Corpus Linguistics and the Rediscovery of Anglo-Saxon Heathenism

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This paper aims to recover the notion of death as the return of man's soul to the heathen gods in Anglo-Saxon England. I will focus on the study of a small group of lexical units which have been predominantly connected with the Christian belief in the separation of body and soul. All these units are compounds whose second element is *gedāl*, which has been interpreted as standing for *division*, *separation* so far. In what follows, I will argue that the former should be read in terms of *distribution* instead, that this *distribution* is categorized under Old English (OE henceforth) verbs of *giving* and conceptualizes the return of man's dearest gift—his soul—to the gods. Our findings spring from a review of the verbal section of the religious vocabulary of the Anglo-Saxons (Chase 1988; Roberts, Kay & Grundy 2000) on prototypical lexical domain grounds (Faber & Vázquez González 2002; Vázquez González 2004) that is largely based upon the corpus linguistics criterion for *quantitativeness* (McEnery & Wilson 2001): the systematic checking of each unit's definition in all the existing quotations.

1. Dictionary Definitions and Prototypical Domain Members

Table 1 shows the commonest meaning definitions provided by traditional and modern dictionaries for *gedāl* and this small group of *death* terms:

Table 1. *Lexicographica*: the GEDĀL group.[1]

		CLARK HALL		SWEET		BOSWORTH-TOLLER
GEDĀL		Division, separation Sharing Giving out	†	Separation, division Distribution		Division, separation Dissolution, destruction Parting, separation Sharing, distributing Difference
FEORHGEDĀL	†	Death	†	Death		Acknowledged
EALDORGEDĀL	†	Death		Separation from life, death		
GĀSTGEDĀL	†	Death	†	Death		
FRIÐGEDĀL	†	Death	†	Death		Acknowledged
LĪFGEDĀL	†	Death	†	Death		Acknowledged
DEAÐGEDĀL		Separation of body and soul by death	†	Separation of body and soul in death	†	Acknowledged
NĪEDGEDĀL	†	Forced dissolution, death	†	Enforced separation (of body and soul), death		
SĀWOLGEDĀL	†	Death	†	Death		
WORULDGEDĀL		Death	†	Death		

ROBERTS, KAY AND GRUNDY	02.02. Death:	DĒAÞ, SWYLT
	.Act of dying, decease:	DĒAÞ, ENDE, (GE)ENDUNG, GEHROR, HRYRE, LYRE, SWYLT
	..As separation:	DĒAÞGEDĀL, EALDORGEDĀL, FEORHGEDĀL, FRIÞGEDĀL, LĪFGEDĀL, TŌLYSNES
	…From a lord:	ÞĒODENGEDĀL
	…With compulsion:	NĪEDGEDĀL
	…From the soul:	GĀSTGEDĀL, SAWLUNG, SĀWOLGEDĀL
	….And the World:	WORULDGEDĀL

The dictionaries that I have consulted demonstrate the existence of a wide range of meaning definitions for *gedāl*, with alternatives such as *division, sharing*, *distribution*, *destruction* and *difference*. As regards the GEDĀL group, the works of Clark Hall and Sweet show noticeable similarities when contrasted with Bosworth-Toller, whose coverage of compounds is extremely unsatisfactory this time: most of them are neglected (*ealdorgedāl*, *gāstgedāl*, *nīedgedāl*, *sāwolgedāl* & *woruldgedāl*); others, although acknowledged, require definition (*friðgedāl*, *līfgedāl* and *deaðgedāl*). The three dictionaries, however, agree in regarding these terms as belonging to poetic register and expressing the notion of *death*. The Christian belief in death as the separation of body and soul seems to be restricted to *deaðgedāl* and *nīedgedāl* in these works. However, *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Roberts, Kay & Grundy 2000) develops the notion of *death as separation* to the full by turning it into a complex lexical category in which all the GEDĀL members are found and some of them are subcategorized as death with compulsion (*nydgedāl*), separation from the soul (*gāstgedāl* & *sāwolgedāl*) and separation from the soul and the world (*woruldgedāl*).

In what follows, I will show that the GEDĀL group is the ultimate expression of the return of man's own life and spirit to the heathen gods in Anglo-Saxon England. *Gedāl* is no longer interpreted in terms of *separation* but of *distribution* instead. The general conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987) LIFE IS A GIFT particularizes into the concrete LIFE IS A GIFT TO BE RETURNED AND DISTRIBUTED AMONG SEVERAL LIFE-GIVERS.

