doing so, Ælfric rhetorically positions Hercules’ self-immolation in a list of killings he has perpetrated: he kills all his neighbours and only kills himself ‘*siððan*’ (after) he killed men and the lion and the great serpent.<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

These four episodes are the only instances of self-immolation found by this thesis. From analysing them, it can be assumed that self-immolation was not seen as a gendered method of self-killing. It could be done in a positive way, when death is seen as the best option left available to a person or group of people (as in, when they would otherwise become slaves). However, if done when a person or group of people had other options, or when they caused their situation to become unfavourable in the first place by their excessive and immoral deeds, then the perpetrators and the act are seen as morally corrupt.

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<sup>66</sup> Goliath, a cyclops, and Nimrod are all also called *ent*. See ‘ent’, Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

<sup>67</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 384.

For some reason, to which we can only speculate, there are no accounts of people burning themselves alive in early medieval England. The only instances take place geographically, culturally, and temporally distinct from early modern England. Self-immolation was likely not a culturally favoured self-killing method or custom in early medieval England.<sup>68</sup> However, the concept was not so foreign, or unthinkable, so as to be rendered unspeakable (or unwritable).

The fact that it was only recorded in texts that were temporally distinct from those compiling/writing them may not point to any concrete conclusions about the act. However, I find it likely that the act was not a common self-killing method in early medieval England. If it were, there would likely be more mention of it in Ælfric's writings, as he thoroughly enjoyed explaining the immorality of self-killing, and especially methods which involved a lot of pain. His depiction of Hercules emphasises Hercules' excessiveness, which is multiplied by his chosen method of self-killing. This would not be seen as extravagant if he chose a common self-killing method, such as stabbing or hanging (unless, of course, he stabbed himself multiple times, or hanged himself in some extravagant fashion, such as from a cliff). Thus, it seems likely that self-immolation was not a widespread practice in early medieval England. While people likely did do it, it may have been thought of as either impulsive; something done in madness or a frenzy, or over-the-top and excessive.

These conclusions match the way the four episodes are rhetorically positioned. The first one (Hasdrubal's wife) is positioned as impulsive and reactive. It is done because King Hasdrubal killed himself. The remaining three episodes are all conducted by people who are

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<sup>68</sup> This contrasts, for example, with the Indian custom of *sati*, though the degree to which these deaths are willed by the women who die varies. See: Anand A. Yang, 'Whose Sati?: Widow Burning in Early 19th Century India', *Journal of Women's History*, 1.2 (1989), 8–33; Seth Abrutyn, 'What Hindu Sati Can Teach Us About the Sociocultural and Social Psychological Dynamics of Suicide', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 47.4 (2017), 522–39.

characterised as excessive: Sardanapalus is called a ‘stiðe furðumlic man’ (which this thesis has argued means ‘very indulgent man’), the Numantians committed the ‘offence’ of ‘drinking excessively’, and Hercules was called ‘excessive’.<sup>69</sup> Thus, it makes sense that their chosen self-fulfilled ends would also be considered excessive.

Ultimately, self-immolation is rhetorically positioned as an emotional reaction to grief, distress, and fear. It is one of the few self-killing methods which consistently explains why the victims took their lives. All the self-immolations discussed in this thesis are not accounts of contemporary self-killings, and like the self-poisonings, none of them take place in the British Isles. Self-immolation is therefore positioned as a method by and for the Other. As this chapter explained, this likely has to do with the conversion to Christianity and the concurrent cessation of inhumation in favour of burial. It is likely that self-immolation was an uncommon method in early medieval England, and that it was negatively connoted. The chapter explained that this method, done by the Other, was also rhetorically positioned as impulsive and excessive. It therefore makes sense that it is only positioned as something that the Other does.

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<sup>69</sup> Represented by the terms: *swicdome*, *oferdrencton*, and *ormætan*.

## Chapter Eight: Hanging

This chapter investigates the rhetoric around self-hanging acts and argues that mentioning a noose in relation to someone's death codes the death as either criminal or sinful. It also investigates a likely idiolectal phrase of Ælfric's, providing further compelling evidence that Ælfric was more concerned and wrapped up in discourses for self-killings to convince his audience(s) that self-killing was sinful and immoral than many other authors around this time.

As the other chapters have stated, the construction of a post-mortem self-killing narrative was influenced by the method for the self-killing act. Some methods lent themselves to be coded more as self-killings than others. As in present day, self-hanging was one of these methods.<sup>1</sup> If a body was found hanged with a noose, it would have been interpreted post-mortem as a self-killing, whether there was a known self-killing motive or not.

If someone had drowned or stabbed himself, it took time to decide if the case was indeed one of suicide. That made hanging a special case, for hanging usually suggested suicide *prima facie*.<sup>2</sup>

In his book, Murray outlines the urgency to which people in medieval Europe broadly wanted the case of a self-killer heard and done with immediately.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, Murray explains that some methods of self-killing took more time to dispute than others. As in present day, self-hanging was one of these methods.<sup>3</sup> As with today, if someone dies suddenly and the circumstances are investigated to ascertain a cause of death, even without much evidence to suggest there was an intent to die on behalf of the victim, certain methods of self-killing are perceived as more cut-and

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<sup>1</sup> A. Varnik, 'Suicide Methods in Europe: A Gender-specific Analysis of Countries Participating in the European Alliance Against Depression', *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 62:6 (2008), 545–51.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, *The Curse On Self-Murder*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Murray quotes a 'worldly-wise pope' here from c. 866, who suggests that self-killers' cases had to be dealt with post-haste: 'lest the body offend the nostrils of the living'. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

dry. As Nouma and Wöllner argue, this is the case with hangings now.<sup>4</sup> As both studies explain, there are few accidental deaths by hanging. Medieval hangings were no different.

In his book, *Suspended Animation*, Mills asserts that hanging before c. 1500 was not only an act of legal significance, but a symbolic one.<sup>5</sup> Mills argues that medieval (and even modern) descriptions of hanging do not relay how excruciatingly painful hanging was to die.<sup>6</sup> Mills points to V.A.C. Gatrell's book on eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain where Gatrell recounts and recontextualises the gruesome nature of deaths by hanging: 'watched by thousands, they urinated, defecated, screamed, kicked, fainted, and choked as they died'.<sup>6</sup> Mills explains that in the Middle Ages, across Europe there was never an attempt to break the victim's neck. It should be noted here that there are two types of hanging: suspension hanging (suspension of the body at the neck) and drop hanging (calculated drop designed to break the neck). In modern day England and Wales, fatality for suicide by hanging is 70%, although of those who reach the hospital, the majority survive.<sup>7</sup> As Gunnell et al. explain, the usual cause of death is asphyxia (suffocation) as the height of the drop is typically insufficient for spinal cord injury. Drop hanging was developed as a form of capital punishment in England in the nineteenth century, and so, Mattison and Gatrell convincingly explain that the short-drop or running noose method of hanging would have been used in early medieval England.<sup>8</sup> The process of death by hanging was therefore slow and horrific.

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<sup>4</sup> Y. Nouma and others, 'Accidental Hanging among Children and Adults: A Report of Two Cases and Review of the Literature', *Egyptian Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 6.3 (2016), 310–14; K. Wöllner, G. Kernbach-Wighton, and B. Madea, 'Suizid im Kindesalter oder unfallbedingtes Erhängen? Eine Fallvorstellung' [Suicide in childhood or accidental hanging? A case report], *Archiv für Kriminologie*, 262 (2015), 43–50.

<sup>5</sup> Mills, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> David Gunnell, Olive Bennewith, Keith Hawton, Sue Simkin, Nav Kapur, 'The Epidemiology and Prevention of Suicide by Hanging: A Systematic Review', *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 34.2 (2005), p. 433.

<sup>8</sup> V.A.C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770–1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 46; Mattison, 'Decapitation', p. 155.

Folio 59<sup>r</sup> of British Library Cotton MS Claudius B IV, from c. 1075–1150, depicts a running noose execution, where the victim is hoisted up by a rope already around his neck:



Figure 11: © British Library Board, *Running Rope Hanging in Claudius B IV, f. 59<sup>r</sup>*

As Mattison explains, the early medieval English gallows are likely to have been similar to what is depicted above: two vertical wooden posts with a crossbeam. There is minimal osteological evidence of hangings, especially because there were few or no broken bones with the short-drop or running rope methods of hanging, which is what we would find later with drop hanging.

However, there is supporting evidence from archaeology to support the theory of the short drop both with gallows and gibbets. Moreover, there is linguistic evidence of trees performing the function of a gallows in the OE word *gealg-treow*.<sup>9</sup> In her book, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England*, Della Hooke explains that many meeting places on the boundaries of hundreds or even shires were named by their function for carrying out judicial execution. These places were named in charters as a *cwealmstow*, ‘killing place’, while in others, a gallows is named as a *weargrod*,

<sup>9</sup> ‘galga-tre’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/13227>> [accessed 2 June 2021]. This could also refer to a wooden structure in general, in the same way that the cross from Jesus’ crucifixion can be referred to as a tree, which we can see in scripture.

‘felons’ cross’ (OE *wearg* ‘a felon, a criminal, an outlaw’ with *rod* ‘gallows, a scaffold’).<sup>10</sup> Of course, without any evidence of a crime, it is hard to come to this evidence of hanging trees as evidence of capital punishment or self-killing. What we can say, however, is that hanging as a method of death would have been rife with criminal connotations. It is likely, that as with now, these connotations were bound up in both the idea of the *gallows* (which would connote capital punishment) and the *noose*, which would bring with it the association of either capital punishment or self-killing.

For evidence of the heavy associations the idea of the *noose* had, we can look to Book Six, Chapter Thirty-Six of the OE *History of the World*. There, Arbogastes kills Emperor Valentinian and makes it look as though it were an accident:

Æfter þam feng eft Valentinianus to his rice, and þæs ymb twa gear, þa he on Gallium com, hine ofsmorode Ambogæstes his ealdorman and hine siþþonn mid rapum be þam sworn up aheng, gelicost þam þe he hine sylf unwitende hæfde awirged.<sup>11</sup>

(After that Valentinian returned to his throne and two years later, when he went to Gaul, his general Arbogastes suffocated him and then hanged him up by the neck with ropes as if he had strangled himself unknowingly).

In the OE *History of the World*, Valentinian was strangled and then Arbogastes made it look like an accident. The Latin does not shy away from saying that Arbogastes made it look like a self-killing:

Igitur Valentinianus iunior regno restitutus extincto Maximo eiusque filio Victore, quem imperatorem Gallis Maximus reliquerat, ipse in Galliam transiit: ubi cum tranquilla

<sup>10</sup> Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature, Lore and Landscape* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), p. 185.

<sup>11</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, pp. 408–9.

republica in pace ageret, apud Viennam dolo Arbogastis comitis sui, ut ferunt, strangulatus atque, ut uoluntariam sibi consciuisse mortem putaretur, laqueo suspensus est.<sup>12</sup>

(After the destruction of Maximus and of his son Victor, whom Maximus had left among the Gauls as their emperor, Valentinian the Younger, now restored to his realm, passed over into Gaul. While living there peacefully in a country then tranquil, so the story goes, he was treacherously strangled to death at Vienna by his count Arbogastes. So that people would believe he voluntarily brought death upon himself, as he was suspended by a noose).

The Latin clearly says that Arbogastes wanted it to look like Valentinian killed himself voluntarily, which is why he strangled him and then hanged him by a noose. The *laqueus* ‘noose’ is enough to suggest to Orosius’ readers that ‘uoluntariam sibi consciuisse mortem putaretur’ (people would believe he voluntarily brought death upon himself). The OE Compiler amended the Latin, either through poor translation, or purposefully, to say that Arbogastes made it look like Valentinian strangled himself *unwitende* ‘unwitting; not knowing’.<sup>13</sup> Although *unwitende* is not a hapax legomenon and is clearly what the manuscripts say, Bosworth and Toller view it as an error, suggesting that the text ought to read *witende* ‘knowing’, in line with the Latin.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Orosius, *Adversus Paganos Historiarum*, p. 308.

<sup>13</sup> Both extant manuscripts with the full OE (British Library Additional MS 47967 and Cotton Tiberius B 1) clearly wrote ‘unwitende’. It is unlikely anything else was meant. Tiberius may have been in Abingdon from 1040-1060 and ADD MS 47967 was compiled between c. 892 and 925, possibly at Winchester. See: British library, Catalogue of illuminated Manuscripts, Detailed record for Additional 47967.

<<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8372>> [accessed 28 January 2021].

<sup>14</sup> ‘*un-witende*’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/33993>> [accessed 27 January 2021]; cf. ‘unwiten, v.’, *Middle English Dictionary*.



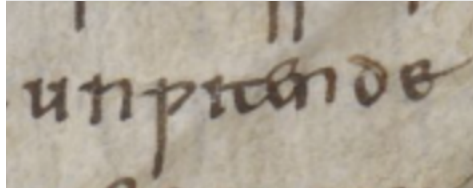


Figure 12: © British Library Board, British Library, Add MS 47967, f. 86<sup>r</sup>

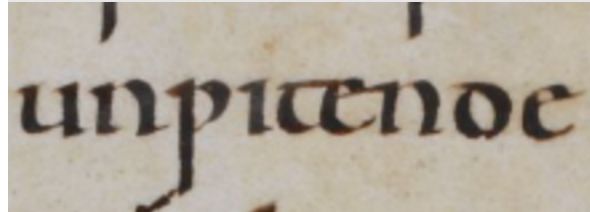


Figure 13: © British Library Board, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B I, f. 110<sup>v</sup>

It is, however, worth exploring the possibility that the OE translator, or a subsequent copyist, deliberately chose to say that Arbogastes made it look as though Valentinian strangled himself *unknowingly*. If so, it seems probable that this was due to a fear of self-killings and murders, and murders being made to look like self-killings were conceived by the Compiler as even worse than a murder made to look like an accident. Of course, OE *rap* is the common word for ‘rope’, whereas *laqueus* is Latin for ‘noose’ specifically. The Compiler could have used OE *grin* ‘noose’, but he chose not to.<sup>15</sup> Instead, he rendered *laqueus* as *rap*, which is typically used as a translation for *funis* ‘rope’ or *rudens* ‘rope’.<sup>16</sup> Less straightforward is his decision to make *rap* plural: quite how Valentinian was supposed accidentally to have got into a situation where he was hanging by the neck from multiple ropes is not clear. Thus, although it is possible that the Compiler did not want to have the self-killing connotation here and chose to amend the situation to be contextually suspect, but not damning, Bosworth and Toller’s assumption that mere confusion is at work remains viable, making it harder to draw clear conclusions from how the Old English diverges from the Latin here.

<sup>15</sup> *Grin* is typically used as a translation for *laqueus*. See ‘grīn, giren, geren’, in *DOE A-I*.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, pp. 795, 1603; ‘rap’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/25577>>.

Ælfric uses *grin* to ensure that the self-hangings he preaches about are understood as intentional. In *The Passion of Saint Alban* (ÆLS (Alban) B1.3.20)), Ælfric explains that Achitophel ‘acwealde hine sylfne on healicum grine þæt he hangigende sweolt’ (killed himself in a high noose, so that he died hanging) and Judas ‘acwealde hine sylfne hangiende on grine’ (killed himself by hanging in a noose).<sup>17</sup> In the *Fifth Sunday in Lent* (HomS 16 (Ass 12) B3.2.16)), Ælfric explains that Judas ‘wæs ærest apostol and syððan he sealde urne drihten to cwale and on ænde hine sylfne on grine aheng’ (was first an apostle and afterwards he gave our lord to a violent death, and finally hanged himself in a noose).<sup>18</sup> In *Palm Sunday* (ÆCHom II, 14.1 B1.2.16), Judas ‘hine sylfne aheng sona mid grine’ (immediately hanged himself with a noose).<sup>19</sup> Finally, in *The Forty Soldiers* (ÆLS (Forty Soldiers) B1.3.12)), Ælfric explains that Judas ‘aheng hine sylfne sona on grine’ (hanged himself in a noose at once).<sup>20</sup> It is not only Ælfric who uses *grin* in these episodes, though his homilies are where the bulk of self-killings are mentioned. An anonymous version of *In Cena Domini*, which will be discussed shortly, uses *grin*, as does the anonymous translation of Alcuin’s *De Virtutibus et Vitiis*. None of the OE self-hangings use *rap*, which is likely a judgment on behalf of the author, cementing the act as a self-killing.

Several of the self-killings Murray discusses from the early to late medieval period in what is now Europe and the United Kingdom are found ‘hanged by the neck’ and therefore interpreted as self-killings – whether they truly were or not.<sup>21</sup> Hangings were typically the end of

<sup>17</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 428.

<sup>18</sup> Ælfric of Eynsham, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, trans. by Bruno Assmann (Kassel: Wigand, 1889), pp. 144–50.

<sup>19</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 428.

<sup>20</sup> ‘and gelæhte þone kynhelm þe se oðer forleas Iudas eac, se arleasa þe belæwde þone hælend, aheng hine sylfne sona on grine’ in Skeat, ‘The Forty Soldiers’ in *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 256.

<sup>21</sup> Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, pp. xix, 23, 78, 81, 85–88, 100–5, 107–8, 112, 113, 117, 132, 150–53, 156–57, 159, 162, 163, 168, 169, 175, 176, 181–82, 183, 184, 192, 193, 198, 207, 209, 217, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226,

criminals or self-killers, which were blurred categories in some areas. It was, in many places, the authorities' duty to uncover self-killings, as one law code from Lille in the late thirteenth-century makes perfectly clear.<sup>22</sup> There was an assumption that the living, and even the self-killer prior to death, would try to hide what had happened so that they could be rightfully buried, and their property would stay in the family. There is nothing written in the OE law codes which says that a self-killer's property should go to anyone other than their next of kin, making this motive for subterfuge unlikely.<sup>23</sup> If the victim was killed, however, his Lord would have to exact payment to the family, in addition to the wergild.<sup>24</sup> As Foxhall Forbes notes, self-killing is not mentioned at all in secular legislation from the period, which suggests that there was no legal penalty for self-killing.<sup>25</sup> However, there was certainly an issue regarding where the body was to be buried, and the shame that came along with having someone take their own life.<sup>26</sup> Why else would the OE Compiler amend the Arbogastes episode?

## Judas

Despite the taboo, there are several self-hangings in homilies, nearly half of which are of Judas' hanging.<sup>27</sup> The Judas self-killing is one of the most popular self-killings to mention, especially as a throw-away line in a homily, remarking on someone or something as damnable and unforgiveable. As such, it is unsurprising that it is mentioned several times by Ælfric, as well as

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232, 233, 234, 239, 240, 241, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 256, 258, 264, 287, 297, 299, 301, 309, 310, 316, 326, 327, 328, 334, 336, 337, 339, 345, 346, 364, 366, 367, 373, 375, 376, 377, 378, 397, 403, 404, 406–13, 427, and 429. Of course, not all people found hanged were self-killers. In the 1360s, after a man drowned to death the village seigneur took his body and hanged him so as to make it look like a suicide so he could take the man's effects. Murray, *The Violent Against Themselves*, p. 193.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 300.

<sup>24</sup> Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 55.

