

# A Commentary on “The Old English and Anglo- Latin Riddle Tradition”

ANDY ORCHARD



SUPPLEMENTS TO THE  
DUMBARTON OAKS MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

## A Commentary on The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition

ANDY ORCHARD

DUMBARTON OAKS RESEARCH LIBRARY AND COLLECTION

This volume is a companion to *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition*. Its extensive notes and commentary on hundreds of Latin, Old English, and Old Norse–Icelandic riddles illuminate and clarify the multifaceted and interconnected nature of a broad, international tradition. Within this commentary, readers will encounter a deep reservoir of knowledge about riddles produced in both Latin and Old English during the Anglo-Saxon period, and the literatures with which they were in dialogue.

Riddles range from those by prominent authors like Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin, and Boniface to those presented anonymously in collections such as the Exeter Book. All are fully discussed, with particular attention paid to manuscript traditions, subject matter, solutions, style, sources, parallels, and recommendations for further reading. Consideration is given to running themes throughout the collection, comparisons to other riddles and to other literature more broadly, and important linguistic observations and manuscript readings. The commentary also lists the manuscripts and earlier editions for each riddle, extensive catalogues of proposed solutions, and additional bibliographic references. Following the general discussion of each riddle there is detailed line-by-line annotation.

This authoritative commentary is the most comprehensive examination to date of the bilingual riddle tradition of Anglo-Saxon England and its links to the wider world.

HARDCOVER \$65.00 • £52.95 • €58.50

ISBN 9780884024774 PUBLICATION: MAY 2021

Visit [DOMEDIEVAL.ORG](http://DOMEDIEVAL.ORG) to purchase *A Commentary on “The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition”* or to browse the full list of titles.

### DUMBARTON OAKS MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

The Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library is a groundbreaking facing-page translation series that makes the written achievements of medieval and Byzantine culture available to the English-speaking world. It offers the classics of the medieval canon as well as lesser-known gems of literary and cultural value to a global audience through accessible modern translations based on the latest research by leading scholars in the field.

With works ranging from *The Vulgate Bible* to *Beowulf*, and genres as diverse as travelogues, scientific treatises, and epic and lyric poetry, this series brings a vibrant medieval world populated with saints and sinners, monsters and angels, kings and slaves, poets and scholars, to a new generation of readers who will discover cultures and literatures both hauntingly familiar and wondrously alien.

Look  
Inside



SUPPLEMENTS TO THE  
DUMBARTON OAKS *M*EDIEVAL LIBRARY

A Commentary on  
*The Old English and  
Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition*

ANDY ORCHARD

DUMBARTON OAKS RESEARCH LIBRARY AND COLLECTION  
WASHINGTON, DC

## Contents

*Preface* ix*A Note on This Commentary* xiii*Abbreviations of Riddles and Riddle Collections* xvi*Abbreviations of Previous Editions, Translations,  
and Commentaries* xviii*Manuscript Sigla* xxi*Bibliographical Abbreviations* xxv

## COMMENTARY

## THE ANGLO-LATIN TRADITION 1

Aldhelm 1

Bede 113

Tatwine 131

Hwætberht, The Riddles of Eusebius 172

Boniface 230

Alcuin 257

The Lorsch Riddles 289

The Abingdon Riddle 300

The High-Minded Library 302

## THE OLD ENGLISH TRADITION 315

The Franks Casket Riddle 315

The Leiden Riddle 317

The Exeter Book Riddles 321

The Old English Rune Poem 489

The Riddles of Solomon and Saturn II 501

The Old English Prose Riddle 505

## SOURCES AND ANALOGUES OF THE TRADITION 509

Symphosius 509

The Bern Riddles 573

The Verses of a Certain Irishman on the Alphabet 607

The Old Icelandic Rune Poem 624

The Riddles of Gestumblindi 630

Various Riddles 648

*Bibliography* 655*Index of Solutions* 685*Concordance of Parallels with Isidore's Etymologiae* 697*General Index* 701