2. Bridging the Gap between Historical Semantic Reconstruction and Corpus Linguistics

In order to demonstrate that the GEDĀL group categorizes under OE verbs of *giving*, I have based my particular type of diachronic prototype semantics (Geeraerts 1997) on corpus-driven linguistics methodology. Traditional quotations are no longer regarded as one or two lines whose main aim is to verify the unit's definition but are rather perceived as *texts* (Sinclair 2004) with their corresponding *cotexts* (Sinclair 2000): longer stretches of textual space where the lexical unit involved occurs with other units *cohesively* (Halliday 1994: 310–313). In this respect, a study of the most frequent collocates (Sinclair 1991; Biber et al. 1998) for *gāstgedāl* will bear out our distributional hypothesis and will also reveal a religious phrase unacknowledged so far.

Our conception of *cotext* is broad and comprises not only 'the language which surrounds a particular word, phrase or passage and which can determine its meaning' (s. v. *cotext* n. in the *OED*) but also the very idea of *text type* as posited by Stubbs (1996 & 2002). All the texts containing the GEDĀL group are of poetic ascription. Apart from one quotation in *Beowulf* and another one in *The Fortunes of Men*, the rest of the texts are explicitly hagiographical—Saints' Lives—or translations of the Old Testament (*Genesis A, B*). I will develop the cotextual implications of this overriding religious register to the full.

Above all, this study utilizes corpus linguistics methodology insofar as it tries to comply with the criterion for *quantitativeness* (McEnery & Wilson 2001). In order to overcome the shortcomings derived from circular definitions in historical lexicography and a corpus that is necessarily reduced in size and text types, I have proceeded to analyse the totality of the existing texts and *cotexts* for the GEDĀL group in the CD-ROM version of the *Microfiche Concordance to the Dictionary of Old English*

(Healey & Venezky 1980). In this, I have followed the systematic check of each definition in all the available quotations, one of the foundational premises of the *Dictionary of Old English* editors (Amos & Healey 1986; Healey et al. 2004). The members of the GEDĀL group are characterized by extremely low frequency. Indeed, many of them (*gāstgedāl*, *friðgedāl*, *deaðgedāl*, *nīedgedāl* & *woruldgedāl*) are *hapax legomena*. Had I used the related section in the *Helsinki Corpus* (Kytö 1996), I would have obtained a drastic and most unwelcome reduction in the number of texts available for analysis: *friðgedāl*, *deaðgedāl*, *nīedgedāl* & *woruldgedāl* are not among the resulting matches when one searches the Helsinki Corpus using the Wordsmith Tools concordancer; the rest of the units are reduced numerically. This is so with *feorhgedāl*, (3>2), *līfgedāl* (4>3), *(e)aldorgedāl* (3>2), *sāwolgedāl* (2>1) and *gāstgedāl* (2>1).

3. Empirical Methods in Historical Semantics, 1: 'The Company a Word Keeps'

One of the ways in which I can show that the GEDĀL group categorizes under OE verbs of *giving* and should be interpreted distributionally is by restoring the so-called link between pattern and meaning (Hunston 2002) and making use of collocational analysis. I have disregarded the study of the *gedāl* collocates because of the highly polysemic nature of the term. Instead, attention has been turned to all the existing first members of our compound group (FEORH, (E)ALDOR; FRIÐ; LĪF; DEAÐ; GĀST, NĪED & SĀWOL), focussing on GĀST (*gāstgedāl*). This has been done firstly because most of the other terms show other possible meanings or are simply not related to religion straightforwardly: FEORH, LĪF, (E)ALDOR and DEAÐ stand for (*cessation of*) *life*; NĪED signifies *need* or *compulsion* and FRIÐ *peace*. Secondly, GĀST is at least as salient as SĀWOL on etymological grounds but, unlike the latter, shows connections with the supernatural world (Buck 1949: 1087–1088).[2] Thirdly, and above all, I have focused on GĀST because its collocates hint at the existence of *GĀST(A) DÆLAN, an Anglo-Saxon heathen *formula* that was not to survive the coming of Christianity.

The study of the *gāsta* collocates is highly illuminating, as Table 2 shows:

Table 2. The *gāsta* collocates.[3]

	FREQUENCY COUNT	TOTAL	RATE	SEMANTIC PROSODY
HALIGRA GĀSTA	42	237	40.9%	+
EADIGRA GĀSTA:	36			
HEOFONLICRA GĀSTA	18			
GODES GĀSTA / GĀSTA GODES	32			
GOD GĀSTA / GĀSTA GOD	20			

[2] Entry 16.11 for SOUL, SPIRIT: OE *gāst*, ME *gost* (NE *ghost* in Holy Ghost), OS *gēst*, …OHG-NHG *geist*, the usual rendering of Latin *spīritus*, but also and old and general term for a 'supernatural being': OE *gæstan* 'frighten', Skt. *hēda*- 'anger, wrath', Av. *zōizdista*- 'most frightful', from IE *gheizd-, extension of *gheis- in Goth. *Us-gaisjan* 'frighten', Av. *zaēsa*- 'horrible'. Walde-P. 1.554. Feist 531.