<sup>25</sup> Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 300.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, *In Cena Domini*; Ælfric: *Passion of Saint Alban*; *Fifth Sunday in Lent: The Forty Soldiers*.

by an anonymous homilist in a translation of Alcuin's *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* to specifically include the method of his death. Moreover, Wulfstan does not include the mention of Judas' death in his version of the homily, *In Cena Domini*, in Oxford, Bodleian MS. Hatton 113, ff. 81<sup>r</sup>–83<sup>r</sup>.<sup>28</sup> An anonymous version, attributed to Abbo of St. Germain, states of Judas (HomS 22 (CenDom 1) B3.2.22)):<sup>29</sup>

He wæs læwa and myrðra and furðon he hine sylfne swiðe unlædlice mid grine aheng and awyrigde and swa ungesæliglice to ecan deaðe and to ecum witung wæs geniðerad.<sup>30</sup>  
(He was a betrayer/traitor and murderer and what's more, he swiftly, miserably hanged himself with a rope and was strangled and so unhappily to eternal death and to eternal punishment was he condemned).

This version takes up Ælfric's position on Judas, and likely self-killers by positioning Judas' self-killing as the final straw in his descent to eternal punishment.<sup>31</sup> Although Wulfstan of York wrote a version of this homily, his does not include any mention of Judas' self-hanging or SELF-KILLING.<sup>32</sup>

God's judgment is also brought up in legal documents, such as wills, where one mention of Judas' self-hanging is unconventionally found. A common rhetoric in wills of the period is to pray to God at the end of the statement so that no man will alter their will.<sup>33</sup> Some even go so far as to add that anyone who does will have to deal with God – if the reader interprets that as God's

<sup>28</sup> *In Cena Domini*, in Oxford, Bodleian MS. Hatton 113, ff. 81<sup>r</sup>–83<sup>r</sup>. It is also not in CCCC, MS 190.

<sup>29</sup> According to Wulfstan, *Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. x.  
<<https://archive.org/details/homiliesofwulfst0000wulf/page/n15/mode/2up>> [accessed 26 January 2021].

<sup>30</sup> *In Cena Domini* in CCCC MS 198, f. 174<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 304.

<sup>32</sup> Wulfstan does not take part in any conversation condemning self-killing or self-killers, even Judas. For more on Wulfstan's opinion and erasure of self-killing(s) see the final chapter of this thesis.

<sup>33</sup> Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*.

wrath. One will, the *Will of Æthelgifu* (Ch 1497 (Whitelock-Ker) B15.6.15)), from the tenth century, expands on this common trope by saying:

Heo ne anbit na hyre cyne hlaforde ne hire hlæfdian ac gif hwa bidde þæm ðes cwide standan ne mote wurðe he aworpen on þa synstran hand þonne se hælend his dom deme & he wurðe gode swa lað swa judas wæs þy hyne selfne aheng buton hio hit get self awende & þa ne lybben þe hit nu becweden ys.<sup>34</sup>

(She does not ask it of her lord or her lady; but if anyone ask that this will may not be allowed to stand, may he be cast off on the left hand when the Saviour deems his judgement and may he be as hateful to God as was Judas, who hanged himself, unless she herself change it still, and those be not alive to whom it is now bequeathed).

Here, Æthelgifu chooses to imply that God's hatred of Judas comes not from betraying Jesus, but from hanging himself. While the reader of her will is certain to know of Judas' crimes, Æthelgifu uses the mention of his self-hanging as the worst thing a person could do, other than alter or disallow her will. This casual mention of self-hanging in a legal document tells us two things: Æthelgifu found self-killing reprehensible, and yet, speakable. She does not call Judas' act by any noun but describes the act – which tells us that no noun was used enough to be recorded here. Moreover, she does not use *on grine*, it is enough to say that Judas 'hyne selfne aheng' (hanged himself). This could be because Judas' death is famous enough so that everyone knows it was a self-killing, or because the construction *hyne self + aheng* is enough to entail KILL to Æthelgifu and her readers. It is likely that people knew that if someone hanged themselves, they did so deliberately. Unlike Æthelgifu, Ælfric does not seem to consider *hyne self + aheng* as enough to connote a self-killing.

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<sup>34</sup> Æthelgifu, *Will of Æthelgifu*, S1497 in *The Electronic Sawyer*, <https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/about/index.html>, accessed 2 April 2022.

## St. Martin

The OE Martiniana abounded in four main texts concerning the saint: The OE *Martyrology*, *Homily for Martinmas*, Ælfric's *Catholic Homily for Martinmas*, and Ælfric's *Life of St. Martin*. All of these texts except the *Martyrology* include the self-hanging episode and follow a similar structure. In Ælfric's *Life of St. Martin* (ÆLS (Martin) B1.3.30), St. Martin hears the sound of someone crying and hurries towards it to try and find out if he can do anything to aid in the person's suffering. There he finds that: 'sum ungesælig man hine sylfne ahenge of þære hiwrædene and swa hangigende hine sylfne adydde'.<sup>35</sup> (Some unhappy man of that household hanged himself, and hanging thus he killed himself.) The repetition of the form of the act should be noted, especially the clarification that not only did a member of that house hang himself, but that he died by doing so. Ælfric does not think *hine sylfne ahenge* entails DIE. Therefore, Ælfric does not think it entails KILL either.

We are told that the man was *ungesælig*; the term from which it derives, *gesælig*, can refer to either 'happiness', 'prosperity', or 'fortune' and thus could refer to a mental state or a streak of luck.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, it seems as though Ælfric thought that people were likely to kill themselves because they were *ungesælig*, whether by that he meant 'unhappy' or 'unfortunate'.<sup>37</sup>

In other versions, Ælfric chooses a different term. In Ælfric's *Catholic Homily for Martinmas* (ÆCHom II, 39.1 B1.2.42), he says that:

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 284–85.

<sup>36</sup> 'gesælig', *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/15793>> [accessed 20 January 2021].

<sup>37</sup> This thesis cannot unfortunately cover more on the reasons why people kill themselves, but the author intends to cover this in forthcoming works.

Sum ungesceadwis man hine sylfne aheng þæt he fotum span. and his feorh forlet þæt wearð ða mid wope þam halgan were gecydd. and he genealæhte þam lifleasan men. And hine unwurðne of deaðe aræde. þurh his ðingrædene wið þone soðan god.<sup>38</sup>

(Some irrational man hanged himself, so that he spun from the feet, and abandoned/left his life. That was reported with a cry to the holy [one] and he approached that lifeless man and raised him from death, through his advocacy with the true god).

In the *Catholic Homily for Martinmas*, Ælfric uses *ungesceadwis* to describe the man.

*Gesceadwis* is an adjective meaning ‘reasonable, rational, discriminating, intelligent, prudent, cautious; *rationalis*’, according to Bosworth and Toller.<sup>39</sup> An *ungesceadwis* man is therefore ‘not acting according to reason, un-reasonable, irrational, unwise, foolish’ – not *unhappy*.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, Ælfric was not writing these homilies in a vacuum. Sulpicius Severus wrote the seminal contemporary biography of St. Martin, *Vita Martini*, probably in the spring of c. 397.<sup>41</sup> After Martin’s death the year after the publication of the *Vita*, Severus wrote several other texts on St. Martin. Severus’ works created the perfect base for the cult of the saint, and a rise in Martiniana. Ælfric’s *Life* and the anonymous *Homily for Martinmas* take their basis in this tradition. According to Mertens, besides Severus, the core of this canon subsists of Paulinus of Périgueux (also known as Paulinus Petricordiensis)’s *De Uita Sancti Martini Episcopi* and *Verse Epitaph for the Basilica in Tours*, Venantius Fortunatus’ *Vita Martini*, Gregory of Tours’ four books on the miracles of *St Martin*, Gregory of Tours’ *History of the Franks*, Book One, Chapter Forty-eight, and Alcuin’s *Works on St Martin*.<sup>42</sup> All of these texts inform the OE tradition, but

<sup>38</sup> Andre Mertens, *The Old English Lives of St Martin of Tours: Edition and Study* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2017), p. 228.

<sup>39</sup> ‘ge-sceadwis’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/15823>> [accessed 20 June 2021].

<sup>40</sup> ‘un-gesceadwis’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/33251>> [accessed 20 June 2021].

<sup>41</sup> Mertens, *The Old English Lives of St Martin*, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

not necessarily the self-killing. While Severus, Paulinus, Venantius, and Alcuin include the self-killing and subsequent miracle, Gregory of Tours' four books on the miracles of *St. Martin* and *History of the Franks*, and Paulinus' *Verse Epitaph for the Basilica in Tours*, do not.<sup>43</sup>

There are several differences between the Latin self-hanging episodes that inform Ælfric and the anonymous OE homily. First, all the Latin versions include the word *laqueus* 'noose'. Alcuin's *Sermo De Transitu Sancti Martini* features the briefest version: 'Alterum quoque, in cuiusdam Lupicini agro laqueo suspensum, sacris orationibus vitae restituit'.<sup>44</sup> (Another, moreover, suspended from a noose in in a field of a certain Lupicinus, he restored to life through holy prayers). Alcuin's version features the three key components of the Latin versions: 1) Martin was near Lupicinus' land. 2) He finds out that someone hanged themselves with a noose. 3) He revives the dead man through prayer.

As with Ælfric, some of the Latin versions animate this section by giving more detail about the act and the person. Paulinus describes the man as *demens*, which could be interpreted in the same vein as Ælfric's *ungesceadwis*. *Demens* specifically refers to being 'out of one's mind or senses; mad, raving; foolish'.<sup>45</sup> There is, of course, the possibility that this 'irrationality' lends itself to the domain of MENTAL ILLNESS or DEMENTIA. Murray tells of several individuals

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<sup>43</sup> Paulinus also mentions a different self-killing whereby a man was tempted to kill someone, but God's wrath acted quickly and he turned the sword on himself instead. Paulinus, 'Liber Sextus', *Corpus Corporum*, 2020, [accessed 13 September 2021]

<[http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/xfromcc.php?tabelle=Paulinus\\_Petricordiensis\\_cps19&rumpfid=Paulinus\\_Petricordiensis\\_cps19,%20Carmina,%20%20%206a&id=Paulinus\\_Petricordiensis\\_cps19,%20Carmina,%20%20%206a,%20%20%20205&level=99&level9798=&satz=205&hilite\\_id=Paulinus\\_Petricordiensis\\_cps19,%20Carmina,%20%20%206a,%20%20%20%20205&string=DESUPER&binary=&corpus=&target=&lang=0&home=&von=suchergebnis&hide\\_apparatus=1&inframe=1&jumpto=205](http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/xfromcc.php?tabelle=Paulinus_Petricordiensis_cps19&rumpfid=Paulinus_Petricordiensis_cps19,%20Carmina,%20%20%206a&id=Paulinus_Petricordiensis_cps19,%20Carmina,%20%20%206a,%20%20%20205&level=99&level9798=&satz=205&hilite_id=Paulinus_Petricordiensis_cps19,%20Carmina,%20%20%206a,%20%20%20%20205&string=DESUPER&binary=&corpus=&target=&lang=0&home=&von=suchergebnis&hide_apparatus=1&inframe=1&jumpto=205)>

<sup>44</sup> Alcuin, 'Vita S. Martini Turonensis', *Corpus Corporum*, 2020

<[http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/xfromcc.php?tabelle=Alcuinus\\_cps2&rumpfid=Alcuinus\\_cps2,%20Vita%20S.%20Martini%20Turonensis&id=Alcuinus\\_cps2,%20Vita%20S.%20Martini%20Turonensis&corpus=2&lang=0&von=overview\\_by\\_author](http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/xfromcc.php?tabelle=Alcuinus_cps2&rumpfid=Alcuinus_cps2,%20Vita%20S.%20Martini%20Turonensis&id=Alcuinus_cps2,%20Vita%20S.%20Martini%20Turonensis&corpus=2&lang=0&von=overview_by_author)> [accessed 21 January 2021]

<sup>45</sup> Lewis and Short, *Latin*, p. 540; 'ferus', Lewis and Short, *Latin*, p. 741.



who have ‘lost their mind’, which Metzler reads as possible evidence of dementia.<sup>46</sup> Metzler explains that in the mid thirteenth century, ‘the loss of mental faculties, what we would now term senile dementia or specifically Alzheimer’s disease, was considered a particularly worrying aspect of ageing already’.<sup>47</sup> Later, in 1390, the late lord of Eksaarde, Ghent, was posthumously called *incompetent* in the years prior to his death because he was so old that he was a child and had no control over his five senses.<sup>48</sup> Another case, in 1278 of an elderly man, Phillipe Testard, who killed his wife and then threw himself out of a window, involved a posthumous trial where twelve witnesses were brought to court to declare that Phillipe ‘par l’espace de trois ans ou environ et encore soit hor de son sens et de tout bon memoir’ (In the span of three years or so, and still [he] was out of his mind and all good memory).<sup>49</sup> Although it is clear that discussions about intent and capacity regarding self-killing and age were had in the medieval period at large, it is hard to say whether or not terms like *ungesceadwis* are supposed to evoke these connotations for the homily’s audience(s). It is hard to say whether or not descriptions of self-killers as ‘out of their mind’ or ‘sense’ should be interpreted as animal-like, child-like, mentally ill, or as having a disease or disability that affects the mind like *dementia*.<sup>50</sup> For now, it is enough to say that it could be that the self-hanging in St. Martin’s miracle is referring in some versions to something

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<sup>46</sup> Irina Metzler, ‘Ageing’, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages: Cultural Considerations of Physical Impairment, Studies in Cultural History* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 147. This could also be construed as the same as *unwitende*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>49</sup> Paris, Arch. Nat., JJ 78, f. 145<sup>v</sup>, no. 262.

<sup>50</sup> There is some scholarship around this. Mary Begley investigated the Semantic field of Insanity in MidE, Mary Begley, *The Middle English lexical field of INSANITY: Semantic change and conceptual metaphor* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Manchester, 2018); Malgorzata Fabiszak looked at Fear, Greif and Anger in OE in ‘A Semantic Analysis of FEAR, GRIEF, and ANGER in Old English’, in *A Changing World of Words: Studies in English Historical Lexicography, Lexicology and Semantics*, ed. by Javier E. Diaz Vera (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002). From a history of medicine perspective, there has been a study which looked at descriptions of dementia: I.P. Vatanabe, P.R. Manzine, M.R. Cominetti, ‘Historic Concepts of Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease: From Ancient Times to the Present’, *Rev Neurol*, 176.3 (2020), 140–47 <10.1016/j.neurol.2019.03.004> [accessed 20 October 2021].

along the lines of ‘out of mind/senses’. Of course, not all the versions use this terminology, and therefore, not all of them are making the same comment about what may cause someone to kill themselves.

It is worth noting that some of the versions, like Severus’, use *servulus* (young male slave), while Paulinus uses *minister* (male servant/attender).<sup>51</sup> A *minister* is more likely to be older, whereas a *servulus* is explicitly a young slave.<sup>52</sup> Venantius Fortunatus’ *Vita S. Martini* uses *famulum*, from *famulus*, which has no connotations of age.<sup>53</sup> *Famulus* is translated by the same OE terms as *servus*, though OE diminutive suffixes are rarely used.<sup>54</sup> Ælfric does not use a term for *slave*, and the only adjective which could tell us anything about the mental state of the person is *ungesceadwis*. The person is called a *man* ‘person, man’ – not a young man or a child. While his age cannot be discerned from anything else, we can certainly say that he is not ‘young’. In Severus’ version, the person who hanged themselves was a *servulum* (young male slave).<sup>55</sup> In the versions where the servant is young, no word for ‘irrational’ is used. This could corroborate the idea that there is a connection between *demens*, *ungesceadwis*, and DEMENTIA as only the older slaves/people are relayed as *irrational* or *out of their minds*.

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<sup>51</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, pp. 1684, 1146.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1684.

<sup>53</sup> Lupicini demum celerans dum praeterit agrum, Comperit, heu! famulum crudeli funere raptum, Elidendo suum fera per suspendia collum’ (While speeding past Lupicius’ field, he discovered, alas! A servant had been wrenched away by a cruel death, striking his own neck through feral hanging). Latin from Book one, lines 180-83: Venantius Fortunatus, ‘Vita S. Martini’, *Corpus Corporum*, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Katherine Leah Miller, *The Semantic Field of Slavery in Old English: Wealth, Esne, Præl* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Leeds, 2014), p.107, <<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/8031/>> [accessed 23 January 2021].

<sup>55</sup> The section reads: ‘Nec multo post, dum agrum Lupicini cuiusdam honorati secundum saeculum viri praeteriret, clamore et luctu turbae plangentis excipitur, ad quam cum sollicitus adstisset et quis esset hic fletus inquireret, indicatur unum ex familia servulum laqueo sibi vitam extorsisse’. (Not long after these events, while Martin was passing by the land of a certain man named Lupicinus, who was honorable according to the the time, [Martin] followed a clamour of mourning to a sorrowful crowd, who having been nearby and concerned, might investigate the weeping there. Someone revealed that [the weeping] was a result of a young slave of the household tearing himself away from life with a noose). Latin from: Bryn Mawr College Library, Bryn Mawr, MS 17, ff. 7<sup>v</sup>–8<sup>r</sup> <[https://archive.org/details/BMC\\_MS17/page/n17/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/BMC_MS17/page/n17/mode/2up)> [accessed 20 January 2021].

St. Martin is the only saint who has a place in both Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and his *Catholic Homilies*, which means that, like descriptions of Judas, Ælfric decided to write this particular episode more than once.<sup>56</sup> According to Mertens, Ælfric's *Catholic Homily for Martinmas* was composed c. 990–995 AD, and his *Life of St. Martin* was composed around 995–1000 AD.<sup>57</sup> This means that Ælfric changed *ungesceadwis* 'irrational' to *ungesælig* 'unhappy' when he rewrote the episode. This could be a result of simplification in the *Life of St. Martin*, as the self-killing episode there is much shorter. Unhappiness may, then, represent Ælfric's considered explanation for a self-killing, superseding 'irrationality' (or even MENTAL ILLNESS or DEMENTIA, if we may go so far as to suggest an overlap between *ungesceadwis* and some concept of MENTAL ILLNESS or DEMENTIA). On the other hand, *ungesælig* might better be translated 'unfortunate', in which case we are seeing a rare hint of compassion on Ælfric's part.

In addition to stating that the servant was *demens*, Paulinus also expands on how the hanging kills him, and bestows the adjective *triste* 'sad' to the *cadaver* 'corpse':

'unus enim laqueo fauces stringente minister, ruperat extortae demens confinia vitae, accurrit prope complexus triste cadaver'.<sup>58</sup> (For one servant, a noose drawing tight around his neck, had, out of his mind, broken the limits of his wrenched-out life; [Martin] quickly ran to lay hold of the sad corpse). It is possible that Ælfric took *ungesælig* 'unhappy' from Paulinus' description of the corpse as *triste* 'sad', though when Ælfric uses *ungesælig*, it is *before* the man kills himself, not after. Most interestingly, Paulinus goes over the act of hanging in great detail.

<sup>56</sup> Mertens, *The Old English Lives of St Martin*, p. 127.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>58</sup> Latin from book 1.34.376-378: Paulinus Petricordiensis, 'Liber Primus', *Corpus Corporum*, 2020 <

He uses the phrase *laqueo fauces stringente*, which specifically explains that the throat is tightened or pressed by the noose. Following this, Paulinus uses the perfect passive participle, *extortae*, to tell us that through the ‘wringing; twisting; pressing’ of the noose on his neck, the servant broke his contact to/with life (*confinia vitae*). While seemingly unimportant, this distinction tells us that Paulinus was aware of the mechanics of self-killing via hanging at this time.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, this comment gives evidence to Buckberry’s assumption that there were few self-hangings where a person was dropped from a height so that they would die quickly from breaking their neck.<sup>60</sup> Instead, hangings of the period involved slowly strangling the victim, sometimes even from a low place.