*Pages omitted from preview*

## The Anglo-Latin Tradition

ALDHELM

*Authorship and Date*

Aldhelm (b. 639 or 640, d. 709 or 710) is one of the most important, prolific, and widely read authors of the Anglo-Saxon period, a deeply learned and innovative scholar whose writings were rightly celebrated in his own lifetime. His works were highly prized by later generations, to judge not only from the number of manuscripts that survive, but also by the sheer amount of indebtedness to him of later Anglo-Saxons, both at the verbal and thematic levels. It appears that Aldhelm was a son of the West Saxon King Centwine (676–685), but that, like several other members of his family, he chose the church above a potential (or, in some cases, continuing) royal career. Nonetheless, his royal connections may well have contributed to his ultimate preferment, as he became abbot of Malmesbury around 685, and traveled to Rome in 688 accompanying his kinsman Ceadwalla, a successor to Centwine, who had abdicated his throne sometime between 682 and 685 and retired (also to Malmesbury). Aldhelm ultimately became the first bishop of the newly created see of Sherborne in 705/6, which he held until his death. We know from Aldhelm's own letters that he was initially educated by an Irish teacher (presumably at Malmesbury), but that he considered his education to have been completed rather later in life when he attended the celebrated school established at Canterbury sometime after 670 by Archbishop Theodore (602–690), a Greek-speaking monk from

Tarsus, and Abbot Hadrian (d. 709), a North African with a reputation as a superb scholar of Latin.

Aldhelm himself describes the *aenigmata* as among his earliest works, and ALD seems to have been sent as part of the composite *Epistola ad Acircium* sent to King Aldfrith of Northumbria (685–705) shortly after his accession in 685. In the *Epistola*, which survives complete in five manuscripts and three fragments, ALD appears third in a sequence of four texts, following a treatise on the significance of the number seven and another “on meters” (*De metris*), and preceding another “on the rules of metrical feet” (*De pedum regulis*). Such a context is important for understanding certain features of ALD, which seems sometimes designed to illustrate aspects of Latin poetics rather than to promote any sense of enigmatic mystery. This is particularly clear when the metrical patterning of ALD is compared with that found in his other major verse works, namely the 428 lines of the *Carmina ecclesiastica* (“ecclesiastical poems”) and the 2941 lines of the *Carmen de virginitate* (“poem on virginity”). Not only do the 801 lines of ALD display markedly greater metrical variety than the other works, but they have a clear preponderance of patterns that Aldhelm rarely uses elsewhere. Likewise, several of the *aenigmata* in ALD comprise either entirely or mostly different metrical patterns, or conversely repeat the same metrical pattern: both strategies would of course be useful in a classroom context (for some particularly striking examples, see further the headnotes to ALD 56, ALD 76, and ALD 92). If the focus on metrical patterning essentially offers practical illustration of the theoretical material that makes up the treatise *De metris* which precedes ALD in the relevant manuscripts, another aspect does the same for the further treatise *De pedum regulis*, which follows in the same manuscripts. In composing *De pedum regulis*, Aldhelm performed a signal service for would-be composers of Latin poetry, by providing (apparently for the first time) lists of words that fit particular metrical patterns, so allowing them to be inserted at the appropriate place in the line.

Likewise, several of the *aenigmata* contain sequences of synonyms or near-synonyms scanned variously, thereby offering the same flexibility and service to aspiring poets. Some of the synonyms are found in *aenigmata* whose solutions may offer clues to their content, such as

the synonyms for “fire” and “water” in ALD 54 (*COCUMA DUPLEX*, “double boiler”), but in other cases the connection between solutions and synonyms is more oblique. ALD 70 (*TORTELLA*, “loaf of bread”), for example, has a series of synonyms for “shield,” presumably prompted by the shared round shape of both in Anglo-Saxon England.

Set in the larger context of the didactic project of using ALD to teach meter, the *Prose Preface* gives an interesting perspective on Aldhelm’s attitudes: he cites three basic models for his *aenigmata*, namely the Bible (quoting only from the Old Testament), Aristotle, and Symphosius, and it is surely notable that these three ideals are in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin respectively, the so-called *tres linguae sacrae* (“three holy languages”) of Christian theology. In other words, as is clear also from the range and trajectory of the subjects, as well as the manuscript transmission, in composing his *aenigmata* Aldhelm sought to teach not only the principles of Latin poetry, but an encyclopedic attitude, based largely, but not entirely, on Isidore, towards appreciating the wider world both within and beyond the classroom.