[3] The search was conducted in the *Microfiche Concordance to Old English* in its CD-ROM version (Healey & Venezky 1980) using the *Concordance* in the *Wordsmith Tools Controller*. The *Collocate Horizons* are the *maximum* allowed: 25 L, 25 R. The *Minimum Frequency*: 3. The estimates obtained are approximate insofar as I have omitted the irrelevant collocates and have also restricted the search to the inflected genitive plural in searching for *GĀST(A) DÆLAN. What matters here is what can be obtained in terms of semantic prosody and prototypical domain classification.

AWYR(I)GEDRA GĀSTA	99	159	27%	-
GRIMME GĀSTA	27			
GĀSTA WE(O)ROD	15			
GĀSTA HRYRE	18			
GĀSTA GEOCEND	16	89	15%	-/+
GĀSTA WALDEND	15			
GĀSTA NERIGEND	16			
GĀSTA SCYPPEND	24			
GĀSTA HELPEND	18			
GĀSTA GESEAH	22	40	6%	-/+
GĀSTA GESYHÐ	18			
GĀSTA GEFEOHT	18	18	3%	-/+
GĀSTA GIFE	18	18	3%	-/+
GĀSTA SEALDE	18	18	3%	-/+

The two highest frequency subgroups foreground the clash between the new faith—with expressions such as *halig gāst*, *eadig gāst* & *heofonlic gāst*—and the old one, which has been restricted to commonplace references to evil spirits and demonic tempters that is so defining of hagiographical works. The estimates obtained—67% of the total—indicate the overriding influence in terms of semantic prosody that these two major subgroups exert on the overall meaning of *gāst*.

There is also a third group of collocates that seems to bear out that the GEDĀL group should be perceived in terms of the apportioning of someone's soul. This group is relatively small (*gāsta geocend, waldend, scyppend, nerigend, helpend*), belongs to poetic register and is obviously a group of epithets used for the expression of man's subjection to God. It has already been demonstrated in the world of Germanic religion (Hulsmann 1980; Bernárdez 2002) that some of the terms applied to the Christian deity—*meotod* in *Cædmon's Hymn*—were undoubtedly later Christian adaptations of earlier heathen *formulae*. I believe that this could also hold for *gāsta geocend* (subjector of souls) and *gāsta waldend* (owner of souls).

However, the most important piece of empirical evidence obtained from this analysis is that such collocates as *gāsta sealde* (*gave their souls* (*up*)) and *gāsta gife* ((*of*) *soul*(*s*) *gift*) ascribe the concept of death that is inherent in the GEDĀL group to the prototypical domain of POSSESSION verbs, verbs of *giving* in particular.

4. Empirical Methods in Historical Semantics, 2: The Recovery of *Cotext*

Despite the reasons that I have adduced in the study of the *gāsta* collocates, the evidence for the GEDĀL distribution hypothesis remains inconclusive. The low frequency that *GĀSTA* GIFE (3%) and *GĀSTA* SEALDE (3%) display might be thought to suggest random co-occurrence instead. What is now required is the introduction of a quantitative analysis (Díaz Vera 2003) that allows for the systematic study of all the *cotexts* in which each GEDĀL unit occurs.

A close scrutiny of the nineteen extant quotations reveals that eight of them specify a heathen *cotext* straightforwardly. In my opinion, four more express it indirectly. Furthermore, some quotations of the first type contain indirect glimpses of human sacrifices as can be seen in Table 3:

Table 3. The GEDĀL group: units[4] and *cotexts* expressing the Anglo-Saxon heathen background explicitly.