Ælfric mirrors this version in the *Catholic Homily for Martinmas*. He does not say that the man died, though he does say he was *lifleasan* (lifeless). He also uses the euphemistic phrase *his feorh forlet*. *Forlætan* firstly means ‘let’ though it can also mean ‘leave, abandon, and release’.<sup>61</sup> This could be Ælfric’s way of translating Paulinus’ loss of contact with life while possibly still encoding it as negative: ‘abandoned his life’.

Ælfric includes some additional information about the method of death with the phrase *fotum span*. The phrase is only ever used by Ælfric, and only in two texts: *The Life of Saint Martin* and *The Feast of St. Stephen* (*ÆCHom* II, 39.1 B1.2.42 and *ÆCHom* II, 2 B1.2.3 respectively).<sup>62</sup> The self-hanging in *The Feast of St. Stephen* will be discussed in more detail shortly. For now, it is important to note that the two texts add to the hanging the phrase *þæt he/heo fotum span*. *Span* comes from *spinnan* ‘to spin’ and *fotum* is typically the dative plural of

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<sup>59</sup> As with now, the typical cause of death is asphyxia as, unlike judicial hanging, the height of the drop – if there is one – is insufficient to cause an injury to the spinal cord. Gunnell, et al., ‘The Epidemiology and Prevention of Suicide by Hanging’, p. 433.

<sup>60</sup> Jo Buckberry, ‘Osteological Evidence’ in *Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), p. 148.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Forlætan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/11569>> [accessed 20 June 2021].

<sup>62</sup> According to a simple search in the DOEWC.

‘foot’.<sup>63</sup> Thus, either they spun by their feet (i.e., upside-down), or Ælfric is describing what it looked like as they died (i.e., their feet spun). Although *fotum* is in the dative case (which typically follows or implies a preposition: ‘that they spun’ with/by/to/from/ their feet) the least likely meaning would be that they hanged themselves upside-down.

Inverted hanging was used as a method of torture and execution in Europe in the later medieval period.<sup>64</sup> It is possible, though unlikely, that the man was attempting to leave his life via inverted hanging because he saw it being put to practice. According to Mattison, ‘one of Edmund’s laws (III Edmund 4) juxtaposes the capital punishment of being “slain” with hanging’, which may suggest that they are two distinct punishments: ‘Et dictum est de servis: si qui furentur, senior ex eis capiatur et occidatur vel suspendatur’ (And we have declared with regard to slaves that, if a number of them commit theft, their leader shall be captured and slain, or hanged).<sup>65</sup> It may be that while some hangings were corporal punishment which resulted in death, some hangings referred to torture only (i.e., inverted hangings). At the time of this study, there has not been enough research into the archaeological, literary, or linguistic evidence to suggest one way or another whether this could be true. As far as the hanging of the man in *St. Martin* and woman in *St. Stephen* go, it seems more likely that they hanged themselves so that they spun from a height of multiple feet off the ground, or so that their feet spun as they died. Of course, all these readings have their issues and merits.

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<sup>63</sup> ‘Spinnan’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/28497>> [accessed 17 June 2021]. *Fot* could also mean a measure of length, divided into twelve equal parts or inches. But this is clearly not being referred to here. ‘Fot’, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* <<https://bosworthtoller.com/12072>> [accessed 17 June 2021].

<sup>64</sup> Esther Cohen, ‘Women and Jews’, in *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), p.93. Cohen explains that inverted hanging and animal associated hanging became connected with Jews by the later Middle Ages in France, while it was already an exclusively Jewish penalty in Germany by the end of the thirteenth century. She concedes that it is unclear how common inverted execution was in Roman law in the Middle Ages.

<sup>65</sup> Alyxandra Mattison, ‘The Execution and Burial of Criminals in Early Medieval England, c. 850–1150: An Examination of Changes in Judicial Punishment Across the Norman Conquest’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2016), p. 121.

The final text that describes this specific self-hanging is in an anonymous *Homily for Martinmas*. It was composed before Ælfric's works around 900–950 AD.<sup>66</sup> The OE *Homily for Martinmas* does include a brief note about the episode but does not use either *ungesceadwis* 'irrational' or *ungesælig* 'unhappy', nor does it use any euphemistic language, or mention being hanged from any measure of height.

The anonymous *Homily for Martinmas* (LS 17.1 (MartinMor) B3.3.17.2)) was written to be preached, making it distinct from the other St. Martin texts. It is unknown whether the homily is authored by an early medieval person, or translated by one, and the dating for the text is quite confused.<sup>67</sup> The text follows the same story as in Ælfric's *Life of St. Martin*. However, while the circumstance of the story is the same (i.e., Martin hears crying and goes to the source to find that a man has killed himself), the description is completely different: 'ðær wære sum man earmlice deaðe geswolten þæt he hine sylfne awyrgde'.<sup>68</sup> (Some man had died a miserable death, in that he strangled himself.) In this version, the man who killed himself did not explicitly hang himself. There is no rope or noose. Instead, he *awyrgde* 'strangled' himself. While there is no will mentioned, it is still likely that this would have been received as a self-killing, as the word order makes clear that the man did it to himself.

The homily does not mention the man's mental state or circumstances, but it does relay what the perception of his death is: *earmlice deaðe* 'miserable/ wretched death'. This is the first time the views of the community towards SELF-KILLING as a form of dying is made explicit, and it is a form of sadness and not disgust. The anonymous *Homily for Martinmas* likely got *earmlice deaðe* from Venantius Fortunatus' *Vita S. Martini*, as Venantius uses *crudeli funere*

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 93–94.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

‘cruel death’. It does not get *awyrgde* ‘strangled’ from Venantius, who describes the act as ‘striking his own neck through wild hanging’ (*elidendo suum fera per suspendia collum*).<sup>69</sup> It could be that the anonymous author got the idea of strangling from Paulinus, who explained how the throat was tightened. All these versions of St. Martin provide evidence of the authors’ familiarity with hanging and strangulation. Their variances do not call into question their knowledge of the act, but their interpretation of it.

As the servant’s SELF-KILLING does not stick, it is hard to decide whether any of the authors considers him a self-killer, or if he is merely a sad, wayward soul to be saved by the power of Christianity. Given that he is brought back to life and never spoken of again, it seems that we are to assume that he did not end up killing himself a second time and thus his soul was forever saved by Martin.<sup>70</sup> This is important on two counts.

In addition to St. Margaret’s executioner, Malchus, we now have evidence of two self-killers who have their souls pardoned or saved by a saint’s prayer. While less common than other self-killing comments, clearly, self-killing was not wholly reprehensible in the literature of early medieval England. Secondly, as the servant in this episode’s self-killing attempt was thwarted, we, and the early medieval audiences, are confronted with a person who has wanted to die and through the power of Christ was kept alive. If self-killing was ‘against God’ then why would he pardon or save a self-killer? Even Ælfric does not erase this episode, nor does he attempt to account for why this person would have been saved. The only major change he makes is to make the person a *man* and not a *slave*, adding the issue of class structure to the self-killing acceptability debate.

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<sup>69</sup> Latin from book 1, lines 180–83: Venantius Fortunatus, ‘Vita S. Martini’, *Corpus Corporum*, 2020.

<sup>70</sup> The *Anonymous Homily* omits the passage in Sulpicius Severus’ *Life* wherein it is mentioned that the man who killed himself was brought before the tribunal of the Judge and received a severe sentence before being let go because Martin was praying for him. Mertens, *The Old English Lives of St Martin*, p. 190.

Most self-killers in the corpus are neither pardoned nor explicitly condemned. However, Ælfric typically amends or supplements the story to include some form of negative commentary on the person or their choices. While he did not do so for either of his two versions of the man saved by St. Martin, he does not make a habit of letting self-killers off the hook. The final self-hanging act in the corpus is another of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*.

***The Feast of St Stephen (Natale Sancti Stephani)***

*The Feast of St. Stephen* can be found in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* series II (ÆCHom II, 2 B1.2.3). It is extant in two manuscripts: Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 3. 28, written c. 975–1025 possibly a product of Ælfric's own scriptorium, and the British Library Ms. Cotton Vitellius D XVII, written c. 1000, with unknown origins.<sup>71</sup> The story follows a widow with ten children who sets out to church to curse one of her sons after being heavily provoked by him. On the way, she meets a devil who suggests that she curse all her children, not just the one who provoked her. She follows the devil's advice and:

Æfter þisum gecyrde ham. and gemette ealle hire bearn mid ormætre cwylminge.  
 cwacigende eallum limum; þa wearð heo mid micelre sarnysse ðurhslegen. þæt heo swa  
 micel man gefremode. eode ða and hi sylfe on grine aheng. þæt heo fotum span;  
 Witodlice se ylca deofol ðe hi tihte ær to ðære manfullican wyriunge. se hi eft siððan to  
 hire agenre hengene gelærde.<sup>72</sup>

(After this she turned home and found her children in immense torture; all limbs shaking.

Then was she struck with a great mental pain because she had committed such a great  
 crime. Then she went and hanged herself with a noose so that she spun from the feet;

<sup>71</sup> Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, pp. xliii, lviii.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



Certainly, by the poisonous devil that before charged her to that evil curse. He then afterwards persuaded her to do her own hanging.)

Three things are striking about this self-killing. First, the fact that the state of mind of the self-killer is mentioned: *micelre sarnysse*. *Sarnysse*, according to Bosworth and Toller, can be bodily or mental pain: this mental pain is similar to or synonymous with ‘affliction, guilt’.<sup>73</sup> While this will prove to be similar to some of the less emotional examples, the guilt this mother feels strikes her upon witnessing the bodily pain she cursed all of her children with. Secondly, both the curse and the killing are said to be done by persuasion of the devil. While the mother is a willing participant in the end, the actions were not born out of her own mind. Finally, while it can be assumed that the mother goes to hell, it is not explicitly stated as it is in many of Ælfric’s other homilies.

While it is unlikely that Ælfric gave the widow wriggle room to plead insanity via the devil for her acceptance into heaven, it does highlight one of the major debates about SELF-KILLING which theologians like Ælfric and Jerome had. The concept of wills, insanity, and devilish intervention are also discussed in an Anglo-Saxon penitential written nearly a hundred years after Ælfric’s text. Here, it is made clear that anyone who kills themselves (whether by instigation of the devil or their own hand) is not to receive the same burial as other dead people and will not be admitted into heaven.<sup>74</sup> The question of whether the widow was guilty is not up for debate, given that it is her guilt from seeing her children in pain that leads to her killing herself at the suggestion of the same devil. It is clear that her conscience is guilty, but instead of leading her towards God, the widow follows the devil’s advice a second time and kills herself.

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<sup>73</sup> ‘sarnysse’ Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*.

<sup>74</sup> Buckberry, ‘Osteological Evidence’, p. 132.

All of these points are a product of Ælfric alone. The Latin Ælfric adapts comes from Augustine of Hippo's *De Civitate Dei*. In Augustine's version of the text, which Campos calls the *Twelfth Miracle, the Healing of Paulus and Palladia*, there is no mention whatsoever of the widow's self-killing. Instead, it says:

Unum est apud nos factum, non maius quam illa quae dixi, sed tam clarum atque illustre miraculum, ut nullum arbitrer esse Hipponiensium, qui hoc non vel viderit, vel didicerit, nullum qui oblivisci ulla ratione potuerit. Decem quidam fratres (quorum septem sunt mares, tres feminae) de Caesarea Cappadociae suorum civium non ignobiles, maledicto matris recenti, patris eorum obitu destitutae, quae iniuriam sibi ad eis factam acerbissime tulit, tali poena sunt divinitus coerciti, ut horribiliter quaterentur omnes tremore membrorum

(One miracle, not greater than those I have spoken of, but so clear and bright that there are many witnesses among the people of Hippo having seen it there or having heard about it, a miracle that will be never forgotten, has happened here near us. Ten noble brothers (seven boys and three girls) from Caesarea of Cappadocia that had been recently cursed by their mother due to an insult they had done to her after their father's death, were punished by divine will with a pain consisting of a terrible quaking of their limbs).<sup>75</sup>

Augustine only mentions that the children were recently cursed by their mother ('maledicto matris recenti'). The noun *maledicto* derives from the verb *maledico* 'I curse, I speak ill of', and coupled with the Latin adverb *divinitus* 'due to divine will', seems to be where Ælfric got the idea to add in the devil, as Campos suspects.<sup>76</sup> Campos points out that one of Ælfric's arguments

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<sup>75</sup> Xavier Campos, 'The Latin Sources of One of Aelfric's Homilies on St. Stephen', 7 (2000), 97–124 (pp. 117, 119).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

here is on the dangers of cursing, which he expands on to show an early medieval English audience what can happen when you turn to cursing and away from God.

Ælfric fashioned this story about the widow being coerced by the devil to curse her children and then hanging herself all by herself. It is certainly clear that Ælfric did not find self-killing an unspeakable topic, given that the entire self-killing is Ælfric's own invention. He could have chosen a generic self-killing phrase, such as *heo acwealde sylf*, but he does not. Instead, he chose to invent a very long lead-up to a fictitious self-killing, which has little to do with the miracle Stephen then performs. Ælfric makes a conscious unaided decision to include the widow's mental state at the time she kills herself, as well as adding details about the method, including the suspicion that the devil may have led her to kill herself after he relays her death.

There are two salient comments about self-hanging that Ælfric gives us. The first, is that the verb *hangian* alone is not enough to convey a self-killing or killing. Ælfric adds *on grine* – ‘with a noose’. Specifically, Ælfric chooses *grin* ‘noose’ instead of *rap* ‘rope’ or another ligature. This suggests that *hangian* and *grin* collocates to Ælfric, and likely to others in the period. It is possible that this collocation points to connotations of self-killing without the presence of a reflexive, or, at the very least, connotations of criminal deaths. The collocation also tells us that hanging and self-hanging was a common enough occurrence for the words to be habitually placed together. More specifically, these words, like *acwealde hine sylf*, collocate in a specific order for Ælfric, but not for any of the other authors who mention self-hanging. The strong collocation employed by Ælfric points to the words being lexically primed for Ælfric specifically.

As Barnbrook and Mason explain, extensive work has been done on the effects and implications of priming across a wide range of disciplines, including linguistics, behavioural

studies, and psychology. Priming ‘has been recognised as part of the process of morphological processing and speech recognition for some time’.<sup>77</sup> Barnbrook and Mason give nursery rhymes and listing songs as an example of a device for acquiring linguistic information and/or catalogues of lexically related groups of words.<sup>78</sup> Although Barnbrook and Mason do not move this line of thinking further, Wolf and Polzenhagen marry corpus and cognitive linguistics together to investigate culture in English(es). Cognitive linguistics, which this thesis is a proponent of, assumes that language or language variety reflects the cultural context of the speech community it is used by. Wolf and Polzenhagen suggest that the conceptual structure underlying a particular variety of English is heavily influenced by cultural identity, reality, and belief systems. Wolf and Polzenhagen use this model to discuss collocational patterns as evidence of an underlying conceptual link.<sup>79</sup> I argue that there is an underlying conceptual link present in Ælfric’s fixed expression ‘*hangian + grin*’, specifically that SELF-KILLERS ARE CRIMINALS. This underlying conceptual link is not present across the board, even by authors reproducing the same texts as Ælfric. Two anonymous authors do use ‘*hangian + grin*’: the anonymous version of *In Cena Domini* and the anonymous translation of Alcuin’s *De Virtutibus et Vitiis*.<sup>80</sup> While they are replicating the Latin, there is no fixed collocation between terms for HANGING and *laqueo* in the Latin they replicate.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Geoff Barnbrook, Oliver Mason, and Ramesh Krishnamurthy, *Collocation: Applications and Implications*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 154.

<sup>78</sup> Hans-Georg Wolf and Frank Polzenhagen, ‘Fixed Expressions as Manifestations of Cultural Conceptualizations: Examples from African Varieties of English’ in *Phraseology in English*, ed. by Paul Skandera, 54 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), p. 156.

<sup>79</sup> Hans-Georg and Polzenhagen, ‘Fixed Expressions’, p. 423.

<sup>80</sup> The instance in the anonymous version of *In Cena Domini* uses: ‘he hine sylfne swiðe unlædlice mid grine aheng’ (He quickly, wretchedly with a noose hanged himself). The Alcuin text is Cameron number: B9.7.3 in the DOEWC. It says of Judas: ‘he hine an grine aheng’ (he hanged himself on a noose). See Appendix A.

<sup>81</sup> As this chapter points out, Alcuin uses: ‘laqueo suspensum’, Paulinus uses: ‘unus enim laqueo fauces stringente minister’, and Severus uses ‘laqueo sibi vitam extorsisse’.

We can also assume that the phrase *fotum span* is either Ælfric's own invention, or something he picked up from people's speech. It seems likely to me that it is also a fixed phrase, although we only have evidence of it twice in the entire OE corpus. The phrase constructs a macabre image meant to put off potential self-killers and cursers of a body writhing in death.

## Conclusion

By investigating these self-hangings in context, and comparing them with their Latin counterparts, we can conclude that a) self-hanging was, as it is a now, a viable method of self-killing that was construed as wilful; b) self-hanging did not have to be done from a height and different ligatures have varying connotations (*laqueus* and *grin* being negative and criminal); c) Ælfric was so concerned with self-killing that he added an entire backstory to a woman's cursing to make her even more hateful; d) Ælfric cemented his own (though likely a cultural) perception of self-killers as criminal into his language – a conceptual link that is not taken up across the board.

This chapter showed that the construction of a post-mortem self-killing narrative is easily swayed by the method described. As in present day, and throughout time, hanging is one of the methods most often coded as a self-killing. The result is that hangings could be coded self-killings where there was actually a second party involved, as in the case of Arbogastes' murder. This was shown to be exacerbated by the fact that certain terms connote self-killing more than others, such as *grin* 'noose'.

This section also saw evidence of the mention of self-killing in the *Will of Æthelgifu*, which is the only text in this thesis known to have been at least partially, if not primarily, written and conceived of by a woman. Æthelgifu implies that at least part of what made Judas hateful to

God was his self-hanging. This thesis noted that the explicit mention of a self-killing in a will clearly proves that self-killing was a touchable topic, and that it was discussed among people other than theologians.

This chapter also illustrated Ælfric's comments on the mental state of a self-killer. He originally described an anonymous man in the *Life of St. Martin* as *ungesceadwis* 'irrational', before shortly changing it to *ungesaelig* 'unhappy/not fortunate'. Neither, as the chapter showed, were direct translations from the Latin. Instead, the change likely points to an understanding on Ælfric's part on what might make an average individual kill themselves. There is a need for more research on the reasons why people kill themselves in OE to better understand the use of these terms here, and the change that was made.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, this chapter showed that *hangian* and *grin* collocate frequently for Ælfric, and likely others in the period. While there is not a lot of extant evidence on hanging, it does seem as though the two terms connote a self-killing for a reader in the period. Ultimately, this provides evidence for the conceptual link between self-killers and criminals, which is clearly a perception Ælfric holds.

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<sup>82</sup> While I have plans to address this in the form of an article and extended chapters in a planned monograph, based on this thesis, I believe that there is a wealth of material here and hope more scholars use the data from this thesis to draw their own conclusions based on different methodologies, including archaeology, psychology and history.