#### *Manuscript Context(s)*

ALD survives in two quite distinct recensions, one of which appears to be a revised version of the other, and in general corrects metrical infelicities in what is presumed to be the original version. The first recension is found in only three manuscripts, one from the early eighth century (A) and two from the twelfth (F<sup>1</sup>F<sup>2</sup>, where the second is an apograph of the first). Apart from a number of distinctive readings highlighting the difficulties that composing Latin metrical verse presents for a nonnative speaker, it is characterized both by lacking any numbering of the constituent *aenigmata* and by giving the titles/solutions in the nominative case; the second recension uniformly employs the preposition *DE* (“about”), followed by the ablative case, perhaps after the model of the two treatises *De metris* and *De pedum regulis*, which contain many subsections similarly titled. The second recension is extant in part or in whole in no fewer than twenty separate manuscripts, and there are a number of further fragmentary or now-lost witnesses. While the metrical improvements are most likely by Aldhelm himself, the rubrics cannot be, since several

*Pages omitted from preview*

“milfoil, yarrow”), ALD 51 (*ELIOTROPUS*, “heliotrope”), ALD 58 (*VESPER SIDUS*, “evening star”), ALD 60 (*MONOCERUS*, “unicorn”), ALD 65 (*MURICEPS*, “mouser”), ALD 91 (*PALMA*, “palm”), and ALD 95 (*SCILLA*, “Scylla”). A different kind of interest in words, and one which influenced many subsequent collections, is evinced in the three logogriphs ALD 63 (*CORBUS*, “raven” → *ORBUS*, “widow”), ALD 70 (*TORTELLA*, “loaf of bread,” where *spelta*, “grain” → *pelta*, “shield”), and ALD 86 (*ARIES*, “ram” → *PARIES*, “wall of a house”), all of which play on the spellings of the creatures in question, and indeed elsewhere Aldhelm talks of “playful letters” (Eh, 75: *ludibundis apicibus*); see further the headnote to ALD 63. In his focus on such bookish aspects of words, Aldhelm simply echoes his immediate sources, of which Isidore is clearly the most significant (see in particular the *Index of Parallels* with Isidore’s *Etymologiae* below).

In this context, Sk notes that manuscript L contains no fewer than forty-one extended glosses on the text of ALD that can be traced back, often verbatim, to Isidore, *Etymologiae*, as is made clear here in the headnotes to ALD 1, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24, 25, 37, 40, 42, 46, 49, 51, 53, 56, 61, 82, 98, and 99; further extended glosses are noted at PR.4 and PR.13; ALD 1.4, 4.3, 13.1, 14.4, 25.5, 28.4, 36.6, 45.5 and 6, 47.9, 88.3, 89.4; and 100.47, 49, 65, and 82. The total tally of all those aenigmata in ALD that either focus explicitly on etymological factors, or can be otherwise explained by reference to Isidore’s *Etymologiae* (or both) accounts for forty-three out of the one hundred in the collection. Sk (at 48–54) also discusses the Old English glosses in L, which appear in two hands. There are sixty-seven of them, including two in the *Prose Preface*, where *cola* is glossed as *lim*, “members, limbs,” and *commata* as *limes dæl*, “parts of members,” “parts of limbs.” Twenty-four of the one hundred aenigmata that make up ALD cover all eight chapters of Book 12 (Isidore, *Etym.* 12.1.8–8.14), but are somewhat scattered throughout the collection (see the individual notes at ALD 12, 15–18, 20, 28, 31, 35–37, 39, 42–43, 56, 60, 63, 65, 82, 86, 88, 96, 99, and 100).

#### *This Text and Translation*

This edition essentially follows that of Eh, which gives an extensive recording of manuscript variants which I have much simplified here,

focusing on the four most important Anglo-Saxon manuscripts containing multiple collections of aenigmata, namely BGLO, as well as D, which contains ALD, SYM, and LEI. Eh gives priority to the readings of the so-called first recension, especially the witness of the eighth-century manuscript A, but I have highlighted in the notes changes (generally correcting faulty scansion) made in the course of the second recension; for examples, see the notes at ALD 6.4, 12.2, 14.1, 18.4, 19.4, 30.1, 42.3, 44.8, 52.7, 53.8–9, 54.1–2, 58.4–5, 60.3, 74.3, 82.1, 95.5, and 100.37. I have also made extensive use of the translations in LR, St, and Ju (with whom I shared a first draft of what follows).