UNIT	WORK	COTEXT
FEORHGEDĀL	Andreas	[005400 (167)] Þa sio stefn gewearð gehered of heofenum, þær se halga wer in Achaia, Andreas, wæs, leode lærde on lifes weg, þa him cirebaldum cininga wuldor, meotud mancynnes, modhord onleac, weoruda drihten, ond þus wordum cwæð: ðu scealt feran ond frið lædan, siðe gesecan, *þær sylfætan* eard weardigað, *eðel healdaþ morðorcræftum.* [005500 (177)] Swa is þære menigo þeaw þæt hie uncuðra ængum ne willað on þam folcstede feores geunnan syþþan manfulle on Mermedonia onfindaþ feasceaftne. [005600 (181)] Þær sceall *feorhgedal*, earmlic ylda cwealm, æfter wyrþan. [005700 (183)] Ðær ic seomian wat þinne sigebroðor mid þam burgwarum bendum fæstne. [005800 (185)] Nu bið fore þreo niht þæt he on þære þeode sceal fore *hæðenra* handgewinne þurh gares gripe gast onsendan, ellorfusne, butan ðu ær cyme.
		[045400 (1383)] Ðu scealt widan feorh ecan þine yrmðu. [045700 (1388)] Com þa on uhtan mid ærdæge hæðenra hloð (a band of heathens) haliges neosan leoda weorude. [046600 (1415)] Bidde ic, weoroda god, þæt ic gast minne agifan mote, sawla symbelgifa, on þines sylfes hand. [046700 (1418)] Ðu ðæt gehete þurh þin halig word, þa ðu us twelfe trymman ongunne, þæt us heterofra hild (the war of those full of hate) ne gesceode, ne lices dæl lungre oððeoded, ne synu ne ban on swaðe lagon, ne loc of heafde to forlore wurde, gif we þine lare læstan woldon. [046800 (1425)] Nu sint sionwe toslopen, is min swat adropen, licgað æfter lande loccas todrifene, fex on foldan. [046900 (1427)] Is me feorhgedal leofre mycle þonne þeos lifcearo.
LĪFGEDĀL	Genesis A, B	[078800 (2540)] Þa sunne up, folca friðcandel, furðum eode, þa ic sendan gefrægn swegles aldor swefl of heofnum and sweartne lig werum to wite, weallende fyr, þæs hie on ærdagum drihten tyndon lange þrage. [078900 (2546)] Him þæs lean forgeald *gasta waldend.* [079000 (2547)] Grap heahþrea on *hæðencynn.* [079100 (2548)] Hlynn wearð on ceastrum, cirm arleasra cwealmes on ore, laðan cynnes. [079200 (2550)] Lig eall fornam þæt he grenes fond goldburgum in, swylce þær ymbutan unlytel dæl sidre foldan geondsended wæs bryne and brogan. [079500 (2561)] Eall þæt god spilde, frea mid þy folce. [079600 (2562)] Þa þæt *fyrgebræc*, leoda *lifgedal*, Lothes gehyrde bryd on burgum, under bæc beseah wið þæs wælfylles.
	Beowulf	[023200 (841)] No his *lifgedal* sarlic þuhte secga ænegum þara þe tirleases trode sceawode, hu he werigmod on weg þanon, niða ofercumen, on nicera mere fæge ond geflymed feorhlastas bær. [023400 (850)] Deaðfæge deog, siððan dreama leas in fenfreoðo *feorh alegde, <hæþene> sawle*; þær him *hel* onfeng.
	The Fortunes of Men	[001500 (43)] <Sumne> *on bæle* (in the funeral pyre) sceal brond <aswencan>, fretan frecne <lif> fægne monnan; þær him *lifgedal* lungre weorðeð, read reþe gled; reoteð meowle, seo hyre bearn gesihð brondas þeccan.

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[4] The units appear in italics in the COTEXT section.

EALDORGEDĀL	Beowulf	[022300 (805)] Scolde his *aldorgedal* on ðæm dæge þysses lifes earmlic wurðan, ond se *ellorgast on feonda geweald* feor *siðian*.
SĀWOLGEDĀL	Andreas	[055800 (1675)] Þa eft gewat oðre siðe modig, mægene rof, Marmedonia ceastre secan. [055900 (1677)] Cristenra weox word ond wisdom, syððan wuldres þegn, æþelcyninges ar, eagum sawon. [056000 (1680)] Lærde þa þa leode on geleafan weg … [056100 (1687)] Swylce se halga herigeas þreade, *deofulgild* todraf ond gedwolan fylde. [056200 (1689)] Þæt wæs *Satane* sar to geþolienne, mycel modes sorg, þæt he ða menigeo geseah hweorfan higebliðe *fram helltrafum* þurh Andreas este lare to fægeran gefean, þær næfre *feondes* ne bið, gastes gramhydiges, gang on lande.[…] [056400 (1698)] Ongan hine þa fysan ond to flote gyrwan, blissum hremig, wolde on brimþisan Achaie oðre siðe sylfa gesecan, þær he *sawulgedal*, *beaducwealm* gebad.
WORULDGEDĀL	Elene	[016400 (573)] Elene maþelade ond him yrre oncwæð: Ic eow to soðe secgan wille, ond þæs in life lige ne wyrðeð, gif ge þissum lease leng gefylgað mid fæcne gefice, þe me fore standaþ, þæt eow in beorge *bæl* fornimeð, hattost heaðowelma, ond eower hra bryttað, lacende lig, þæt eow sceal þæt leas apundrad weorðan to *woruldgedale*.