## Chapter Nine: Editorial Voices and Perceptions

In the previous chapters, I wrote about how diction and syntax can highlight an author/editor/compiler's perception of self-killing, while discussing what perceptions this could point to in general. This chapter outlines three author/editor's views on self-killing, the Orosius Compiler, Wulfstan, and Ælfric, expanding on points in previous chapters to present evidence for their individual perceptions. Ælfric and the Orosius Compiler were chosen simply because they have written the most on the topic, while Wulfstan was chosen because of his high status as an author around the same time as Ælfric, and for his telling absence of self-killing commentary. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the Compiler was likely indifferent or uninterested in self-killing for self-killing's sake, Wulfstan may have been more sympathetic to self-killing in some circumstances, and Ælfric took it upon himself to be the moral voice against self-killing in all situations.

### **Orosius**

While this thesis is mainly concerned with the compiler of the Old English *History of the World*, it would be hard to spot his changes without first discussing the aims and voice of his source text. Paulus Orosius was a Latin-speaking Christian historian born around 380.<sup>1</sup> Orosius' *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* was meant to counter concerns by the public that the sack of Rome c. 410 was due to the empire's Christian conversion.<sup>2</sup> When the Roman Empire converted to Christianity under Constantine (c. 306–337), the Roman historians wanted to

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Sahner, 'From Augustine to Islam: Translation and History in the Arabic Orosius', *Speculum*, 88.4 (2013), 905–31 (p. 905).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Kate Hurley, 'Alfredian Temporalities: Time and Translation in the Old English *Orosius*', *Journal of Germanic Philology*, 112.4 (2013), 405–32 (p. 405).

replace traditional accounts of Rome and its neighbours with a tradition that better reflected their new religion.<sup>3</sup> The goal was to glorify the achievements of Imperial Rome, above that of the Republic, idealise peace over war, tie Biblical events to Roman and Greek history, and even to acknowledge neighbouring places rather than just Rome. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, was the first to begin this chronicle in Greek, which was updated and translated into Latin by Jerome around 380, who brought the chronicle up to his own time.<sup>4</sup> Then, Augustine began writing *City of God*, around 410. Around 417, Orosius began writing his *History* with Augustine's encouragement.<sup>5</sup> He drew heavily from Livy, Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, Justinus, Eusebius-Jerome's chronicle, Rufinius' church history, and Herodotus.<sup>6</sup> His history was widely circulated in the medieval period, with fifty manuscripts surviving from before c. 1100, and two hundred after that up until c. 1500.<sup>7</sup> Given its great success, it is unsurprising that in the late ninth or early tenth century, someone created a translation and adaptation of the *History* into OE.

Scholars have recently begun to question whether 'translation' is a suitable term for the OE *History of the World*.<sup>8</sup> Hurley suggests that the OE *History of the World*'s narrator/author, could be deemed a 'compiler', that is, someone who selects material from a certain tradition and places it in a particular arrangement.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, compilers transfer authority. This is certainly what the Compiler, as I will refer to him, does in his version of Orosius' *History*. As it was written in the ninth century, the OE *History of the World* features two distinct voices

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<sup>3</sup> *Old English History of the World*, Godden, p. viii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii–ix.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Bately, Janet, 'The Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign: Translation or Transformation' in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. by Paul Szarmach (New York: Garland Press, 2000), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Hurley, 'Alfredian Temporalities', pp. 409–10.



commenting on their own periods: Paulus Orosius' fifth-century Roman world and late ninth-century England.

Interestingly, the Compiler does not make his own voice clear to his audience. Instead, he invokes Orosius and puts words in his mouth to gain authorial power. Godden thoughtfully explains that the Compiler claims authority by using *cwæð Orosius* (said Orosius); even though what typically follows the phrase is not a translation of the Latin, but an entirely new addition.<sup>10</sup>

The Compiler's overall interest is also skewed from Orosius'. As Bately explains, the Compiler alters the text from an 'exercise in polemic using historical material to a survey of world history from a Christian standpoint'.<sup>11</sup> She explains that the Compiler's interests lie in events as well as actions, whereas Orosius' was mainly concerned with the resulting effects, as long as they were miserable.<sup>12</sup> The Compiler amends this history of misery to show a turning point with Christ's birth, after which the calamities ameliorate.<sup>13</sup> Whitelock explains that the Compiler emphasises and rewrites whole sections in order to show how the whole of history, from Babylon to Carthage, had been leading to the 'universal empire of Rome, so that Christ should be born in the universal peace of Augustus' reign and the faith could be spread throughout the empire'.<sup>14</sup> This theme matches his major edits to the piece, as he kept nearly everything about the first four empires but cut the intrastate wars between the Greeks. He trims books five and six but keeps the information about Rome's expansion.<sup>15</sup> This is important, because most of the self-killings in the original occur in the last three books.

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<sup>10</sup> Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?" *Medium Ævum*, 76 (2007), 7.

<sup>11</sup> *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Janet Bately (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. xciii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xciv.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xcvi.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

The OE *History of the World* features seventeen self-killings, while the Latin has forty-two.<sup>16</sup> Most of the self-killers' favour methods like stabbings, immolations, and poisonings – the latter two of which are rare in the rest of the OE self-killing corpus. Twenty-five of the self-killings are erased from the original Latin, and others are only alluded to for those who were familiar with the original stories, like the self-immolation of Elissa (Dido, Queen and founder of Carthage).<sup>17</sup> The erasure of a good number of the self-killings may look like it points to a Compiler who was uncomfortable with self-killing; however, the OE *History of the World* is an adaptation of the text with 'radical unacknowledged alterations' which cut, rewrite, and expand on the source while keeping the order of the material. The Compiler did not just cut out self-killings, he also added some in.

For example, the Compiler adds Lucretia's self-killing. In the Latin, it is only said that she was raped by Tarquin: *Tarquinii Superbi regnum occisi soceri scelere adsumptum, habita in ciues crudelitate detentum, flagitio adulteratae Lucretiae amissum.*<sup>18</sup> (Tarquinius Superbus

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<sup>16</sup> For the OE, see *History of the World*: Sardanapalus burns himself alive because he is supplanted, p. 86; Lucretia is raped and kills herself, p. 108; Himelcho kills himself because of the great turmoil of Carthage, p. 240; Quintus Fulvius terrifies all the senators so that they kill themselves, p. 276; Hannibal poisons himself, p. 291; Hasdrubal kills himself because he has been defeated, p. 296; Hasdrubal's wife burns herself and two sons alive because her husband died, and they would be killed or taken as slaves, p. 296; The Numantians burn themselves and their city to the ground because they got drunk and lost the battle to Scipio, p. 312; Cato jumps to his death because he has lost the war and does not want to see Julius again, p. 338; Cleopatra kills herself to escape capture after losing to Octavian, p. 342; Anthony kills himself, p. 342; Some of the people of Spain kill themselves because they are defeated by Augustus, p. 346; Pontius Pilate kills himself because of God's torment for killing Jesus, p. 360; Nero kills himself, p. 365; Magnentius kills himself, p. 396; Arbogastes, p. 410. For the Latin, See: Fear, *Seven Books*: Sardanapalus, p. 67; Leonidas, pp. 88-89; Demosthenes, p. 98; Socrates, p. 104; Marcus Curtius, p. 118; Carthagenians, p. 164; Himelcho, p. 165; Campanians, p. 190; Hannibal, p. 199; Hasdrubal's wife and children, p. 203; Dido, p. 203; Numantians, p. 221; Vidacilius, p. 243; Accidentally patricidal soldier, p. 246; Same again, p. 247; Marius and Telesinus, p. 251; Mithraides, p. 265; Fimbria, p. 267; Mithraides after failed self-poisoning but successful group self-poisoning, p. 272; Bibulus, p. 293; Cato, p. 298; Juba, p. 298; Petrius, p. 298; Scipio, p. 298; Caesar suicidal thoughts, p. 299; Dolabella, p. 302; Brutus and Cassius, p. 303; Antony, p. 307; Cleopatra, p. 308; Men on Mount Medulus, p. 312; Pilate, p. 329; Nero, p. 335; Otho, p. 337; Licinius, p. 370; Magnentius, p. 374; Ducentius, p. 375; Firmus, p. 382; Theodosius, p. 382; Count Andragathius, p. 388; Count Andragathius, p. 389; Valentinian's death made to look like self-killing; Arbogastes, p. 392.

<sup>17</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 237.

<sup>18</sup> *Pauli Orosii historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, ed. by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Zangemeister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899), Book Two, Chapter Four <<http://www.attalus.org/latin/orosius2.html>> [accessed 12 September 2021].

obtained the kingdom through the criminal murder of his father-in-law, held onto it through his cruelty towards its citizens, and lost it through the shameful rape of Lucretia).<sup>19</sup>

While, in the OE it expands Tarquin's end, and includes more about Lucretia in Book Two,

Chapter Two:

Ac þa cyningas ðe æfter Romuluse ricsedan wæran forcuðran and eargran þonne he wære and þæm folcum laðran and ungetæsran, oþ þæt Tarcuinius, þe we ær ymb sædon, þe hiora eallra fracodost wæs – ægðer ge eargost ge wrænost ge ofermogast. Eallra þara Romana wif þa þe he mihte he gelingre genydde, and his suna geþafode þæt he læg mid Latinus wife, Lucretie hatte, Brutuses sweoster, þa hi on fyrde wæron, þeah hi Romana brymuste wæron to þæm cyninge. Hio þa Lucretie hy sylfe forðæm acwealde. Þa þæt Latinus hyre werr geahsode and Brutus hyre broðor, þa hi ham coman, þa adræfdon hy ægðer ge þone cyning ge his sunu ge ealle þa þe þær cynecynnes wæran of ðy rice mid ealle. Him ða Romane æfter ðæm underlatteowas gesettan, þe hi consulas heton, þæt hiora rice held an gear an man.<sup>20</sup>

(But those kings that ruled after Romulus were more perverse and vicious than he was, and they were more hateful and more troublesome to the people, until Tarquin, whom we spoke of before, who was the vilest of all – both the most vicious, most lascivious, and most proud. All those Roman women that he could he forced into adultery, and permitted his son to lie with Latinus' wife, called Lucretia, Brutus' sister, when they were on campaign, though they were the most famous Romans to the king. For that reason, Lucretia killed herself. When her husband Latinus and Brutus her brother found out, when they came home, they drove out both the king and his son, and everyone who was

<sup>19</sup> Translation from Fear, *Seven Books*, pp. 79–80.

<sup>20</sup> *History of the World*, Godden, p. 108.

of royal blood. After that, the Romans set subordinate rulers, that they called consuls, so that one person held power per year).

The Compiler felt the need to include Lucretia's self-killing, not to put forth the point that self-killing is shameful or sinful here, but to explain the effects and cruelty of Tarquin's deeds. He *geþafode* his son such that he 'laid with Latinus' wife' (*læg mid Latinus wife*). Although Lucretia's rape is famous in other sources, neither Orosius nor the Compiler use the language of explicit rape here.<sup>21</sup> The Latin says *flagitio adulteratae* (shameful adultery), which Fear chooses to translate as 'shameful rape'.<sup>22</sup> However, *adulteratae* first and foremost refers to adultery. Lewis and Short define *adulterato* as 'to commit adultery, to pollute, defile', which could mean shameful defiling of the women, depending on the context.<sup>23</sup> However, in her thesis on the subject of the language of adultery in Roman sources, Dixon explains that adultery and rape were two separate subjects, and that *adulterium* was 'sex with a married woman' while *rapina* was RAPE.<sup>24</sup> While a man could certainly be charged with both offenses, it is relevant to note that here, the Compiler retains this lack of force for Lucretia.<sup>25</sup>

The Compiler says that Tarquin's son was allowed to *licgan mid* Lucretia, not to force her into adultery (*gelingre genydde*), which is how he describes what Tarquin does to many of the Roman wives. *Ge-nydan* means 'to compel, force, press' and is more clearly conveying that this was not a mutual decision. While the phrase *læg mid* does not convey the forcefulness of this shameful adultery, the Compiler does make it clear that is this act which causes Lucretia to kill

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<sup>21</sup> See Marianne R Dirksen and Beate Britz, 'Five Brave Pagan Women in the Work of Tertullian', In *die skriflig: tydskrif van die Gereformeerde Teologiese Vereniging*, 48.2 (2014): 1–7 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v48i2.1777>> [accessed 24 October 2021]; Miriam Griffin, 'Philosophy, Cato, and Roman Suicide: II', p. 193.

<sup>22</sup> Fear, *Seven Books*, p. 80.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis and Short, *A New Latin Dictionary*, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> Jessica E. Dixon, 'The Language of Roman Adultery' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Manchester, 2012), p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

herself: ‘Lucretie hy sylfe forðæm acwealde’. The use of *forðæm* after the act of being laid with clearly sets out the cause of her self-killing. While this act of self-killing is treated as noble in other sources, such as Valerius Maximus, Quintilian, and Livy, the Compiler does not seem to be including Lucretia’s self-killing to say anything about women taking back control after rape by killing themselves to keep their virtuous reputations intact.<sup>26</sup> Instead, it is first and foremost an inciting incident.

Lucretia’s self-killing here spurs Brutus and Latinus to drive out Tarquin and his son and install consuls to the seat of power, ending the monarchy. It is likely that the Compiler did not include this self-killing to say anything about self-killings themselves, nor chastity and agency. Instead, the Compiler was merely explaining in more detail how Tarquin was evil, and how he lost the kingdom through *adultery*, which is what the original explains happened. This suggests that the Compiler was not actually very concerned with the sinfulness of self-killing, nor was he concerned with consent and the repercussions of rape. He adds Lucretia’s self-killing back into this section because it is a famous piece of history, which spurred the switch from monarchy to republic.

Despite the clear Christian message of the *History*, the Compiler of the OE *History of the World* never took it upon himself to comment on the sinfulness of self-killing directly. While this may sound trivial, the Compiler does take it upon himself to comment on the sinfulness of other acts.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Valerius Maximus described her as *dux Romanae pudicitiae* and Quintilian ‘valued her example of fortitude in the face of death’ above that of famous male suicides. Dirksen and Britz, ‘Five Brave Pagan Women in the Work of Tertullian’, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Book One, Chapter Eight, p. 73, Book One, Chapter 10.6, Chapter 12.2, Book Two, Chapter 5.10, Book Two, Chapter 6.4, to name a few.

For example, Orosius' *History* details the eruption of Mt. Etna after discussing in general the slaughter and crime in which 'all of Asia and Europe' were entangled:

His deinde temporibus grauissimo motu terrae concussa Sicilia, insuper exaestuantibus Aethnae montis ignibus fauillisque calidis cum detrimento plurimo agrorum uillarumque uastata est.<sup>28</sup>

(After these events, Sicily was struck by a powerful earthquake and was, moreover, devastated by seething fire and hot ash from Mount Etna which destroyed many fields and farms).<sup>29</sup>

The Compiler of the OE *History of the World* did not find the symbol of Mt. Etna's eruption powerful enough in the Latin. The Compiler expands this section of the text and explains that the Romans were fighting many inglorious wars.<sup>30</sup> After that, in Book Two, Chapter Six, there is a whole year where:

ofer eall Romana rice seo eorðe wæs cwaciende and berstende, and ælce dæg man com unarimedlice oft to senatum, and him sædon fram burgum fram tunum on eorðan besuncan, and hi sylfe wæron ælce dæg on þære ondrædinge hwænne hi on ða eorðan besuncene wurdon.<sup>31</sup>

(All over the Kingdom of Rome the earth was quaking and bursting, and each day men came countlessly to the senate, and they told them of cities and towns that had sunk into the earth, and the senators themselves were each day dreading when they would sink into the earth).

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<sup>28</sup> *Pauli Orosii historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, ed. by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Zangemeister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899), Book 2 Chapter 18.6 <<http://www.attalus.org/latin/orosius2.html>> [accessed 12 September 2021].

<sup>29</sup> Translation from Fear, *Seven Books*, pp. 79–80.

<sup>30</sup> Using the adjective: *heanlicne*. Godden, *History of the World*, p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Following this, the Compiler explains that there was a large-scale famine, and then the Romans appointed eight more consuls to make more laws. One of these consuls, Claudius, became greedy and tried to take control, but the others were divided, and the two factions fought each other and forgot about the famine and the earthquakes. All the consuls then came together and ‘beat the lone Claudius with rods’ (*Claudium þone ænne mid saglum ofbeoton*). The narrator then explains that:

Igþelice, cwæð Orosius, and sceortlice ic habbe nu gesæd hiora ingewinn, þeah hi him wæron forneah þa mæstan and ða pleolecestan. Þæt eac Eðna þæt sweflene fyr tacnode, þa hit upp of hellegeate asprang on Sicilia þam lande, hwylce gewinn þa wæron be þam þe nu syndon, and Sicilia fela ofsloh mid bryne and mid stence. Ac syððan hit cristen wearð þæt hellefyr wæs syððan geswiþrad, swa ealle ungetima wæron, þæt hit nu is buton swylcum tacnungum þæs yfeles þe hit ær dyde, þeah hit ælce geara sy bradre and bradre.<sup>32</sup>

(Simply, said Orosius, and shortly, I have now told of their internecine wars, though they were almost their largest and the most dangerous. Etna, the sulfurous fire, when it sprang up from the gates of Hell in the land of Sicily, also indicated what kind of wars those were in comparison to now, and greatly battered Sicily with fire and fumes. But after it [Rome] became Christian that hellfire has since weakened, as have all misfortunes, so that it now is without those marks of evil that it had before, though each year it [Etna] becomes wider and wider).

The OE compiler takes it upon himself to narrate as ‘Orosius’ and speak more directly to his contemporary audience. He argues that the eruption of Mt. Etna was an act of God as punishment

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 134–35.

for their fighting and killing, which is diminished when they become Christian. The Compiler does not leave the eruption open to any reading but pushes his interpretation to further the argument that misfortunes abounded more pre-Christianity than after. While the Compiler comments on certain acts of God and identifies them as punishment, he does not single out self-killings as warranting the same reaction, which was later used as a rhetorical move by the Church.<sup>33</sup> Although the *History's* central theme is that the history of the pagans is rife with conflict, turmoil, and catastrophes, nearly all the self-killings are positioned as a result of disastrous defeat or loss of power in the OE *History of the World*.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that the OE Compiler found self-killing to be an act of fear, one that in itself, was not a dishonourable thing to do.

However, his changes are not consistent with one view of self-killing. Not only does the Compiler add and omit self-killings based on what he views as important, but he also even goes so far as to change the cause of some people's deaths. Instead of saying that Gaius Marius and Sulla killed themselves because of their disastrous defeat, the OE says Gaius Marius and Sulla died of natural causes.<sup>35</sup> However, in the case of Hasdrubal, the Latin says he surrendered, and the Compiler changes this to say he killed himself.<sup>36</sup> The changes the Compiler makes to the self-killings do not seem to be motivated by a certain view of SELF-KILLING.

While these changes are likely motivated by the sources the Compiler was following, the lack of consistency in making changes regarding the self-killings shows that he did not find self-killing an unspeakable topic. He keeps self-killings which could be viewed as understandable or

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<sup>33</sup> See Murray, *The Curse of Self-Murder*, pp. 359, 460, 562.

<sup>34</sup> Eleven out of the seventeen self-killings in the OE Orosius are clearly because of defeat. This is certainly an area for substantial future research.

<sup>35</sup> Fear, *Seven Books*, p. 251, and *History of the World*, Godden, p. 331.