#### *Further Reading*

Manitius, “Zu Aldhelm und Beda”; Cook, “Aldhelm’s Legal Studies”; Pitman, *Riddles of Aldhelm*; Campbell, “Some Linguistic Features”; Lagorio, “Aldhelm’s Aenigmata”; Winterbottom, “Aldhelm’s Prose Style”; Howe, “Aldhelm’s *Aenigmata*”; Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*; Cameron, “Aldhelm as Naturalist”; Orchard, “After Aldhelm”; Orchard, *Poetic Art*; Scott, “Rhetorical and Symbolic Ambiguity”; Stork, *Through a Gloss Darkly*; Crane, “Describing the World”; Milanović-Barham, “Aldhelm’s *Aenigmata* and Byzantine Riddles”; Rusche, “Isidore’s *Etymologiae*”; Thornbury, “Aldhelm’s Rejection of the Muses”; Ruff, “Metrics”; Salvador-Bello, “Patterns of Compilation”; Salvador-Bello, “Sexual Riddle Type”; Lapidge, “Career of Aldhelm”; Lapidge, “Aldhelmus Malmesberiensis Abb. et Scireburnensis ep”; Salvador-Bello, *Isidorean Perceptions, 177–221 and 460–61*.

#### ⌘ ALD PR ⌘

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 10v–11r; L, fol. 83; G, fol. 394v–95r; B, fol. 59v; O, fol. 1r–v.

EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 97–99; Gl, 377–81; LR, 70–71; Sk, 93–99; Ju, 2–7 and 77–85. (SK 961)

The *Preface*, with its ambitious hexameter acrostic-telestich spelling out (albeit with some slight numerical exaggeration) the notion that



“Aldhelm has sung songs in thousands of verses” (*ALDHELMUS CECINIT MILLENIS VERSIBUS ODAS*), is a highly crafted poem and a fitting tour de force to begin the collection. It is notable that Aldhelm leads off with his own name, just as he concludes the *Preface* with two lines asking God for forgiveness of sins, presumably primarily his own; it is worth pointing out that the Old English poet Cynewulf uses a similar technique in his own runic signatures. Aldhelm exploits the exigencies of the acrostic-telestich form to his own advantage, so that the larger structure of the poem provides sentence breaks that coincide neatly with the first three words of the resulting hexameter. In seeking out words which end in the required final letter for each line, Aldhelm is led to some odd choices, including the proper names *Uehemoth*, *Iob* (evidently scanned imaginatively as disyllabic with first syllable long: *Īob*), and *David*, as well as the Hebrew-derived *cephal* (a usage evidently imitated later in EUS 45.3 [*DE CAMELEONE*, “about a camelopard”]). It is striking that he never repeats a final word, despite the difficulty of finding (for example) four words ending in *-l* and two each in *-c* and *-d*. Similarly varied are all the many different words employed here for “poem,” “song,” “singing,” or “poet” (*metrorum carmina . . . versibus aenigmata . . . cantibus . . . versificum . . . carmen . . . metrica . . . carmina vatem . . . cecinisse . . . psalmista canens metrorum cantica . . . aenigmata versu . . . ritu dactilico . . . cecinit . . . carmine*), with barely a repeated word in the whole display. The range of possibilities for scansion and metrical placement offers a kind of *gradus* or collection of alternative forms for the aspiring poet, just as many of Aldhelm’s other aenigmata seem to do; see for example the notes at ALD 13 (*BARBITA*, “organ”), 37 (*CANCER*, “crab”), 39 (*LEO*, “lion”), 40 (*PIPER*, “pepper”), 69 (*TAXUS*, “yew”), 70 (*TORTELLA*, “loaf of bread”), and 75 (*CRABRO*, “hornet”). This listing is very much in the spirit of his *De pedum regulis*, which dul(l)y catalogs different words with the same metrical pattern, and immediately follows the *Aenigmata* in several manuscripts.

As if to underline that part of the purpose of the piece is poetic training, Aldhelm displays here a much wider range of caesura-patterning than is his norm: lines 7, 8, 11, 13, 18, 23, and 29 all deviate

from the strong masculine caesura that Aldhelm employs almost universally elsewhere. In a similar vein, Aldhelm’s use of unusual monosyllabic and quadrisyllabic endings in lines 12, 19, and 26 marks this passage as a set piece; the single example of hiatus in line 25 is likewise striking (there are no elisions at all in the poem, unless the reading *almi*, found in L, is accepted for *prisci* in line 18).

The Old Testament references to Behemoth, Moses, Job, and David are balanced very carefully by classical ones to Castalian nymphs and the twin peaks of Parnassus and Cynthus. It is notable that here *lucifer* (ALD PR.23) is simply the morning star, and part of a wider pattern of poetic light-shedding and wandering that is enshrined in the Latin verb *lustro* (which implies both), and lies at the heart of the play of word and image in the middle passage of the poem, where the words *perlustro . . . illustria . . . lustrat* (lines 12, 19, and 20) clearly echo each other; see further the note at ALD 5.4 (*IRIS*, “rainbow”). The allusion to Persius in lines 12–13 is at once a gesture toward a somewhat obscure (during the early Medieval period, at least) classical poet whose works Aldhelm cites by name on no fewer than three occasions in the metrical treatises *De metris* (Eh 78.12–14 and 88.2–3) and *De pedum regulis* (Eh 168.7).