Three instances in Table 3 belong to *Andreas*. In the first *cotext*, the first section under FEORHGEDĀL, one of Andreas' fellow-companions is in danger of being killed by the cannibals of Mermedonia. These are depicted as heathens (*fore hæðenra handgewinne*) who follow murderous practices (*eðel healdaþ morðorcræftum*) and are responsible for unspeakable torments (*earmlic cwealm*), spear-thrusting among them. The second *cotext* shows the afflictions of the Saint in the hands of a group of Achaians, who are described as a band of heathens (*hæðenra hlod*), hideous people (*heretofra hild*). The third *cotext* from Andreas—under SĀWOLGEDĀL—makes direct reference to his torture by the heathen Achaians just after the conversion of the Mermedonians, who had forsaken their pagan temples (*helltrafum*) and practices (*deofulgild*). What was to be performed at least in the first and third cases was a human sacrifice to alien and false gods.

The destruction of Sodom by Yahve follows next, under LĪFGEDĀL. The people of this city are again described as heathens (*hæðencynn*). Indeed, the whole scene is portrayed as an immense human sacrifice that the God of the Old Testament exacts in retaliation for their warlike opposition *(hie on ærdagum drihten tyndon lange þrage)*. In *Beowulf*, Grendel's bodily dismemberment—the removal of his arm—is again somehow linked with sacrifice (*se ellorgast on feonda geweald feor siðian*). Furthermore, Grendel's heathen soul (*hæþene sawle*) is said to be received by Hell (*þær him hell onfeng*). In turn, in *The Fortunes of Men* the death of a warrior finds its *locus amoenus* in the funeral pyre (*on bæle*), one of the old Anglian burial practices eradicated by the new faith, a custom which is also referred to by *Elene* in her tale (*þæt eow in beorge bæl fornimeð, hattost heaðowelma*).

Table 4 includes those *cotexts* where we find heathenism of a softened nature:

Table 4. The GEDĀL group: units and *cotexts* expressing Anglo-Saxon heathen practices implicitly.

UNIT	WORK	COTEXT
EALDORGEDĀL	Genesis A, B	[035700 (1069)] Siððan Mathusal magum dælde, bearn æfter bearne broðrum sinum æðelinga gestreon, oðþæt *aldorgedal* frod fyrndagum fremman sceolde, *lif oflætan*.

EALDORGEDĀL	Genesis A, B	[059700 (1945)] Abraham wunode eðeleardum Cananea forð. [059800 (1946)] Hine cyning engla, metod moncynnes mundbyrde heold … [059900 (1951)] He frean hyrde estum on eðle, ðenden he eardes breac, halig and higefrod. [060000 (1953)] Næfre \<hleowlora\> æt edwihtan æfre weorðeð feorhberendra forht and acol, mon for metode, þe him æfter a þurh gemynda sped \<mode\> and dædum, worde and gewitte, wise þance, oð his *ealdorgedal* oleccan wile.
GĀSTGEDĀL	Genesis A, B	[037000 (1121)] Us gewritu secgað þæt her eahta hund iecte siððan mægðum and mæcgum mægburg sine Adam on eorðan; ealra hæfde nigenhund wintra and *XXX* eac, þa he þas woruld þurh *gastgedal ofgyfan* sceolde.
FRIÐGEDĀL	Genesis A, B	[037400 (1138)] Seth wæs gesælig; siððan strynde seofon winter her suna and dohtra ond eahta hund. [037500 (1140)] Ealra hæfde *XII* and nigonhund, þa seo tid gewearð þæt he *friðgedal fremman* sceolde.

The terms of the old religion are used this time in order to describe the passing away of many relevant Old Testament characters. Abraham, Methuselah and Seth are, strictly speaking, founders of the Jewish nation. As such, they have no connection with the new customs professed in the New Testament. They were perceived sympathetically by Anglo-Saxon translators but they were nevertheless regarded as followers of the old precepts. Hence the usage of the old religious terms in their progeny lists. Some of the scribes felt the need to make this difference manifest by adding reflections like the following: *oðþæt aldorgedal frod fyrndagum fremman sceolde*. It is clear that Methuselah's death required a ceremony (*aldorgedal … fremman*) to be conducted adequately (*frod*), a ceremony that was felt to be different from the new Christian worldview (*fyrndagum*).

The six remaining *cotexts* belong to *Gūðlāc*. These are found in Table 5:

Table 5. The GEDĀL group: units and *cotexts* showing heathen terms transferred to the new beliefs.