<sup>36</sup> Fear, *Seven Books*, p. 203; *History of the World*, Godden, p. 296.



even noble, such as Lucretia's. However, he does not idealise it. It is possible that the Compiler was near indifferent to self-killing itself. Ultimately, we cannot be sure how he felt.

Bately and Hurley explain that there is also the possibility that the text was a collaborative effort.<sup>37</sup> They explain that there is some linguistic and stylistic evidence which points to more than one writer, and the additions, emendations, and erasures of self-killing may add to this idea. It is possible that some of the confusion comes from more than one author and therefore more than one view on self-killing. Whether it was written by one person or not, the author(s) clearly did not find the act of self-killing alone to be unforgiveable or hellish, though it is possible that some of the authors did find it unspeakable and so erased self-killings from their sections. If we assume one author for the piece, however, it seems as though we have an author who did not really care about self-killing, other than for its historical value.

### **Wulfstan and the Lack of Commentary**

Wulfstan II was a bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York who most famously penned his *Sermo Lupi* c. 1014.<sup>38</sup> He was an advisor to both King Æthelred II (died c. 1016) and King Cnut (died c. 1035).<sup>39</sup> While he is best known as a homilist, he compiled most of the extant OE law codes from about c. 1000 until his death in c. 1023.<sup>40</sup> Wulfstan's lack of mention of self-killing might seem uninteresting to anyone who assumes that there is a lack of discussion or mention of self-killing in the period in general. However, as this thesis shows, that is a myth. According to

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<sup>37</sup> Bately, 'The Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign: Translation or Transformation', p. 21; Hurley, 'Alfredian Temporalities', pp. 409–10.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Marsden, 'The Sermon of the Wolf (Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi*)', in *The Cambridge Old English Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 209.

<sup>39</sup> For general information about Wulfstan, see Robert D. Fulk and Christopher Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> His death is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 1023. See Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 636, f. 49v. <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/6272311c-058d-417a-8e21-05e463b4f1f9/surfaces/47f8bfd6-ecf1-4c23-a7d6-4e874696a25e/>> [accessed 23 August 2021].

Fulk and Cain, most surviving OE homilies were written by Ælfric or Wulfstan.<sup>41</sup> The two wrote contemporary to each other, and even wrote to one another to discuss and debate theology.<sup>42</sup>

Fulk and Cain explain that the differences between Wulfstan and Ælfric are striking: Ælfric wrote scholarly explications on his homilies, while Wulfstan designed pieces for ‘dramatic and effective preaching’.<sup>43</sup> Wulfstan, they say, is known as a stern moralist; yet it is Ælfric, and not Wulfstan who preaches on the immorality of self-killing.

Wulfstan’s most famous sermon, the *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos* (Whom 20.3 B2.4.2.C) catalogues the sins of the *Angli* (what becomes the English peoples), and lists a great number of types of sinners he finds reproachable:

Her syndan mann slagan & mægslagan & mæsserbanan & mynsterhatan &  
 her syndan mansworan & morþorwyrhtan, & her syndan myltestran & bearn myrðran &  
 fule forlegene horingas manege, & her syndan wiccan & wælcyrian, & her syndan  
 ryperas & reaferas & woruldstruderas & hrædest is to cwepenne mana & misdæda ungeri  
 ealra.<sup>44</sup>

(Here there are person-slayers and kin-slayers and priest-killers and haters of monasteries and betrayers of lords and murder-workers, and here there are harlots and child murderers and many foul adulterous whores, and here there are witches and Valkyries, and here there are reapers and robbers and spoilers of this world’s goods, and thieves and criminals against the community, and false pledges, faithless and the quickest is to say an uncountable number of all crimes and misdeeds).

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<sup>41</sup> Fulk and Cain, *A History of Old English Literature*, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> London, British Library, Cotton MS. Nero A I, f. 114<sup>r</sup>

<[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton\\_ms\\_nero\\_a\\_i\\_f070r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_nero_a_i_f070r)> [accessed 23 August 2021].

The above is not the only example of an extensive list by Wulfstan of crimes or sins he perceives or notes the population to be committing. While his list is extensive, it does not make any note of self-killers.

Wulfstan reworks Ælfric's *De Falsis Deis* but picks a small part of it and ignores any mention of self-killing.<sup>45</sup> This is not the only time that Wulfstan reworks a piece that Ælfric wrote that included self-killing and erases all mentions. For a lesser-known example, there are the different versions of *In Cena Domini*, of which Wulfstan's version is found in Oxford, Bodleian MS. Hatton 113, ff. 81<sup>r</sup>–83<sup>r</sup>.<sup>46</sup> An anonymous version (HomS 22 (CenDom 1) B3.2.22)), attributed sometimes to Abbo of St. Germain, and previously to Ælfric, states of Judas:<sup>47</sup>

He wæs læwa and myrðra and furðon he hine sylfne swiðe unlædlice mid grine aheng and awyrigde and swa ungesæliglice to ecan deaðe and to ecum witum wæs geniðerad.<sup>48</sup>  
(He was a betrayer/traitor and murderer and what's more, he very miserably hanged himself with a noose and strangled [himself] and so unhappily to eternal death and to eternal punishment was he condemned).

This version takes up Ælfric's position on Judas, and likely self-killers by positioning Judas' self-killing as the final straw in his descent to eternal punishment.<sup>49</sup> Although Wulfstan wrote a version of this homily, his does not include any mention of Judas' self-hanging or SELF-KILLING. This is to say the above excerpt was completely erased from his version.

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<sup>45</sup> A comparative analysis of the two different works is the subject of a BA thesis from Utrecht: H.M. Aho, "Ealra þæra goda þe þa hæðenan on ðam dagum for godas hæfdonn": A Comparative Analysis of Wulfstan's *De Falsis Deis* and Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Utrecht University, 2016), <<http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/339005>> [accessed 25 August 2021].

<sup>46</sup> *In Cena Domini*, in Oxford, Bodleian MS. Hatton 113, ff. 81<sup>r</sup>–83<sup>r</sup>. It is also not in CCCC, MS 190.

<sup>47</sup> According to Wulfstan, *Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. x. <<https://archive.org/details/homiliesofwulfst0000wulf/page/n15/mode/2up>> [accessed 26 January 2021].

<sup>48</sup> *In Cena Domini* in CCCC MS 198, f. 174<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 304.

Wulfstan does not take part in any conversation condemning self-killing or self-killers, even Judas.<sup>50</sup> He does, however, engage in debates with Ælfric in letters about just punishments. In Ælfric's first OE *Pastoral Letter* for Wulfstan (ÆLet 2 (Wulfstan 1 – CCCC 190) B1.8.2)), he instructs Wulfstan to say that priests killed during a fight can be buried but should not have masses offered for them.<sup>51</sup> Wulfstan changes this to say that they can be buried in consecrated ground, and 'let everything else be left to God's judgement' (*lætan swa siððan eal to 3odes dome*).<sup>52</sup> It seems likely that this is Wulfstan's outlook on SELF-KILLING: the judgment of people after death should be left to God. As in the case with priests killed during a fight, this is not the opinion of Ælfric.

### **Ælfric**

Ælfric was one of the most prolific writers in early medieval England, writing in both English and Latin. He was born sometime around 955 and most likely lived to be little older than fifty-three.<sup>53</sup> He was a monk at the Old Minster Winchester, before moving to Cerne, and then to Eynsham, where he was an abbot before his death.<sup>54</sup>

### **Self-Killing in Ælfric's Works**

Clayton's in-depth article 'Suicide in the Works of Ælfric' provides solid evidence for the hypothesis that Ælfric found self-killing inexcusable in all contexts. Clayton clearly and thoughtfully lays out the connections between Ælfric's work and his contemporaries', and their

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<sup>50</sup> This is according to the vast searches using the DOEWC, the methodology for which is explained in the beginning of this thesis.

<sup>51</sup> He also amends Ælfric's version of *De Falsis Deis* to take out the mention of SELF-KILLING.

<sup>52</sup> OE from: Ælfric, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics in altenglischer und lateinischer Fassung*, ed. by Bernhard Fehr, (Hamburg: Verlag Von Henri Grand, 1914), pp. 134–35. See also Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 309: CCCC 201 (D) contains the change; CCCC 190 (O) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343 (Oz) contain the alternative.

<sup>53</sup> Hill, *Companion to Ælfric*, pp. 36–37; Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', p. 245.

<sup>54</sup> Hill, *Companion to Ælfric*, p. 35.

resulting opinions on the debate of self-killing. Although the article does address terminology, it does not pay attention to phrasal constructions of self-killing, which, although it would not change the relevance or strength of Clayton's argument, it is needed for any in-depth investigation of cross-temporal studies of cultural perceptions, especially when linguistic evidence is nearly all that remains.

There are ten texts written by Ælfric which mention and condemn self-killing: the *Passion of Saint Alban*, *The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria*, *Palm Sunday*, *Nativity of the Innocents*, *Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem*, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, *Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter*, *The Deposition of St. Martin*, *The Feast of St Stephen*, and the *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*.<sup>55</sup> Each text deals with a specific type of SELF-KILLING or SELF-KILLER, ultimately highlighting many of the contexts in which Ælfric finds it inappropriate and immoral to kill oneself. *The Passion of St. Alban*, *The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria*, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, *The Nativity of the Innocents*, *The Deposition of St. Martin*, *Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem*, and *The Feast of St Stephen* were all already discussed in this thesis. Though his opinions on SELF-KILLING are spread across the ten texts which address it, Ælfric's stance on self-killing is clearly expressed in his general note on the act in the introductory prose paragraph to the *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*.

The *De octo uitiis et de duodecim abusiuis* is a composite text in the genre of wisdom literature which combines the eight vices and complementary virtues with the twelve abuses in Old English vernacular.<sup>56</sup> It was translated and adapted from a seventh-century Hiberno-Latin

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Clayton, *Two Ælfric Texts: The Twelve Abuses and The Vices and Virtues: An Edition and Translation of De Duodecimo Abusiuis and De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 11 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), p. 23.

tract.<sup>57</sup> The treatise is attributed to Ælfric and can be found in *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies series I*, as well as in the last part of *Ælfric's Lives of Saints XVI*.<sup>58</sup> The text is extant in three manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 178; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 116; London, Lambeth Palace Library 487, and is believed to have been composed no later than 998.<sup>59</sup> The provenance of each manuscript is different, though they can be localised to Worcester, or the West Midlands; Treharne suggests that MS 178 was written in the west of England, Hatton 116 is written at Worcester, and Lambeth 487 is localised to Northwest Worcestershire.<sup>60</sup>

The introductory prose paragraph wherein SELF-KILLING is mentioned only exists in the composite versions of the *De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis* (ÆAbus (Mor) B1.6.2.1). The section reads: 'Eaðe mæg se mann findan hu he hine sylfne amyrrre ac we sceolan witan þæt nan sylfcwala þæt is agenslaga ne becymð to Godes rice'.<sup>61</sup> (Easily may the man find how he may destroy himself but we should know that no self-slayer, that is one who kills himself, will go to the Kingdom of God). Here Ælfric mentions three of the constructions for SELF-KILLING in one sentence, and clearly implies that all self-killers will go to hell. As each of the constructions carry their own connotations, associations, and weight, it may be that Ælfric expected his audience to be more familiar with one term or another. In no uncertain terms, Ælfric makes his stance on self-killing very clear. Self-killers will *ne becymð to Godes rice*. Although this

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<sup>57</sup> Clayton, *Two Ælfric Texts*, p. 37.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>60</sup> E. A., McIntyre, 'Early-Twelfth-Century Worcester Cathedral Priory, with Special Reference to the Manuscripts Written There' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 1978), pp. 36–37; Elaine M. Treharne, 'The Production and Script of Manuscripts containing English Religious Texts in the First Half of the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 27; Laing, Margaret, 'Multidimensionality: Time, Space and Trigraphs in Historical Dialectology', in *Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology*, ed. by Marina Dossena and Roger Lass (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 72–73.

<sup>61</sup> Clayton, *Two Ælfric Texts*, p. 142.

sentiment is certain, Ælfric repeats it in several other texts, and even expands different self-killing episodes to make the self-killer more villainous, or their end more painful, which we saw throughout this thesis.

The myriad of ways and contexts in which self-killings occur in Ælfric's work point to differing ideas about what might make SELF-KILLING acceptable to an early medieval audience, which we can and must read in line with the theory of resistant spectatorship. While Ælfric has reasons why each of the contexts he brings up are immoral and unchristian to him, by working backwards from the need for such rhetoric, it becomes clear that Ælfric feels that some section of the general laity, monastic community, or royal court needed to be convinced that SELF-KILLING is never a moral grey area. Ultimately, while Ælfric's views and perception of SELF-KILLING is clear, the perceptions of the general laity, monastic community, and royal court(s) are not.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that three authors/editors, who were writing around the same period, had varying and contradictory views of self-killing. Wulfstan felt the need to completely erase and not argue for his view of self-killing, which leaves a silence Ælfric shouts to fill. Instead of erasing, obscuring, or completely condemning self-killing, the OE *Orosius* Compiler seems to regard self-killing as similar to generic killing. In some circumstances, the Compiler may even be suggesting that self-killing to some people could be noble. Finally, Ælfric takes the most time to discuss self-killing, even likely creating his own terms to describe it, with *agenslaga* as we saw previously, and certain euphemistic phrases.

Fundamentally, this chapter has shown that perceptions and responses to self-killing material by OE authors and editors were varied. There was clearly not one perception of self-

killing in this period, despite overwhelming Christian themes and tones. It seems likely that each author's imagined or real audiences were also expected to have differing or contradictory views on the matter, leading to some authors like Ælfric to come down even harder on the subject. Others, like Wulfstan, seem to have chosen to avoid the topic altogether. This seems likely to be because of its controversiality within Church institutions and among theologians like Wulfstan and Ælfric at the time. Ultimately, this chapter highlights heterogeneous responses to self-killing material and puts to bed the idea of a homogenous perception of SELF-KILLING in early medieval England.



## Conclusion

This thesis investigated the OE words used for *suicide*, what they mean, and how we can differentiate between them. Ultimately, this thesis showed that while the main authors who wrote about self-killing in the period were against the idea, there was an ongoing debate about where and when self-killing would be acceptable. Despite the assumption by scholars that there is a lack of evidence on suicide in early medieval England, this thesis has successfully unearthed a relative wealth of evidence of self-killings which were written about or took place in early medieval England. Most of the examples in this thesis were not previously discussed in scholarship, and the data compiled in the appendices will serve as a starting point for a plethora of studies on self-killing in the pre-modern period in England.

This thesis answered three related questions: how can we identify discourses surrounding SUICIDE in a different cultural context from our own/ how does our culture, language, and time affect our understanding of SUICIDE acts, actors, and thoughts? What were the perceptions of SUICIDE (acts and actors) by the writers and perceived audiences in early medieval England? Lastly, what sort of rhetorical devices or effects were employed to discuss or avoid the topic of suicide in Old English?

Chapters One through Four addressed different methodologies which can be employed to identify and investigate discourses surrounding SUICIDE in a different cultural context from our own. The entire thesis worked towards providing some answers to the question of how our own culture affects our understanding of SUICIDE acts, actors, and thoughts. However, as this thesis has shown, a lot of our cultural assumptions and biases about suicide come to us from after the Norman Conquest, when SUICIDE first became illegal in England. If we want to investigate the biases we hold in the modern day towards SUICIDE, more work needs to be done on SUICIDE

narratives and rhetoric in post-Conquest England, especially that which pays attention to the same type of literary and linguistic data we have in periods prior. Moreover, there is no semantic field or data set currently published for self-killing terms and phrases used in post-Conquest England, which would be beneficial for a cross temporal study on the shifting language and attitudes towards SUICIDE from OE to PDE.

This thesis answered: ‘What were the perceptions of SUICIDE (acts and actors) by the writers and perceived audiences in early medieval England?’ It gave evidence for heterogenous and conflicting approaches and responses to SUICIDE in the period. Chapter Nine built on the evidence compiled in this thesis to set out three different authors’ opinions on the subject, as well as the responses taken by different glossators. Ultimately, this thesis states that some people perceived SUICIDE as entirely sinful, while others viewed the subject in increasing shades of grey. In some cases, such as in Margaret’s executioner Malchus, we even have evidence of a self-killer who goes to Heaven.<sup>1</sup> Not all authors, editors, or scribes were comfortable with this though, which showed how the topic was in flux in pre-Conquest England.

In answering the final question, ‘What sort of rhetorical devices or effects were employed to discuss or avoid the topic of suicide in Old English?’, this thesis outlined and investigated the varied syntax, diction, connotations, and emphasis that were employed to convey, describe, and obscure self-killing in OE. The dysphemistic language employed by the OE compiler of the OE *History of the World*, highlighted a dark humour used to convey the topic of self-killing. This thesis showed the dysphemisms for self-killing typically include the concept of DESTRUCTION especially regarding the body and soul of the victim. In this way, the use of dysphemistic language for self-killing descriptions tends to doubly attack the choice to self-kill.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Five: *Falling on One’s Sword*.

The section on euphemisms in Chapter Three highlighted that Ælfric uses euphemistic language even when condemning self-killing. This likely points to a shared use of euphemisms for self-killing, and violent deaths in general, for people that were well-liked by the community. Uses such as these are likely obscured and therefore not counted as self-killings by this and other studies and are likely further obscured and erased by history. A look at the metaphors surrounding self-killing additionally showed that all the euphemisms employed the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS LOSS in some form or another. This loss is typically conceptualised as loss to the dead person and world and not to the community. More research needs to be done on metaphors and conceptual metaphors for death in OE in general before we can come to any real conclusions about what this means, though it could point to an underlying structure of self-killing as a loss to the dead person.

While this thesis did not have the time or space to discuss reasonings for self-killings in detail, it does explain that all the self-poisonings are clearly positioned as the result of some form of defeat. Rhetorically, self-poisonings in OE (as in PDE) are positioned as a painless method of death. Whether that is true or not is an entirely different issue. As self-poisoning is positioned rhetorically as painless, it is also typified as the death one might chose to give oneself in lieu of being murdered, sold as a slave, or taken hostage in some other form. Ultimately, this may be why Ælfric avoided discussions of self-poisoning. He may have also believed in it as a painless method, and therefore did not want to draw further attention to a method which the Orosius Compiler described as like ‘going to sleep’.<sup>2</sup> More research needs to be done on the idea of painless deaths in this period, as well as what was constituted as an ideal death. More obviously, more work needs to be done on the reasons why people killed themselves in pre- and post-

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Six.

Conquest England, and much can be drawn from this thesis in regards to reasons why people killed themselves in the literature of the period, through analyses in this work, as well as by using the data in Appendix A as a starting point. Such studies may choose to widen the scope to include Latin literature from the period, and Appendix B will help them in this.

This thesis proved that self-immolation was rhetorically positioned as an emotional reaction to grief, distress, and fear. It is one of the few self-killing methods which consistently explains why the victims took their lives. All the immolations discussed in this thesis are not accounts of contemporary self-killings, and like the self-poisonings, none of them take place in the British Isles. Self-immolation is therefore positioned as a method by and for the Other. As Chapter Seven explained, this likely has to do with the conversion to Christianity and the concurrent cessation of inhumation in favour of burial. It is likely that self-immolation was an uncommon method in early medieval England, and that it was negatively connoted. The chapter explained that this method, done by the Other, was also rhetorically positioned as impulsive and excessive. It therefore makes sense that it is only positioned as something the Other does. More research could be done on inhumation and self-immolation in medieval England and whether responses to it change post-Conquest.