The middle section (ALD PR.10–13) details four kinds of classical pagan poetic inspiration: by Muses, by eating nectar, by wandering on Cynthus, by sleeping, and by dreaming on Parnassus. It is notable that this passage is not only bracketed by references to “God” (*Deus*: ALD PR.9 and 14), but also spells out “blind ones” (*CECI*) in the acrostic-telestich form: in such ways Aldhelm expresses his disapproval. God is referred to by four different designations: *Arbiter*, *praesul*, *deus* (twice), and *genitor*, and acts in four different ways: *disponis*, *largire*, *rependis*, *servas*; such numerological exposition is matched elsewhere in the *Epistola ad Acircium*, where the number in question is not four but seven.

See also Crane, “Describing the World,” 59–64; Orchard, “Performing Writing and Singing Silence,” 75–77; Thornbury, “Aldhelm’s Rejection of the Muses”; Salvador-Bello, *Isidorean Perceptions*, 175–77.

- PR.1 Compare BON 5.15 (*Arbiter, aethereus*); ALD 7.4 (*Sceptra regens mundi*) and 99.2 (*regni sceptra regebat*).
- PR.4 For Behemoth, see Job 40:15–24; Enoch 60:7–8. The extended gloss in L derives from Isidore, *Etym.* 8.11.27 (*Behemoth*).
- PR.7 Compare Corippus, *Iust.* 3.145 (*Tot divinarum miracula pandere rerum*).
- PR.9 Compare Prudentius, *Apotheosis* 632 (*quae dona rependam*).
- PR.10 Compare Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 24 (*Nec peto Castalidas metrorum cantica nimphas*); Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 15.30 (*Non ego Castalidas vatium phantasmata Musas*). Eh notes several instances where Aldhelm seems to use *istuc* in the sense “to here” rather than the usual “to there.”
- PR.10–14 For Parnassus, see too Isidore, *Etym.* 14.8.11.
- PR.11 See further Thornbury, “Aldhelm’s Rejection of the Muses,” 80.
- PR.12 For the monosyllabic ending here (*nec*), compare ALD PR.19 (*sol*), 67.8 (*nix*); Aldhelm, *Carmen ecclesiasticum* 2.26 (= *Carmen de virginitate* 1704); *Carmen de virginitate* PR.21, 556, and 1460.
- PR.12–13 Compare Persius, *Preface to the Satires* 3 (*nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnaso*).
- PR.13 Compare Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.475 (*somnia vidi*). The extended gloss in L derives from Isidore, *Etym.* 14.8.11 (*Parnassus*).
- PR.15 Compare Cyprianus Gallus, *Genesis* 196 (*munera mentis*).
- PR.16 For the biblical story, see Exodus 15:1–18; compare Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Martini* 4.453 (*corde rependit*).
- PR.17 Compare ALD 57.2 (*carmine vates*), 79.2 (*carmina vatium*), and 97.3 (*NOX*, “night”: *carmine vates*); BON 13.44 (*carmina vatium*); BIB 5.7 (*carmina vatium*); Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* praef. 1, virg. 2010 (*metrica . . . carmina*).