UNIT	WORK	COTEXT
DEĀÐGEDĀL	Gūðlāc	[027600 (950)] Ða se \<ælmihtiga\> let his hond cumin þær se halga þeow, deormod on degle domeadig bad, heard ond hygerof. [027700 (953)] Hyht wæs geniwad, blis in breostum. [027800 (954)] Wæs se bancofa adle onæled, inbendum fæst, lichord onlocen. [027900 (956)] Leomu hefegedon, sarum gesohte. [028000 (957)] He þæt soð gecneow þæt hine ælmihtig ufan neosade, meotud fore miltsum. [028100 (959)] He his modsefan wið þam færhagan fæste trymede feonda gewinna. [028200 (961)] Næs he forht seþeah, ne seo adlþracu \<egle\> on mode, ne *deaðgedal*, ac him dryhtnes lof born in breostum, brondhat lufu sigorfæst in sefan, seo him sara gehwylc symle \<forswiðde\>. [028300 (966)] Næs him sorgcearu on þas lænan tid, *þeah his lic ond gæst* hyra somwiste, sinhiwan tu, deore \<gedælden\>.
GĀSTGEDĀL	Gūðlāc	[033300 (1123)] Him wæs soþra geþuht þæt hit ufancundes engles wære of swegldreamum, swiþor micle mægenþegnes word, þonne æniges monnes lar, wera ofer eorðan. [033400 (1127)] Him þæt wundra mæst gesewen þuhte, þæt swylc \<snyttrucræft\> ænges hæleða her hreþer weardade, dryhta bearna, wæs þæs deoplic eall word ond wisdom, ond þæs weres stihtung, mod ond mægencræft, þe him meotud engla, *gæsta geocend* forgiefen hæfde. [033500 (1134)] Wæron feowere ða forð gewitene dagas on rime, þæs se dryhtnes \<þegn\> on elne bad, adle gebysgad, sarum geswenced. [033600 (1137)] Ne he sorge wæg geocorne sefan *gæstgedales*, dreorigne hyge. [033700 (1139)] *Deað* nealæcte, stop stalgongum, strong ond hreðe sohte sawelhus.

NĪEDGEDĀL	Gūðlāc	[034300 (1163)] Him se eadga wer ageaf ondsware, leof mon leofum, þeah he late meahte, eorl ellenheard, oreþe gebredan: Min þæt swæse bearn, nis nu swiþe feor þam ytemestan *endedogor nydgedales*, þæt ðu þa nyhstan scealt in woruldlife worda minra, næfre leana biloren, lare gehyran, noht longe ofer þis.
FEORHGEDĀL	Gūðlāc	[034600 (1175)] Beo þu on sið gearu, *siþþan lic ond leomu ond þes lifes gæst asundrien somwist hyra þurh feorggedal*.
SĀWOLGEDĀL	Gūðlāc	[030700 (1030)] Sceal þis *sawelhus*, fæge flæschoma, foldærne biþeaht, leomu lames geþacan, legerbedde fæst wunian wælræste. [030800 (1033)] Wiga nealæceð, unlæt laces. [030900 (1034)] Ne bið þæs lengra swice *sawelgedales* þonne seofon niht fyrstgemearces, þæt min *feorh* heonan on þisse eahteþan *ende geseceð* dæg scriþende.
LĪFGEDĀL	Gūðlāc	[031100 (1045)] Nu þu gearwe const leoma *lifgedal*; long is þis onbid worulde lifes.

The number of compounds expressing the Christian notion of *death* is high: *gāstgedāl*, *feorhgedāl*, *sāwolgedāl*, *līfgedāl*, *deaðgedāl* & *nīedgedāl*. Some of them (*cotexts* 1 & 4) express the separation of body and soul overtly. Most of the old heathen terms are thus adapted to the needs of the new faith.[5] Nevertheless, they are applied to a Saint with a past as a warlike mercenary—Gūðlāc means *battle sacrifice*—who later on in his life forsook worldly vanities and isolated himself as a hermit on a small island where he was always struggling with demonic tempters. It thus comes as no surprise that, when dying, Gūðlāc might resort to part of his own heathen background to express a totally new conception.

5. Empirical Methods in Historical Semantics, 3: Introducing Prototypical Domain Structure

Despite the plausibility of the interpretation offered for the usage of the terms involved in the previous section, our hypothesis still remains only partially proved. Numerically speaking, the heathen reading is valid only for approximately fifty per cent of the occurrences. Prototypical domain structure provides the ultimate validation. Indeed, the macrostructural proposal for OE verbs of *giving* that we have presented elsewhere (Faber & Vázquez González 2002) corresponds with the study of all the existing *gāst(a)* collocates: GĀST co-occurs *cohesively* with the prototypes for the main lexical hierarchies within this lexical domain as Table 6 shows:

Table 6. Discovering some OE heathen *formulae*.[6]

LEXICAL HIERARCHY	MEANING	DEATH PHRASE	COTEXT
1.	THE GIVING OF SOMEONE'S LIFE	*gāst sellan*	Short Title: MonCa 1 (Korhammer) [014200 (24.1)] *Ecce servus meus electus meus complacuit sibi in illo anima mea; Dedi spiritum meum super eum. Iudicium gentibus profert* Efne þeowa min gecoren min gelicode himsylfum on him sawl min ic sealde gast minne ofer hine dom þeodum he forðbringð.