This thesis presented evidence of some mental states of the self-killer prior to the act, such as in Chapter Eight where Ælfric described an anonymous man in the *Life of St. Martin* as *ungesceadwis* ‘irrational’, before shortly changing it to *ungesaelig* ‘unhappy/not fortunate’. Neither, as the chapter showed, were direct translations from the Latin. There is a need for more research on the reasons why people kill themselves in OE to better understand the use of these

terms here, and the change that was made.<sup>3</sup> There is also a large gap in research on negative mental states in OE, and further research should look at what terms are used to describe people prior to killing themselves, which is likely a monograph or thesis itself.

This thesis highlighted that an interdisciplinary linguistic and literary analysis is crucial, not only to understand the biases and connotations embedded in the language and texts left behind, but also to evaluate the biases fixed in our current translations and dictionaries. The mixed methods approach used in this thesis open up possibilities for new approaches, while simultaneously highlighting the need for interdisciplinary research on subjects assumed to be dead ends.

There is still a lot of work on self-killing in OE language, literature, and culture to be done, and this thesis barely scratches the surface. It serves as a diving board, and points to different areas of research begging to be investigated, such as why people in early medieval England killed themselves? How many suicides are omitted from translations into OE and by whom? How does the rhetoric of SUICIDE change after the Norman Conquest? How does the rhetoric around SUICIDE change once it is made illegal? How does the semantic field of SUICIDE in OE compare to the rhetoric of other contemporaneous languages and cultures? What are medieval perceptions of the effect of suicidal ideation on SUICIDE?

There are many other studies which can and should be conducted using the data this thesis has compiled, and there is certainly a need for more work in general to be done on the wider issue of negative mental states in and around the early medieval period. Specifically, a comprehensive study of the language of negative mental states in the period in Latin and Old

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<sup>3</sup> While I have plans to address this in the form of an article and extended chapters in a planned monograph, based on this thesis, I believe that there is a wealth of material here and hope more scholars use the data from this thesis in order to draw their own conclusions based on different methodologies, including archaeology, psychology and history.

English would be extremely beneficial, as would a study of the reasons why people are said to have killed themselves in Old English. These studies, and many more like them, will benefit from this thesis as a starting point.

## Appendix A

**Self-Killing Appendix, Organised by Manuscript, Text, then term/phrase****'The Blickling Homily', Princeton, Princeton University Library, MS 71 (c. 971, Mercia or Worcester?)**<https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/3499523>

Homily for Martinmas

He hine selfne awyrgde

**'Exeter Book', Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501 (c. 960–980)**<https://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/history-heritage/cathedral-treasures/exeter-book/>

Juliana

þæt hi færinga feorh aleton þurh ædra wylm.

The Fortunes of Men

Sylfcwale

**British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian D XIV (c. 850, Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury)**[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Vespasian\\_D\\_XIV](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vespasian_D_XIV)

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

**British Library, Cotton Caligula A XIV (c. 1025–1175)**[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Caligula\\_A\\_XIV](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Caligula_A_XIV)

Life of St. Martin

Hine sylfne aheng

**British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra A III (c. 950, St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury?)**[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Cleopatra\\_A\\_III&index=0](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Cleopatra_A_III&index=0)

De Virginitate – Gloss

Sylfmyrð

Three Latin-Old English Glossaries

Selfbonan

**British Library, Cotton MS Domitian A VIII (c. 1075–1099)**[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Domitian\\_A\\_VIII](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Domitian_A_VIII)

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle F

He swealt fram him sylfum ofsticod

**British Library, Cotton MS Faustina A IX (c. 1150–1200, Southeastern England)**[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Faustina\\_A\\_IX](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Faustina_A_IX)

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Hine sylfne on grine aheng

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

The Second Sunday after the Lord's Epiphany in ACH II

Hine sylfne acwealde

**British Library, Cotton MS Julius A II (c. 1050–1150)**

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[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Julius\\_A\\_II](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Julius_A_II)

Anglo-Saxon Apothegms

Agen myrre

**British Library, Cotton MS Julius A X (c. 975–1025, Glastonbury?)**

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[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Julius\\_A\\_X](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Julius_A_X)

16 September – Eufemia – OEM

Me sylfne ofslea mid mine sweorde

2 August: Theodota and her Three Sons – OEM

And seo halige wydewe æfter þam þurh fyr geendode hyre lif mid hyre þrym sunum.

7 July: Marina OEM

Hine yselfne ofslogy mid ðyz ilcan sweorde

**British Library, Cotton MS Julius E VII (c. 1000 – 1033, The Benedictine Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, or Canterbury)**

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[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Julius\\_E\\_VII](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Julius_E_VII)

Life of St. Martin

Hine sylfne aheng

Passion of Saint Alban in ALS

Acwealde hine sylfne hangiende on grine

Acwealde hine sylfne on healicum grine þæt he hangigende sweolt

Agenslaga

Hine sylfne adyt

Passion of St Eustace

He wolde hine sylfne adrencan

The Forty Soldiers

Aheng hine sylfne sona on grine

**British Library, Cotton MS Otho C I/2 (c. 1000 – 1025, South-west England)**

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[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Otho\\_C\\_I/2](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Otho_C_I/2)

Life of St. Malchus

Ageote þin blod

Ic gehwyrfde þone ord ongean me

Life of St. Malchus

Acwellan mid uncer agene swurde.

Hwerf þu nu þin swurd in þe,

**British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius A III (c. 1000)**

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[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Tiberius\\_A\\_III](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_A_III)

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

De Virtutibus et Vitiis

He hine an grine aheng

**British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B I (c. 1000 – 1033)**

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[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Tiberius\\_B\\_I](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_B_I)

OE History of the World

Arbogæstes ofstang hine sylfne

Hannibal his agnum willan hine sylfne mid attre acwealde.

He eode to þære burge weallum and fleah ut ofer, þæt he eall tobærst

He hine ofstang

He hine sylf unwitende hæfde awirged

He hine sylfne acwealde

He hine sylfne ofstang

He hine sylfne sibþon ofsticode

Hi hi sylfe on þam fyre forspildon.

Hi sylfe sume ofslogon

Hiene selfne ofsticade

Hine sylfne forbærnde

Hio þa Lucretie hy sylfe forðæm acwealde.

His wif mid hyre twam sunum hi sylfe forbærnde for þæs cyninges deaðe

Hy hi sylfe mid attre acwealdon

Nu we untweogendlic witan þæt we ure agen lif forlætan scolan

Se cyning Hasterbal hine sylfne acwealde

Sume mid attre acwealdon

þa wolde he hine sylfne on þam gefeohte forspillan

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**British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian D XIV (c. 850–900, Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury)**

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Vespasian\\_D\\_XIV](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vespasian_D_XIV)

Dicts of Cato

Agen amyrræ

Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter in ACH II

He hine sylfne acwealde

Nativity of the Innocents

Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde

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**British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius C V (c. 975–1025)**

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Vitellius\\_C\\_V](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vitellius_C_V)

Nativity of the Innocents

Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde

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**British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius D VII (c. 1040–1060)**

<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.BL.Vite.D.xvii.htm>

28 December – Nativity of Innocents – Old English Martyrology

He ofstang hine sylfne mid his agenre handa.

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**British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius D XVII (c. 1040–1060)**

<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.BL.Vite.D.xvii.htm>

Homily for Martinmas

Hine sylfne aheng

His feorh forlet

Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem in ACH II

And sette his swurdes ord togeanes his innoðe and feol him onuppon. þæt him ðurheode

Nativity of the Innocents

Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde

The Feast of St Stephen in ACH II

Hi sylfe on grine aheng

To hire agenre hengene

The Feast of St Stephen in ACH II

And hi sylfe mid grine acwealde

**British Library, Royal MS 7 C XII (c. 990, Northumbria?)**

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal\\_MS\\_7\\_C\\_XII](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_7_C_XII)

Nativity of the Innocents

Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde

**Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 8558-63 (c. 900–1000, Mercia?)**

<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.Br.BR8558-63.htm>

OE Handbook

Hine sýlfne gewældes ofslýhð mid wæpne

Hine sýlfne ofslýhð mid wæpne

**Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 1650**

Aldhelm, De Laude Virginitatis

Selfbanan

**Cambridge University Library, MS Gg. 3. 28 (c. 900–1000, Durham, Benedictine Cathedral Priory of St. Cuthbert)**

<http://mlgb3.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/mlgb/book/1952/>

Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter in ACH II

He hine sylfne acwealde

Homily for Martinmas

Hine sylfne aheng

His feorh forlet

Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem in ACH II

And sette his swurdes ord togeanes his innoðe and feol him onuppon. þæt him ðurheode

The Feast of St Stephen in ACH II

Hi sylfe on grine aheng

To hire agenre hengene

The Feast of St Stephen in ACH II

And hi sylfe mid grine acwealde

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 023 (c. 950–1000, Malmesbury?)**

Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Prudentius

Her þæt yrre ofslihð hit sylf mid his spurde beforan ðam geðulde

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 144 (c. 700–799, St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/mz111xq7301>

The Corpus Glossary  
Seolfbonan

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173 (c. 850–900, Winchester)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/wp146tq7625>

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A  
Hine offeal

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 178 (c. 1050, Worcester Priory?)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/pm669yz1553>

De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis in ACH 1

Agenslaga  
He hine sylfne amyrrre  
Sylfcwala  
Nativity of the Innocents  
Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde  
Saul and the Witch of Endor in ACH II  
Gewat swa of life  
He sylf þa feoll uppon his wæpne

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 190 (c. 1000–1099, Exeter?)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/dm156pk7342>

OE Penitential  
Hine sýlfne ofslihð for hwýlcere gýmeleaste

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 196 (c. 900–925, Exeter?)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/yk433sj8017>

16 September – Eufemia – OEM  
Me sylfne ofslea mid mine sweorde  
2 August: Theodota and her Three Sons – OEM  
And seo halige wydewe æfter þam þurh fyr geendode hyre lif mid hyre þrym sunum.  
25 June: Luceia and Auceia – OEM  
He geendode hys lyf  
25 June: Luceia and Auceia – OEM  
Ic gelyfe þæt mynes bloddes agotenys me gelæde on Godes gesyhðe.  
7 July: Marina OEM  
Hine yselfne ofslogy mid ðyz ilcan sweorde

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 198 (c. 1000–1050, Worcester?)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/fh878gz0315>

Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter in ACH II  
He hine sylfne acwealde

Homily for Martinmas

Hine sylfne aheng

His feorh forlet

In Cena Domini

He hine sylfne swiðe unlædlice mid grine aheng.

The Second Sunday after the Lord's Epiphany in ACH II

Hine sylfne acwealde

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**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201 (c. 1000–1050, Winchester, Worcester, or York)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/cr485km1781>

OE Handbook

Hine sýlfne gewealdes ofslýhð mid wæpne

Hine sýlfne ofslýhð mid wæpne

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**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 265 (c. 1000–1099, Worcester)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/nh277tk2537>

OE Handbook

Hine sýlfne gewealdes ofslýhð mid wæpne

Hine sýlfne ofslýhð mid wæpne

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**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 302 (c. 1075–1099, Southeastern England)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/cg531kv2466>

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

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**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 303 (c. 1100–1199, Rochester?)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/fr670md2824>

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

Passion of Saint Alban in ALS

Acwealde hine sylfne hangiende on grine

Acwealde hine sylfne on healicum grine þæt he hangigende sweolt

Agenslaga

Hine sylfne adyt

The Second Sunday after the Lord's Epiphany in ACH II

Hine sylfne acwealde

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**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 367 (c. 1000–1099)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/hp566jq8781>

Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem in ACH II

And sette his swurdes ord togeanes his innoðe and feol him onuppon. þæt him ðurheode

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**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 41 (c. 1000–1099)**

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/qd527zm3425>

28 December – Nativity of Innocents – Old English Martyrology

He ofstang hine silfne mid his agenre handa.

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 9 (c. 1000–1062, Worcester?)**

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<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/ty948rv7120>

The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria in ACH II

Forbærnde hine sylfne swa cucenne on fyre

**Cambridge, University Library, MS II. 1. 33 (c. 1150–1200, Canterbury; Rochester; Ely; Barnwell)**

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<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-II-00001-00033/62>

Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem in ACH II

And sette his swurdes ord togeanes his innoðe and feol him onuppon. þæt him ðurheode

Passion of Saint Alban in ALS

Acwealde hine sylfne hangiende on grine

Acwealde hine sylfne on healicum grine þæt he hangigende sweolt

Hine sylfne adyt

**Cambridge, University Library, MS II. 4. 6 (c. 1040–1060)**

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<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.CUL.II.4.6.htm>

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

**Gloucester Cathedral, MS 35 (c. 1040–1060)**

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<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.GCL.35.htm>

Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter in ACH II

He hine sylfne acwealde

**Hereford Cathedral Library, MS P.I.17 (c. 1190–1210, Cirencester)**

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<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.HerCL.P.I.17.htm>

De Virginitate – Gloss

Sylfcwalan

**Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P 7**

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The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria in ACH II

Forbærnde hine sylfne swa cucenne on fyre

**London, Lambeth Palace, MS 487 (c. 1190–1210, Worcester?)**

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<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.Lamb.487.htm>

De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis in ACH 1

Agenslaga

Sylfcwala

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 340 (c. 1000 -1025, Rochester)**

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<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/837c7f62-bbf6-481e-91da-833011672440/surfaces/489ea057-cd0e-4afe-8634-152b15c3c366/>

Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter in ACH II

He hine sylfne acwealde

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343 (c. 1175–1200, West Midlands or Hereford?)**

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[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_1380](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_1380)

Epistle for the Feast of St. Peter in ACH II

He hine sylfne acwealde

Life of St. Martin

Hine sylfne adydde

Hine sylfne aheng

Natale Sancti Mathei Apostoli et Evangelistae Passio Eiusdem in ACH II

And sette his swurdes ord togeanes his innoðe and feol him onuppon. þæt him ðurheode

The Second Sunday after the Lord's Epiphany in ACH II

Hine sylfne acwealde

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 354 (c. 1100–1150)**

[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_1386](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_1386)

The Passion of Chrysanthus and Daria in ACH II

Forbærnde hine sylfne swa cucenne on fyre

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 97 (1000–Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury)**

[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_1910](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_1910)

De Virginitate – Gloss

Sylfcwala

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 146 (c. 980, Abingdon?)**

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/53c65cb3-2553-4f9e-93f9-6c376ca09476/>

De Virginitate – Gloss

Selfbanan

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 113 (c. 1050–1100, Worcester)**

<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.Ox.Hatt.113.htm>

Nativity of the Innocents

Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 114 (c. 1000–1099, Worcester)**

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/b83c2c81-ed4b-47f6-a815-4293135d2a30/>

Nativity of the Innocents

Hine sylfne hetelice ðyde

Palm Sunday

Agenslaga

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 115 (c. 1000–1099, Worcester)**

[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_6041](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_6041)

Passion of Saint Alban in ALS

Acwealde hine sylfne hangiende on grine

Acwealde hine sylfne on healicum grine þæt he hangigende sweolt

Hine sylfne adyt

Passion of Saint Alban in ALS

Agenslaga

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**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 116 (c. 1150–1200, Worcester?)**

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/30e32f3f-c7e3-464d-8c86-e37066c66fbd/>

De Octo Uitiis Et De Duodecimo Abusiuis in ACH 1

Agenslaga

He hine sylfne amyrre

Sylfcwala

Saul and the Witch of Endor in ACH II

Gewat swa of life

He sylf þa feoll uppon his wæpne

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 121 (c. 1060–1072, Worcester)**

[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_6320](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_6320)

OE Penitential

Hine sýlfne ofslihð for hwýlcere gýmeleaste

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 45**

Dicts of Cato

Agen amyrre

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 86 (c. 1040–1060, Southeastern England)**

<https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.Ox.Juni.86.htm>

Homily for Martinmas

He hine selfne awyrgde

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 482 (c. 1075–1099, Worcester)**

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/9ff6e5f7-aa93-4939-b1c8-3784df8b2ad1/>

OE Handbook

Hine sýlfne gewealdes ofslýhð mid wæpne

Hine sýlfne ofslyhð mid wæpne

OE Penitential

Hine sýlfne ofslihð for hwýlcere gýmeleaste

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 636 (c. 1121–1140, Peterborough?)**

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/6272311c-058d-417a-8e21-05e463b4f1f9/>

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle E

He swealt ofsticod fram him sylfum

**Scheide Library, Princeton University, MS 140 (c. 990, St. Albans)**

<https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/3512354>

Will of Æthelgifu

Hyne selfne aheng

**The Tollemache Orosius', British Library, Add. MS 47967 (c. 870–930, Winchester)**

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_47967](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_47967)

OE History of the World

Arbogæstes ofstang hine sylfne

Hannibal his agnum willan hine sylfne mid attre acwealde.

He eode to þære burge weallum and fleah ut ofer, þæt he eall tobærst

He hine ofstang

He hine sylf unwitende hæfde awirged  
 He hine sylfne acwealde  
 He hine sylfne ofstang  
 He hine sylfne sibþon ofsticode  
 Hi hi sylfe on þam fyre forspildon.  
 Hi sylfe sume ofslogon  
 Hiene selfne ofsticade  
 Hine sylfne forbærnde  
 Hio þa Lucretie hy sylfe forðæm acwealde.  
 His wif mid hyre twam sunum hi sylfe forbærnde for þæs cyninges deaðe  
 Hy hi sylfe mid attre acwealdon  
 Nu we untweogendlic witan þæt we ure agen lif forlætan scolan  
 Se cyning Hasterbal hine sylfne acwealde  
 Sume mid attre acwealdon  
 þa wolde he hine sylfne on þam gefeohte forspillan

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**The Vercelli Book', Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CX VII (c. 950–1000, Kent?)**

<http://tesorodelduomovc.it/>

Homily for Martinmas

He hine selfne awyrgde

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**Trinity College Cambridge, MS R. 9. 17**

<https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/manuscripts/uv/view.php?n=R.9.17&n=R.9.17#c=0&m=0>

Anglo-Saxon Apothegms

Agen myrre

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## Appendix B

The final two appendices are based on Anton van Hoof's appendices. I have added Ancient Greek spellings which are needed for some dictionaries, and a translation which is lacking in Hoof's appendices, as well as alphabetising the data based on the transcription column.

### Ancient Greek

| Language                   | Transcription                 | Translation                         | Text                    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ancient Greek              |                               |                                     |                         |
| ἀναιρεῖν ἑαυτόν            | anairein heauton:             | To kill oneself                     | Parth. Erot. Path. 48,2 |
| ἀναιρέτης ἐαυτοῦ           | anairetes heautou:            | Killer/destroyer of oneself         | Vettius valens 2,40     |
| ἀνακρήσασθαι ἑαυτόν        | anakhresasthai heauton:       | To make away with/destroy oneself   | Cass. Dio 52,17,4       |
| ἀνακρεμάννυναι ἑαυτόν      | anakremannunai heauton:       | To hang oneself                     | Diod. 4,62,3            |
| ἀναλίσκεσθαι               | analiskesthai:                | To kill oneself                     | Thouk. 3, 81, 3         |
| ἀναρτᾶν ἑαυτόν             | anartan heauton:              | To hang oneself up                  | Artem. 1,4              |
| ἄγχεσθαι                   | anchesthai:                   | To hang oneself                     | Hipp. Parth.            |
| ἀγχόνας κραίνειν           | anchonas krainein:            | To accomplish hangings              | Hipp. Parth.            |
| ἀνγχονή                    | anchone:                      | Hanging                             | Eur. Hel. 200/201       |
| ἀπαλλάττειν ἑαυτόν τοῦ ζῆν | apallatein heauton tou zen:   | To remove oneself from living       | Diod. 20, 21, 1         |
| ἀπαλλάττεσθαι τοῦ βίου     | apallattesthai tou biou:      | To depart (remove myself) from life | Eur. Hip. 356           |
| ἀπαμᾶν λαιμόν              | apaman laimon:                | To cut (one's/ someone's) throat    | Hom. Il. 18,34          |
| ἀπάγχεσθαι                 | apanchesthai:                 | To strangle oneself                 | Her. 2, 131             |
| ἀπαγχονίζεσθαι             | apanchonizesthai:             | To hang oneself                     | Hipp. Morb. Virg. 1.34  |
| ἀπαγχονίζειν ἑαυτόν        | apanchonizein heauton         | To hang oneself                     | A.P. 11, 249            |
| ἀπαρτάεσθαι                | apartaesthai                  | To be hanged                        | P. Oxy. I, 50           |
| ἀπέχεσθαι τροφῆς           | apechaperchesthaiiai trophes: | To abstain from nourishment         | Louk. Makrobioi 19      |
| ἀπέχεσθαι σίτου            | apechesthai sitou:            | To abstain from food                | Louk. Hist. 21          |
| ἀπέρχεσθαι τοῦ βίου ἐκόν   | aperchesthai tou biou hekon:  | To leave life willingly             | Louk. Dem. 4            |

|                                |                                    |  |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| ἀφείναι αὐτοχειρίᾳ τὴν ψυχὴν   | apheinai autocheiriai ten psuchen: | To cast away one's life (soul) by one's own hand | Paus. 8, 51, 8               |
| ἀφείναι ἑαυτόν (ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν)   | apheinai heauton (epi kephalen):   | To cast oneself (onto one's head)                | Her. 3, 75                   |
| ἀφίεσθαι τὴν ζωὴν              | aphiesthai ten zoen:               | To cast away my life                             | Ach. Tat. 2, 30, 2           |
| ἀφίστασθαι τοῦ βίου            | aphistasthai tou biou:             | To distance myself from life                     | Dion. Hal. Rom. Arch. 9,27,5 |
| ἀποχή σίτου                    | apochē sitou:                      | Abstinence from food                             | Dion, Hal. Rom. Arch. 9,27,5 |
| ἀποχρᾶσθαι ἑαυτόν              | apochrasthai heauton:              | To use oneself up                                | Cass. Dio 57,15, 5           |
| αποδομὴ ἑαυτόν εἰς σφαγὴν      | apodidomi heauton eis sphagen:     | To give up oneself to slaughter                  | Diod. 21, 6, 2               |
| ἀποκαρτερεῖν                   | apokarterein:                      | To persevere to the end                          | Hipp. Sark. 19               |
| ἀποκαρτέρησις                  | apokarteresis:                     | Perseverance to the end                          | Quint. 8.5.23                |
| ἀποκρεμνίζειν ἑαυτόν           | apokremnizein heauton:             | To throw oneself off (a wall, etc.)              | Ktesias 4 koenig (Photios)   |
| ἀποκτείνειν ἑαυτόν             | apokteinein heauton:               | To kill oneself                                  | Dio Chrys. 64, 3             |
| ἀποκτείνειν λίμῳ               | apokteinein limoi:                 | To kill oneself by starvation                    | App. Emph. 4.4, 23           |
| ἀποκτείνουσθαι ἑαυτόν          | apoktinnumi heauton:               | To kill oneself                                  | Cass. Dio 72,17,3            |
| ἀπολύειν αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος  | apoluein hauton ek tou somatos:    | To free oneself from the body                    | Desmon Ael. Poik. Hist. 5,6  |
| ἀπονήχεσθαι τοῦ σώματος        | aponechomai tou somatos:           | To swim away from the body                       | Plout. Mor. 475D-476A        |
| ἀποφθίνεσθαι                   | apophthinomai:                     | To destroy oneself                               | Hom. Od. 10,52               |
| ἀποπνίγειν ἑαυτόν              | apopnigein heauton:                | To choke/throttle/suffocate oneself              | Diog. Laert. 7,28            |
| ἀποπνίγειν ἑαυτόν δι' ἀγγχονῆς | apopnigein heauton di' anchones:   | To choke/throttle/suffocate oneself by hanging   | Diod. 25, 15                 |
| ἀπορρήγνυσθαι βίον             | aporregnusthai bion:               | To break off one's life                          | Eur. Iphigen. Taur. 974      |
| ἀποσφάττειν ἑαυτόν             | aposphattein heauton:              | To cut one's own throat                          | Diod. 16,16,3                |
| ἀποσφάττεσθαι                  | aposphattesthai:                   | To cut one's own throat                          | Xen. Kour. 3,1,25            |
| ἀπόστασις βιοῦ                 | apostasis biou:                    | Renunciation of/ departure from life             | Eur. Hip. 277                |
| ἀποτέμνειν τὸν λαμόν αὐτός     | apotemnein ton laimon autos:       | To sever one's throat oneself                    | Cass. Dio 65, 16, 4          |

|                               |                                  |   |                              |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| ἀποτέμνειν τὸν φάρυγγα        | apotemnein ton pharugga:         | To sever one's throat                             | Hipp. Sark. 18               |
| ἀπωθεῖν ζοήν                  | apothéo zoen:                    | To thrust away life                               | A.P. 7, 731                  |
| ἀποθνήσκειν ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ        | apothneiskein huph'heautou:      | To die by way of himself                          | Plout. Fab. 18,3             |
| ἀρτᾶν δέρην                   | artan deren:                     | To hang (oneself) by the neck                     | Eur. Andr. 81 1              |
| ἀσιτεῖν                       | asitein:                         | To abstain from food                              | Eur. Hip. 277                |
| ἀσιτία                        | asitia:                          | Abstention from food                              | Eur. Hik. 1105               |
| αὐτάγρετος λείπειν ἡλίου φάος | autagretos leipein heliou phaos: | By one's own choice to leave the light of the sun | Semonides Frg. 1, 19         |
| αὐτεπίβουλος                  | autepiboulos:                    | One who plots against themselves                  | Hesychios s.v.               |
| αὐθαίρετος θάνατος            | authairetos thanatos:            | Self-chosen death                                 | Xen. Hell. 6,2,36            |
| αὐθέντης                      | authentés:                       | Perpetrator (often, of death)                     | Suidas s.v.                  |
| αὐτόχειρ                      | autocheir:                       | Done by one's own hand                            | Aristot. Frg. 502            |
| αὐτοχειρία ἀποθνήσκειν        | autocheiriai apothneiskein:      | To die by one's own hand                          | Cass. Dio 51, 26             |
| αὐτοχειρία καταθνήσκειν       | autocheiriai katathnēsein:       | To die by one's own hand                          | A.P. 7, 517                  |
| αὐτόχειρ σφαγή                | autocheir sphage:                | Slaughter done by one's own hand                  | Eur. Phoin. 331              |
| αὐτοέντης                     | autoentes:                       | Murderer  | Cass. Dio 58, 15, 4          |
| αὐτόκριτος ἀποθνήσκειν        | autokritos apothneiskein:        | To die by one's own decision                      | Philodemos Than. 6,10/11     |
| αὐτοκτονία                    | autoktonia:                      | Self-killing                                      | P.G. 2,312C                  |
| αὐτοκτόνος                    | autoktonos:                      | Self-killer                                       | Aisch. Agam. 1635?           |
| αὐτόματος ἔρχεσθαι            | automatos erchesthai:            | To go of one's accord                             | A.P. 7, 118                  |
| αὐτοφονεύς                    | autophoneus:                     | Self-killer                                       | Hesychios autoepiboulos      |
| αὐτοφονεύτης ἑαυτοῦ           | autophoneutes heatou:            | Self-killer of oneself                            | Eus. H. E. 2,7               |
| αὐτοφονευτος                  | autophoneutos:                   | To go of one's accord                             | Schol. Rec. Aisch. Hepta 735 |
| αὐτοφονία                     | autophonia:                      | Self-killing                                      | Schol. Aisch. Eum. 337       |
| αὐτοφόνος                     | autophonos:                      | Self-killer                                       | Opp. Kyn. 2,480              |
| αὐτοσφαγῆς                    | autosphages:                     | Self-slaughterer                                  | Schol. El. 272?              |
| αὐτοθάνατος                   | autothanatos:                    | Dying at one's hand                               | Plout. Mor. 293 E            |

|                               |                                 |   |                              |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| αὐτοθέλει ἄϊδαν ἔρχεσθαι      | autothelei haidan erchesthai:   | Voluntarily going to Hades                | A.P. 7, 470                  |
| βιαιοθανασία                  | biaiothanasia:                  | Violent death                             | Paul. Al.ed. Boer p. 66 r.13 |
| βιαιοθάνατος                  | biaiothanatos:                  | Dying a violent death                     | Paul. Al.ed. Boer p. 46 r.23 |
| βιοθάνατος                    | biothanatos:                    | Dying a violent death                     | SHA Hel. 33,2                |
| βροχιζειν ἑαυτόν              | brochizein heauton:             | To hang oneself                           | P. Oxy.I, 850                |
| χειρας ἑαυτῷ προσφέρειν       | cheira heautoi prospheirein:    | To lay hands on oneself                   | Diod. 13, 89,2               |
| χειρας ἐπιφέρειν ἑαυτῷ        | cheiras epipherein heautoi:     | To lay hands on oneself                   | Aretaios, Ait. 3,6,5         |
| χειρας προσάγειν              | cheiras prosagein:              | To lay hands on                           | P. Mich. 5.231               |
| δάμνασθαι ἑαυτόν              | damnasthai heauton:             | To tame oneself (euphemism for killing)   | A.P. 7, 233                  |
| διαχειρίζεσθαι ἑαυτόν         | diacherizesthai heauton:        | To do away with oneself                   | Aristot. Frg. 502            |
| διαχρᾶσθαι ἑαυτόν             | diachrasthai heauton:           | To do away with oneself                   | App. Emph. 4.4, 21           |
| διαπθείρειν ἑαυτόν            | diaphtheirein heauton:          | To destroy oneself                        | Pol. 8,20,6                  |
| διεργάζεσθαι ἑαυτόν           | diergazesthai heauton:          | To work oneself                           | Her. 1, 213                  |
| ἐκβαίνειν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν (ἐκῶν)   | ekbainein ek tou zen (hekon):   | To depart from one's life (willingly)     | Athen. Deipn. 4,157D         |
| ἐκλείπειν τοῦ ζῆν             | ekleipein to zen:               | To leave one's life                       | Diod. 20, 71, 5              |
| ἐκλείπειν τὸν βίον            | ekleipo ton bion:               | To leave one's life                       | Louk. Makrobioi 19           |
| ἐλεύθερος πότμος              | eleutheros potmos:              | Free fate                                 | A.P. 7, 493                  |
| ἐμπιμπράναι ἑαυτόν            | empimpranai heauton:            | To burn oneself (on a pyre)               | App. Emph. 2,15,105          |
| ἐμπίπτειν (εἰς φρέαρ/ποταμόν) | empiptein (eis phrear/potamon): | To fall (into a well/river)               | Louk. Het. Logoi 12,2        |
| ἐνδεΐα                        | endeia:                         | To end one's life by abstaining from food | Diod. 34/35, 4,1             |
| ἐπιδιδόναι ἑαυτόν ἐκῶν        | epididomi hauton hekon:         | To give oneself willingly                 | Athen. 13, 602D              |
| ἐπιδιδόναι ἐκουσίως τὸ ζῆν    | epididomi to zen:               | To give one's life willingly              | Diod. 10,21,1                |
| ἐπικατασφάζειν ἑαυτόν         | epikatasphazein heauton:        | To slaughter oneself (thoroughly!)        | Her. 1, 45                   |
| ἐπισφάζειν ἑαυτόν             | episphazein heauton:            | To slaughter oneself                      | Plout. C. Gracch. 17,3       |

|                                   |  |   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| ἐθελοντηδόν<br>τελευτᾶν           | ethelontedon<br>teleutan:              | To end (i.e., die)<br>voluntarily                         | Cass. Dio 58, 15, 4                |
| ἐθελόντες<br>ἀποθνήσκειν          | ethelontes<br>apothneiskein:           | To die voluntarily  | Cass. Dio 69, 83                   |
| ἐθελοντί<br>διαφθείρεσθαι         | ethelonti<br>diaphtheiresthai:         | To destroy (oneself)<br>voluntarily                       | Cass. Dio 58, 24, 3                |
| ἐξάγειν ἑαυτόν                    | exagein heauton:                       | To lead oneself out/<br>exit                              | A.P. 7, 95                         |
| ἐξάγειν ἑαυτόν τοῦ<br>βίου        | exagein heauton tou<br>biou:           | To lead oneself out<br>of life                            | Diog. Laert. 7, 1310               |
| ἐξάγειν ἑαυτόν τοῦ<br>ζῆν         | exagein heauton tou<br>zen:            | To lead oneself out<br>of life                            | Plout. Mor. 1076B                  |
| ἐξαγωγή εὐλογος                   | exagoge eulogos:                       | Rational<br>departure/exit                                | Plot. 1, 9                         |
| ἐξάπτειν βρόχον<br>ἀμφὶ δειρήν    | exaptein brochon<br>amphi deiren:      | To fit a noose round<br>the neck                          | Eur. Ion 1065                      |
| αἰρεῖσθαι τὸν<br>θάνατον          | haireisthai ton<br>thanaton:           | To choose death for<br>oneself                            | Diod. 20, 21, 2                    |
| ἄλλεσθαι                          | hallesthai:                            | To leap (mid. Voice)                                      | Hipp. Parth. (Morb.<br>Virg. 1.34) |
| ἐκὼν ἀποθνήσκειν                  | hekon apothneiskein:                   | To die voluntarily  | Cass. Dio 60,3,5                   |
| ἐκοντι διαφθείρεσθαι              | hekonti<br>diaphtheiresthai:           | To destroy oneself<br>voluntarily                         | Joseph. Ant. Jud.<br>15.358        |
| ἐκουσία γνώμη<br>ἑαυτόν ἐξαγαγεῖν | hekousiai gnomei<br>heauton exagagein: | To take oneself away<br>by voluntary<br>decision          | Paulus Aegineta 5,29               |
| ἐκούσιος<br>ἀποθνήσκειν           | hekousios<br>apothneiskein:            | To die voluntarily  | Plut. Sept. Sap. 146d              |
| ἐκουσίως προίεσθαι<br>τὸν βίον    | hekousios proiesthai<br>ton bion:      | To voluntarily throw<br>away one's life                   | Plout. Cat. Min. 73,<br>4          |
| ἐκούσιος θάνατος                  | hekousios thanatos:                    | Voluntary death   | Plout. Them. 2,6                   |
| ὑπεκφεύγειν                       | hupēkpheugein:                         | To evade, escape (in<br>this case by taking<br>poison)    | A.P. 7,107                         |
| ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ<br>ἀποθνήσκειν         | huph'heautou<br>apothneiskein:         | To die at one's own<br>hand                               | Cass. Dio 58, 24,3                 |
| ἰδία τελευτή                      | idia teleute:                          | Own/voluntary end<br>(= death)                            | Diod. 11, 58, 3                    |
| ἴδιος θάνατος                     | idios thanatos:                        | Own / voluntary<br>death                                  | Phil. 231                          |
| ἀποθανεῖν καρτερία                | karteria:                              | To die by endurance<br>(i.e., by voluntary<br>starvation) | Philostr. Bioi Soph.<br>2,24       |
| καταχρᾶσθαι ἑαυτόν                | katachrasthai<br>heauton:              | To maltreat or<br>destroy oneself                         | Cass. Dio 60, 15,5                 |

|                                |                                    |   |                         |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| κατακαίειν ἑαυτὸν              | katakaiein heauton:                | To set fire to oneself                    | Pol. 16,34,9            |
| κατακρεμάννυσθαι               | katakremannusthai:                 | To hang oneself                           | Ach. Tat. 7,6,4         |
| κατακρημνίζειν ἑαυτὸν          | katakremnizein heauton:            | To throw oneself off a cliff              | Diod. 17,79,6           |
| καταλείπειν τὸν βίον           | kataleipein ton bion:              | To leave life                             | Stob. Eklog. 3,7,5      |
| κατασφάζειν ἑαυτὸν             | katasphazein heauton:              | To slaughter oneself                      | Diod. 17,79,6           |
| καταστρέφειν                   | katastrephein:                     | To overturn/put an end to                 | Stob. Eklog. 3,7,5      |
| καταστρέφειν τὸν βίον          | katastrephein ton bion:            | To end one's life                         | Diod. 4,34,7            |
| καταστρέφειν τὸν βίον βρογχῶ   | katastrephein ton bion brochoi:    | To turn one's life upside down by hanging | Plout. Mor. 314C        |
| καταστροφὴν τοῦ βίου ποιεῖσθαι | katastrephen tou biou poieisthai:  | To make an end of one's life              | Diod. 17,101,4          |
| κατέχειν τὸ στόμα καὶ πνεῦμα   | katechein to stoma kai pneuma:     | To shut one's mouth and breath            | App. Emph. 4,1,4        |
| καθιέναι ἑαυτὸν ἐς πόταμον     | kathienai heauton es potamon:      | To throw oneself into a river             | Schol. Hom. Il, 9,537   |
| κρεμάσαι ἑαυτὸν                | kremasai heauton:                  | To hang oneself                           | Aristoph. Batr. 122     |
| κτείνειν ἑαυτὸν                | kteinein heauton:                  | To kill oneself                           | App. Emph. 3,13,92      |
| λαιμοτομεῖν ἑαυτὸν             | laimotomein heauton:               | To cut one's own throat                   | Plout. Otho 2           |
| λαμβάνειν θάνατον              | lambanein thanaton:                | To take (choose; accept) death            | Eur. Hel. 200/201       |
| μεθιέναι σῶμα                  | methienai soma:                    | To let go of one's body                   | Eur. Hip. 356           |
| μεθίστασθαι αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν   | methistasthai hauton (ek) tou zen: | To relocate oneself out of life           | Plout. Mor. 774B        |
| μεθίστασθαι ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν  | methistasthai heauton ek tou zen:  | To relocate oneself out of life           | Diod. 12,11,2           |
| νῆστις βορᾶς θνήσκειν          | nestis boras thneiskein:           | To die not eating food                    | Eur. Iphigen. Taur. 973 |
| ὠθεῖν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὸ πῦρ        | otheein heauton es to pur:         | To cast oneself into the fire             | Her. 7, 167             |
| παίειν ἥπαρ ξίφει              | paiein epar xiphei:                | To strike the liver with a sword          | Eur. El. 688            |
| πατεῖν λάξ ζοήν                | patein lax zoen:                   | To trample life under the heel            | A.P. 9, 574             |
| περιπίπτειν τῷ ξίφει/βέλῳ      | periptein toi xiphei/beloi:        | To fall on one's sword/weapon             | Aristoph. Sphek. 523    |
| φλέβα ἐντέμνειν                | phleba enteinein:                  | To cut a vein                             | Cass. Dio 72,26,4       |
| φλέβας ἐντέμνειν               | phlebas entemnein:                 | To cut veins                              | App. Emph. 1,8,74       |