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[5] This is undoubtedly so with *gāstgedāl*, *feorhgedāl*, *sāwolgedāl* and *līfgedāl*. However, *deaðgedāl* and *nīedgedāl* are *hapax legomena*, which suggests that these terms may have been coined *ad hoc* to reinforce the Christian conception of death as separation of body and soul.

[6] I have extracted these OE phrases from my analysis of the GEDĀL group *cotexts* and the *gāst(a)* collocates. The prototypical lexical domain classification is my own. The units included are informative insofar as they yield lexical category information that validates the hypothesis.

1.1.	THE RETURN OF SOMEONE'S LIFE	*gāst agīefan on hand*	Short Title: Andreas [045700 (1388)] Com þa on uhtan mid ærdæge *hæðenra hloð* haliges neosan leoda weorude. [046600 (1415)] Bidde ic, weoroda god, þæt ic *gast* minne *agifan* mote, *sawla symbelgifa, on* þines sylfes *hand.*
1.1.1.	THE APPORTIONED RETURN OF SOMEONE'S LIFE	*gāstgedāl ofgīefan*	Short Title: Gen A, B [037000 (1121)] Us gewritu secgað þæt her eahta hund iecte siððan mægðum and mæcgum mægburg sine Adam on eorðan; ealra hæfde nigenhund wintra and *XXX* eac, þa he þas woruld þurh *gastgedal ofgyfan* sceolde.
		*gāst(a) dǣlan	Short Title: PsGlK (Sisam) [011800 (10.6)] Axsað rihtwise & *arlease* þe soþlice lufað *unrihtwisnes hat sawle* his *Dominus interrogat iustum et impium qui autem diligit iniquitatem odit animam suam.* [011900 (10.7)] Rinð ofer synfulle grin fyres & swefel & *gast dæl* heora *Pluet super peccatores laqueos ignis sulfur et spiritus procellarum pars calicis eorum.*
			Short Title: Met [018000 (13.56)] Swa deð eac sio sunne, þonne hio *on sige* weorðeð, ofer midne dæg, merecondel scyfð *on ofdæle*, uncuðne weg nihtes geneðeð, norð eft and east; eldum oteweð, brencð eorðwarum morgen meretorhtne.

These phrases, probably religious *formulae*, are absent from all the available lexicographical works. The apportioning of someone's soul among several life-owners may refer to the *wælcyrige* and/or to the tripartite structure of Anglo-Saxon heathen altars (Campbell 1991). Taboo on religious grounds is therefore the cause of the loss of **gāst dǣlan*, whose existence is indirectly suggested by the carnage on the battlefield that *ofdæl* (*destruction*, *perdition* in *cotext* 5) describes and by the punishment granted to the unlawful in *gāstdæl* (*cotext* 4), a nonce formation that has escaped recognition until now. Contrariwise, *gāst sellan* has been luckily preserved in *cotext* 1. In turn, *gāst agīefan on hand* provides a logical explanation for the conceptualization of death as the return of a life to the(ir) real owner(s). But it is g*āstgedāl ofgīefan* that ultimately shows that *gedāl*—the apportioning of man's soul in this case—can only be interpreted as belonging to DONATION and therefore specifies distribution among several life-givers.

6. Empirical Methods in Historical Semantics, 4: Combining the Notions of *Cotext* and *Text Type* with Word Frequency within Prototypical Domain Structure

As mentioned above, the GEDĀL group is characterized by low frequency. When compared with the two hundred and twenty two matches obtained for DEAÐ in the *Microfiche Concordance to the Dictionary of Old English*, the present nineteen seem indeed hardly remarkable. However, there are lessons to be learned from this word frequency contrast when the notions of *cotext* and, more particularly, *text type* (Stubbs 1996 & 2002) are taken into account.

Among all the terms included in the GEDĀL group, *gāstgedāl* offers an ideal *cotext* in the *Genesis*, the list of Adam's progeny: Adam, Seth, Enos, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah and Noah. The lives of these founders of the Jewish nation are briefly summarized in years and offspring. These lines always finish with a concluding remark concerning their passing away. The structure of the passage is always the same and the concluding remark is applied in a father-to-son manner consistently. I have rearranged all the lexical choices for *death* in this context according to prototypical domain structure in Table 7:

Table 7. *Genesis A*, *B*. Scribal preferences in the compilation of the progeny lists.