|                               |                                      |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| φλέβας ἐπιέμνειν              | phlebas epitēmein:                   | To gash veins                                    | Cass. Dio 78, 16,6a                    |
| φλέβας σχάζειν                | phlebas schazein:                    | To slit veins                                    | Cass. Dio 63, 17,4                     |
| φλέβας τέμνειν                | phlebas temnein:                     | To cut veins                                     | Cass. Dio 77,5,6                       |
| φονεύειν ἑαυτὸν               | phoneuein heauton:                   | To kill oneself                                  | Hesychios s.v.                         |
| φθάνειν τὴν εἰμαρμένην        | phthanein ten heimarmenen:           | To pre-empt Fate                                 | Joseph. Pol. Ioud. 1,594               |
| φθεῖρειν ἑαυτὸν               | phtheirein heauton:                  | To destroy oneself                               | Cass. Dio 54, 8, 1;<br>Ant. Jud. 1.662 |
| πλήσσειν ἑαυτὸν               | plessein heuton:                     | To strike oneself                                | Joseph. Ioud.Arch. 14,356              |
| πνιγετός                      | pnigetos:                            | Suffocation                                      | Hesychios s.v. anghone                 |
| προαναλίσκειν ἑαυτὸν          | proanaliskein heauton:               | To spend oneself before one's time               | Cass. Dio 59,18,4                      |
| προαποχρᾶσθαι ἑαυτὸν          | proapochrasthai heauton:             | To use oneself up before one's time              | Cass. Dio 57,15,5                      |
| προαποσφάττειν ἑαυτὸν         | proaposphattein heauton:             | To kill oneself before one's time                | Cass. Dio 65, 10,1                     |
| προίεσθαι τὸν βίον            | proiēsthai ton bion:                 | To throw away life                               | Plout. Mor. 146D                       |
| προίεσθαι τὸ ζῆν              | proiēsthai to zen:                   | To throw away life                               | Diod. 17,117,3                         |
| προσβάλλειν τῷ ξίφῳ           | prosballein toi xiphoi:              | To throw oneself on (one's) sword                | Philodemos Than. 28,22/23              |
| ρίπτειν ἑαυτὸν                | riptein heauton:                     | To cast/throw oneself                            | App. Emph. 5,9,82                      |
| ρίπτειν ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ πέτρων     | riptein heauton apo petron:          | To throw oneself off rocks                       | Plout. Mor. 1069D-E                    |
| ρίπτειν σῶμα                  | riptein soma:                        | To cast/throw the body                           | Eur. Hip. 356                          |
| σφαγὴν παρέχειν               | sphagen parechein:                   | To supply slaughter                              | Plout. Luc. 18,6                       |
| σφάζειν ἑαυτὸν                | sphazein heauton:                    | To slaughter oneself                             | Hipp. Sark                             |
| στερίσκειν ἑαυτὸν τοῦ ζῆν     | steriskein heauton tou zen:          | To bereave oneself of life                       | Diod. 4,52,5                           |
| τελευτᾶν (βρόχῳ)              | teleutan (brochoi):                  | To die by a noose                                | Plout. Mor. 311C                       |
| τελευτᾶν τὸν βίον             | teleutan ton bion:                   | To end one's life                                | Artem. 1,4                             |
| θερίζειν ἑαυτοῦ τὸν τράχηλον  | therizein heautou ton trachelon:     | To cut one's own throat                          | Diod. 25, 13                           |
| ἄπτειν ἐναυχενίῳ δειρὰν βρόχῳ | hapterein enauchenioi deiran brochoi | To fit one's throat with a noose around the neck | A.P. 7, 493                            |

## Appendix C

## Latin

| Latin                                 | Translation                                  | Text                    |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| abicere se (muro)                     | To throw oneself away                        | Cic. Tusc. 1,34         |
| abominare vivere                      | To avert one's life                          | CIL. IX 2229            |
| abrumperre momentum<br>extremae lucis | To break out life moment                     | Luc. Phars. 4,483       |
| abrumperre vitam,                     | To break life                                | Sen. Ep. 78, 2          |
| abstinentia                           | To withdraw from (life)                      | Sen. Ep. 70, 9          |
| abstinentia cibi                      | To withdraw from food                        | Tac. An. 6,26,1         |
| absumere se (veneno)                  | To take away oneself                         | SHA Did. Iul. 8,7       |
| accersita mors                        | To send for death                            | Plin. Ep. 1,12,2        |
| adprehendere ultro mortem             | To voluntarily seize upon death              | Sen. Rhet. Suas. 6,8    |
| adsciscere sibi mortem                | To bring death upon oneself                  | Lex coll. Fun. Lanuvini |
| appetere mortem                       | To strive after death                        | Sen. Ep. 24,23          |
| approbare mortem sibi                 | To give death to oneself                     | Sen. Ep. 70,12          |
| arcessere mortem                      | To send for/ summon death                    | Plin. Ep. 1,12,2        |
| armare manus in pectus                | To equip (arm) the hand in breast/heart/soul | Sen. Rhet. Suas. 6,2    |
| caelum bibere                         | To drink the sky                             | Lucilius frg. 615       |
| cervicem alicui praebere              | To present the neck                          | Vell. 2,6               |
| claudere animam                       | To close the soul                            | Ov. Met. 7,604          |
| collum laedere                        | To strike the neck                           | Hor. Carm. 3,27,60      |
| conficere se                          | To finish oneself off                        | Hier. Chron. 197        |
| conscicere sibi letum                 | To bring death upon oneself                  | Lucr. 3,81              |
| conscicere sibi mortum                | To bring death upon oneself                  | Liv. 34,17,6            |
| conscicere sibi necem                 | To bring death upon oneself                  | Gell. 6,18,11           |
| consulere extremis rebus              | To take the last measure                     | Luc. Phars. 4,477       |
| consulere suae vitae durius           | To take the last measure of life?            | Caes. Civ. 1,22,6       |
| consumere se (suspenido)              | To consume oneself                           | Val. Max. 5,8,3         |
| corrumpere se                         | To spoil/rot/corrupt oneself                 | Flor. 1,22,6            |
| deicere se                            | To throw/pour oneself                        | Amp. 8,4                |
| deicere se praecipitem                | To throw/pour oneself head first             | C.I.L.XIII, 7070        |
| deliberata mors                       | To deliberate death                          | Sen. Ep. 77,5           |
| desciscere e vita                     | To desert from life                          | Cic. Fin. 3,18          |



|                                    |   |                               |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| desilire                           | To leap                                       | Hor. Ep. 17                   |
| destinare mori                     | To design death                               | Suet. Aug. 53                 |
| destinata mors                     | To design death                               | Tac. An. 15,632               |
| discedere e vita                   | To decease from life                          | Cic. Tusc. 1,84               |
| effundere animam                   | To emit the soul                              | Carm. De Bell. Aeg. 49?       |
| egestas cibi                       | To lack food                                  | tac. An. 6,23,1               |
| elidere spiritum                   | To strike/ expel breath/spirit                | Sen. Ep. 70,20                |
| emittere se                        | To emit oneself                               | Sen. Ep. 70,5                 |
| eripere spiritum                   | To snatch away the spirit                     | Val. Max. 6,1 ext. 3          |
| exanimare se                       | To exanimate oneself                          | Caes. B.G. 6, 31              |
| excedere e vita                    | To pass away from life                        | Cic. Fin. 3,18                |
| eximere se                         | To remove oneself                             | Flor. 2,9,15                  |
| exire                              | To exit                                       | Sen. Ep. 70, 24               |
| exire vita                         | To exit life                                  | Val. Max. 9,12 ext. 1         |
| exprimere spiritum                 | To suppress the soul                          | Tac. An. 15,57,3              |
| extorcor animae suae               | To extort/tear away one's own soul            | Aug. Guad. 1.27.31            |
| extrahere se rebus humanis         | To withdraw from human affairs                | Dig. 21, 1, 23,3              |
| fabricare sibi mortem suis manibus | To fashion one's own death by one's own hands | Apul. Met. 6,32,2             |
| fauces secare                      | To cut one's throat/gullet                    | Suet. Cal. 23                 |
| ferrum adigere in viscera          | To drive iron into vitals                     | Sen. Ep. 1,4,4                |
| ferrum in ilia demittere           | To drop iron into the groin                   | Ov. Met. 4, 119               |
| ferrum transadigere                | To pierce through with iron                   | Ap. Met. 8, 14                |
| festinare ad mortem                | To hasten death with respect to oneself       | Aug. Guad. 1,6,7              |
| finem vitae facere                 | To make life's end                            | Liv. 3,58,9                   |
| finem vitae sibi ponere            | To put oneself in life's end                  | Tac. An. 5,8,3                |
| finem vitae suae imponere          | To impose one's life's end                    | Sen. Vit. 19,1                |
| finire se                          | To end oneself                                | Sen. Rhet. Contr. 10 praef. 7 |
| finire spiritum                    | To end one's spirit/soul                      | tac. An. 14,51                |
| finire vitam                       | To end one's life                             | Plin. N.h. 6,66               |
| fodire viscera ferro               | To dig one's vitals up with iron              | Lucanus 4,512                 |
| fugere in mortem                   | To take refuge in death                       | Tac. An. 6,26,2               |
| gladio percutere pectus suum       | To pierce one's own breast with a sword       | Val. Max. 4,6,2               |
| gladio se transfigere              | To thrust oneself through with a sword        | Vell. 2,63,2                  |

|                                       |   |                         |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| gladio se transigere                  | To thrust oneself through with a sword              | Tac. An. 14,37,6        |
| gladio sibi necem manu sua conscicere | To bring death upon oneself by killing with a sword | Gell. 13,20,3           |
| gladio transverberare praecordia sua  | To pierce one's own vitals with a sword             | Val. Max. 3,2,13        |
| gladio uti adversus se ipsum          | To turn a sword against oneself                     | Val. Max. 5,8,4         |
| gladium agere per sua praecordia      | To remove one's own vitals with a sword             | Val. Max. 6, 8,3        |
| gladium in pectus abdere              | To remove one's breast with a sword                 | Sen. Rhet. Suas. 6,2    |
| homicidia in se                       | Man-killer with respect to oneself                  | Sen. Rhet. Contr. 8,4   |
| iacere e saxo                         | To throw/hurl because of a stone                    | Prop. 2,17,13           |
| iacere se in praecipitium             | To throw oneself in headfirst                       | Tac. An. 6,49,1         |
| ictibus mutuis procumbere             | To sink down by mutual blow                         | Tac. An. 4,73,7         |
| ictus sibi dirigere in viscera        | To guide one's vitals into a strike                 | Tac. An. 2,31,3         |
| immittere se in medios hostes         | To send oneself into the middle of the enemy        | Cic. Tusc. 1,48,116     |
| incisione venarum                     | To cut into the veins                               | Hier. Chron. 211        |
| incubare ferro                        | To lie on iron                                      | Sen. Phaedr. 259        |
| incumbere in gladium                  | To fall into/lie upon swords                        | Lucil. 601              |
| induere se in laqueum                 | To put oneself into a noose                         | Plaut. Cas. 113         |
| inedia                                | Fasting/Starvation                                  | Gell. 3,10,15           |
| incere semetipsum profundo mari       | To pour oneself out of the sea                      | (PS) Clem. Recogn. 7,13 |
| inrogare sibimet mortem               | To impose death upon oneself                        | Tac. An. 4,10,3         |
| inserere se in laqueum                | To plant oneself into a noose                       | Cic. Verr. 4,37         |
| interemptor ipse sui                  | One who killed oneself                              | Sen. Ep. 70,14          |
| interficere se                        | To kill oneself                                     | Hier. Chron. 194,1      |
| interimere se                         | To do away with oneself                             | Serv. Verg. Aen. 12,603 |
| interimere se vita                    | To do one's own life away                           | Plaut. Cist. 711        |
| irrogare sibi mortem                  | To inflict/impose death on oneself                  | Digesta 48, 21, 3,5     |
| iudicare de semetipso                 | To give judgment concerning oneself                 | Tert. Apol. 4,6         |
| iugulare se                           | To kill oneself by slitting one's throat            | Ov. Am. 3,8,21          |

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| iugulo ferrum adigere                  | To drive iron into one's throat                     | Suet. Nero 49           |
| iugulum alicui dare                    | To give someone's throat                            | Cic. Mil. 31            |
| iugulum porrigere                      | To extend one's throat                              | Hor.?                   |
| iugulum praebere                       | To present one's throat                             | (PS) Quint.             |
| laqueo animam claudere                 | To close the soul by noose                          | Ov. Met. 7,604          |
| laqueo collum implicare                | To involve one's neck in a noose                    | Ov. Her. 2,142          |
| laqueo nexili se suspendere            | To suspend oneself in an intertwined noose          | Apul. 5,16,4            |
| laqueum nectare                        | To bind the noose                                   | Calpurnius Ecl. 3,87    |
| laqueum torquere                       | To torment the noose                                | Dig. 21, 3,23,3         |
| liberum mortis arbitrium permittere    | To permit free choice of death                      | Suet. Dom. 8            |
| manu sua cadere                        | To fall by one's own hand                           | Tac. Ac. 3,42,4         |
| manu sua gladio sibi necem consciscere | To bring death upon oneself by killing with a sword | Gel. 13,20,3            |
| manus sibi afferre                     | To lay hands on oneself                             | Sen. Ep. 70,10          |
| manus sibi inferre                     | To throw hands on oneself                           | Dig. 47,2,36 pr.        |
| migrare se/e vita                      | To carry one's own life off                         | Cic. Fin. 1, 62/3, 18   |
| mittere animam                         | To send off the soul                                | Ennius, Ann. 210 Vahlen |
| mittere se                             | To send off oneself                                 | Flor. 1,21,17           |
| necare se                              | To kill oneself                                     | Serv. Verg. Aen. 12,603 |
| nectere vincula giutturi suo           | To bind oneself in chains                           | Hor. Ep. 17, 72         |
| occidere se (ipsum)                    | To cut oneself down                                 | Plaut. Trin. 1,2,603    |
| occupare mortem manu                   | To occupy death by one's hands                      | Flor. 2,13,83           |
| offerre se ad mortem                   | To offer oneself to death                           | Cic. Tusc. 1,31         |
| oppetere mortem                        | To strive after death                               | Cic. Fin. 3,18,64       |
| parere sibi letum manu                 | To prepare oneself for death by own hands           | Verg. Aen. 6,434/5      |
| percellere se sua manu                 | To beat oneself down by one's hands                 | Oros. Hist. 7,35,19     |
| perdere se                             | To lose oneself                                     | Cic. Fin. 1,46          |
| perimere se                            | To annihilate oneself                               | Flor. 1,34,17           |
| perimere semet ipsum                   | Who annihilates oneself                             | (PS) Clem. Recogn. 7,14 |
| petere mortem                          | To seek death                                       | Cic. Fin. 2,19,61       |
| potiri mortem                          | To obtain death                                     | C.I.L.IX, 1164          |
| praebere ... brachium                  | Presenting the arm                                  | Hier. Chron. 210, 3     |
| praecipitare se                        | To cast oneself down                                | Dig. 15,1,9,7           |
| praecipitem se mittere                 | To send oneself headfirst                           | Dig. 21, 1, 23,3        |

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| praecipitium                           | Head first                                    | (PS) Clem. Recogn. 7,14     |
| praecipito uti                         | To cast down                                  | (Ps) Clem. Recogn. 1,13     |
| privare se anima                       | To bereave oneself of soul                    | Enn. Scen. 198              |
| privare se vita                        | To bereave oneself of life                    | Cic. De or 3,3,9            |
| proicere se in puteum                  | To throw oneself into a well                  | Amp. 2,6                    |
| propria manu se...                     | By one's very own hands                       | Hier. Chron. 204,3          |
| quaerere mortem                        | To seek death                                 | Tac. An. 1,5,4              |
| quaerere sortem manu                   | To take fate into one's own hands?            | Luc. Phars. 7,309           |
| renuntiare vitae                       | To renounce life                              | Suet. Galba 11              |
| saevire in se                          | To rage against oneself                       | Dig. 29, 5, 1, 22           |
| saevire in suum corpus                 | To rage against one's body                    | Dig. 15,1,9,7               |
| sanguinem per venas mittere            | To let blood by the veins                     | Tac. An. 13,30,4            |
| spontana mors                          | Death by one's own initiative                 | Aug. Gaud. 30,34            |
| sponte decedere                        | To withdraw by one's own initiative           | Plin. Ep. 1, 22, 8          |
| sponte exire                           | To expire by one's own initiative             | Plin. Ep. 1, 22, 8          |
| sponte moriri                          | To die by one's own hand                      | Sen. Rhet. Suas. 6,9        |
| sponte mortem sumere                   | To receive death by one's own initiative      | Tac. An. 4,22,1             |
| statuare aliquid non ignave de spiritu | To set down breath to some degree not idly    | Sen. Rhet Contr. 8.4        |
| statuare de se                         | To set down oneself                           | Tac. An. 6,29,2             |
| suae manus occidunt aliquem            | To fall by one's own hand                     | Sen. Rhet Contr. Exc. 8,4,3 |
| sumere mortem                          | To take up death                              | Tac. An. 13,30,3            |
| suspendere se                          | To suspend oneself                            | Matth. 27:5                 |
| suspensio perire                       | To die by suspension                          | Oros. 4,5,9                 |
| suspendiosus                           | Act of hanging oneself                        | AE 1971, 88 col. II r.22    |
| suspensio vitam finire                 | To end one's life by suspension               | Dig. 48, 21, 3,2            |
| torquere laqueum                       | To twist the noose                            | Dig. 21, 1,23,3             |
| tradere se alicui iugulandum           | To surrender oneself by slitting their throat | Cic. Mil. 11,31             |
| transigere viscera                     | To pierce one's vitals                        | Luc. Phars. 4,545           |
| tumultuarius mors                      | Unplanned death                               | Apul. Met. 1,16             |
| ultimum consilium                      | Ultimate plan                                 | Sen. Nat. Quaest. 4A praef. |
| venas abrumpere                        | To break/cut/sever the veins                  | Tac. An. 6,29,1             |
| venas abscindere                       | To tear away the veins                        | Tac. An. 15,69,3            |

|                                     |   |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| venas intercidere                   | To cut through/ sever the veins           | Tac. An 16,14,6     |
| venas porrigere                     | To stretch out the veins                  | Tac. An 16,.35,2    |
| venas praebere exsolvendas          | To prepare the veins for undoing          | Tac. An. 6,38,4     |
| venas resolvere                     | To release/loosen the veins               | Tac. An. 6,48,5     |
| veneno vitam finire                 | To end life by poison                     | Sen. Helv. 10,9     |
| venenum haurire                     | To draw out/drink poison                  | Tac. An. 16, 14,6   |
| venis ictum inferre                 | To strike the veins                       | Tac. An. 5,8,3      |
| vim sibi adferre                    | To carry forth one's vitality             | Tac. An. 16,14,6    |
| vim vitae suae adferre              | To carry forth one's vital strength       | Tac. An. 16,17,9    |
| vim vitae suae inferre              | To infer one's vital strength             | Tac. An. 6,38       |
| vitae mortisque consilium suscipere | To support the decision of life and death | Plin. Ep. 1,22,10   |
| voluntaria mors                     | Voluntary death                           | Liv. 8,39,14        |
| voluntarius exitus                  | Voluntary exit                            | Tac. An. 6,40,3     |
| voluntarius finis                   | Voluntary end                             | Tac. An. 4,19,7     |
| voluntate exanimare                 | Voluntary kill                            | Hier. Chron. 189, 4 |

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