LEXICAL DOMAIN	DEATH TERM	COTEXT	FREQ. COUNT	RATE
MOVEMENT	(FORÐ) GEWĪTAN	[038800 (1175)] Lifde siððan and lissa breac Malalehel lange, mondreama her, woruldgestreona. [038900 (1177)] Wintra hæfde fif and hundnigontig, þa he *forð gewat*, and eahta hund; eaforan læfde land and leodweard.	4	36.36%
		[039300 (1189)] Fæder her þa gyt his cynnes forð cneorim icte, <eaforan> eahta hund; ealra hæfde *V* and syxtig, þa he *forð gewat,* and nigonhund eac nihtgerimes, wine frod wintres, þa he þas *woruld ofgeaf* <and> Geared þa gleawum læfde land and leodweard, leofum rince.		
		[039800 (1210)] Ac he cwic *gewat* mid cyning engla of þyssum lænan life <feran> on þam gearwum þe his gast onfeng ær hine to monnum modor brohte. [039900 (1214)] He þam yldestan eaforan læfde folc, frumbearne; *V* and syxtig wintra hæfde þa he woruld ofgeaf, and eac *III* hund.		
	HWEORFAN	[040000(1217)] Þrage siððan Mathusal heold maga yrfe, se on lichoman lengest <þissa> worulddreama breac. [040100 (1220)] Worn gestrynde ær his *swyltdæge* suna and dohtra; hæfde frod hæle, þa he from sceolde niþþum *hweorfan*, nigonhund wintra and hundseofontig to.		
EXISTENCE	SWELTAN	[037800 (1150)] Siððan eahta hund and fiftyno on friðo drihtnes gleawferhð hæleð geogoðe strynde, suna and dohtra; *swealt*, þa he hæfde, frod fyrnwita, *V* and nigonhund.	4	36.36%
	WORULD OFGĪEFAN	[039300 (1189)] Fæder her þa gyt his cynnes forð cneorim icte, <eaforan> eahta hund; ealra hæfde *V* and syxtig, þa he forð gewat, and nigonhund eac nihtgerimes, wine frod wintres, þa he þas *woruld ofgeaf* <and> Geared þa gleawum læfde land and leodweard, leofum rince.		
		[038300 (1163)] Ealra nigonhund wintra hæfde þa he *woruld ofgeaf* and tyne eac, þa his tiddæge under rodera rum rim wæs gefylled.		
		[039400 (1197)] Enoch siððan ealdordom ahof, freoðosped folces wisa, nalles feallan let dom and drihtscipe, þenden he hyrde wæs heafodmaga…. [039900 (1214)] He þam yldestan eaforan læfde folc, frumbearne; *V* and syxtig wintra hæfde þa he *woruld ofgeaf,* and eac *III* hund.		

POSSESSION	GĀSTGEDĀL OFGĪEFAN	[037000 (1121)] Us gewritu secgað þæt her eahta hund iecte siððan mægðum and mæcgum mægburg sine Adam on eorðan; ealra hæfde nigenhund wintra and *XXX* eac, þa he þas woruld þurh *gastgedal ofgyfan* sceolde.	2	18.18%
	GĀST ONFŌN	[039800 (1210)] Ac he cwic gewat mid cyning engla of þyssum lænan life <feran> on þam gearwum þe his *gast onfeng* ær hine to monnum modor brohte. [039900 (1214)] He þam yldestan eaforan læfde folc, frumbearne; *V* and syxtig wintra hæfde þa he woruld ofgeaf, and eac *III* hund.		
EVENT	FRIÐGEDĀL FREMMAN	[037400 (1138)] Seth wæs gesælig; siððan strynde seofon winter her suna and dohtra ond eahta hund. [037500 (1140)] Ealra hæfde *XII* and nigonhund, þa seo tid gewearð þæt he *friðgedal fremman* sceolde.	1	9.10%

According to our estimates, the expressions categorized under POSSESSION (*gāst onfōn* & *gāstgedāl ofgiefan*) amount to less than 20%. In most of the cases the scribe(s) prefer(s) to use unbiased idioms taken from MOVEMENT (particularly *forð gewītan*) or EXISTENCE (*woruld ofgiefan*). The *cotext* thus acts as indicator 1) of the scribe's preferences, which suggest his reluctance to use the heathen *formulae*, and 2) of the later evolution of the GEDĀL group, which was finally neglected on taboo grounds.

7. Conclusion

This paper restores the heathen nature of the GEDĀL group. We have seen that these compounds should be approached *cohesively*, as a group, and that the key for their interpretation lies in choosing a different meaning, *distribution*, for their primary member, *-gedāl*. They are best understood as a window onto the old practices, since they ultimately manifest the return of someone's life to several pagan god figures. Corpus linguistics has been used to verify our hypothesis through a careful study of all the existing *texts*, *cotexts* and *text types*. The hypothesis has also obtained further validation from prototypical lexical domain structure. Finally, I have also shown how the attitude of the Anglo-Saxon scribes varied from initial and tentative adaptations of the old terms to the new faith in order to depict heathen customs and some Old Testament characters in the Bible to their ultimate neglect.

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