- PR.18 On Aldhelm’s occasional use of anomalous scansion, in this case *prisci*, see Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 74–79. Compare Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 1104 and 2900 (*vexilla tropei*).
- PR.19 Compare *Miracula S. Nyniae* 10 (*late per populos*), 98 (*late per populos lustravit*), and 155 (*late per populos*). On the monosyllabic ending *sol* here, see the note at PR.12 above.
- PR.20 The unusual and ultimately Greek-derived term *cephal* is also found at EUS 41.1 and 45.3; as well as in Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 1016 and the anonymous *Miracula S. Nyniae* 144. It is interesting to note that while Aldhelm and the *Miracula S. Nyniae* scan the word *cēphal*, EUS has variously *cēphāl* and *cēphāla*.
- PR.21 See further Psalms 109:3 (*ex utero ante luciferum genuite*, “from the womb before the day star I begot thee”); Caelius Sedulius, *Carmen paschale* 1.23–26. For variants on the phrase *psalmista canens*, compare Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 33, 458, 885, 1644, and 2581. See too Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 24 (*metrorum cantica*).
- PR.24 Compare BON 2.11 (*lumina saeclis*) and 5.2 (*splendida . . . saeclis*); Bede, *Vita S. Cudberti* 1 (*fulgescere lumina saeclis*) and 503 (*lumina saeclis*); *Miracula S. Nyniae* 16 (*lumina seclis*).
- PR.26–29 Compare Thornbury, “Aldhelm’s Rejection of the Muses,” 76–79.
- PR.26 For the unusual pentasyllabic ending here (*rusticitate*), compare ALD 30.2 (*annumerandas*), as well as the quadrisyllabic endings at ALD 4.1 (*moderante*), 13.2 (*modulentur*), 30.3 (*moribundae*), 57.1 (*Ganimidis*), 84.3 (*duodenis*), and 100.47 (*calamistro*); *Carmen de virginitate* 325, 2502, and 2699. In producing such polysyllabic endings apparently as a rhetorical flourish or ornament, Aldhelm seems to have inspired imitation: it is notable that BED has six in only 32 lines (see the note at BED 1.3

below) and TAT contains twelve examples of quadri-syllabic endings in only 213 verses (see the note at TAT 1.10 below). In employing such exotic forms, Aldhelm seems to have been ahead of his time: not until the ninth century did poets regularly begin to exploit such forms.

- PR.28 Compare Juvenius, *Evangelia* 1.521 and 2.308 (*molimina mentis*); also Lucan, *Bellum civile* 9.612 (*vana specie*).
- PR.30 Compare *Miracula S. Nyniae* 107 (*moderans eternis legibus illas*).
- PR.32–34 For the biblical story, see Psalms 77:16 and 106:9; Exodus 14:37–15:21. The phrasing from Psalms 77:16 seems closest: *et eduxit aquam de petra et deduxit tamquam flumina aquas*, “He brought forth water out of the rock: and made streams run down as rivers.”
- PR.33 Compare Cyprianus Gallus, *Exodus* 1029 (*marmore rubro*).
- PR.34 Compare BON 1.8 (*cecinit quod carmine David*); Alcuin, *Carmen* 1 603 (*cecinit . . . David*). See too Aldhelm, *Carmen ecclesiasticum* 4.9.10 (*Ut quondam cecinit psalmore carmine vates*); Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 1158 (*cecinit sponsali carmine vatis*), 1912 (*Ut cecinit dudum famosus carmine vates*); 2139 (*Ut cecinit quondam famoso carmine princeps*); 2772 (*cecinit quod carmine vates*).
- PR.35 Compare ALD 8.3 (*arce poli*) and 53.7 (*arce polorum*).

⌘ ALD 1 ⌘

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11r; L, fol. 84r; G, fol. 395r; B, fol. 60r; O, fol. 1v.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 99; Gl, 382–83; LR, 71; Sk, 100–101; Ju, 4–5 and 85. (SK 681)  
 SOLUTION: *TERRA* (earth), although Aldhelm seems in his use of the imagery of suckling to toy with the potential solution *SAPIENTIA* (wisdom), which opens other riddle collections, such as ps-BED 1 (see the note there). See further Sebo, *In Enigmatē*, 73–74.

The feminine nature of the solution here is made grammatically plain in the opening word: *altrix*. The extended gloss in L derives from Isidore, *Etym.* 14.1.1 (*terra*).

- 1.2 The deponent form *nuncupor* is rare; compare BON 10.6 (*VIRGINITAS*, “virginity”).
- 1.3 Compare Bede (?), *De die iudicii* 105 (*lacerant . . . dentibus*).
- 1.4 Compare SYM 11.2 (*Sole madens, aestate fluens*); ALD 22.5 (*bruma . . . aestate*); ALD 77.7 (*brumae . . . tempore*); ALC 9.1 (*tempore brumae*); Bede, *Vita S. Cudberti* 185 (*sub tempore brumae*); Frithegod, *Breviloquium S. Wilfridi* 567 (*tempora brumae*). The extended gloss in L derives from Isidore, *Etym.* 5.35.6 (*bruma*).

⌘ ALD 2 ⌘

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11r; L, fol. 84r; G, fol. 395r; B, fol. 60r; O, fol. 1v.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 99–100; Gl, 384–85; LR, 71; Sk, 102–95; Ju, 4–5 and 85–86. See further Crane, “Describing the World,” 68–75; Hill, “Saturn’s Time Riddle”; Orchard, “Enigma Variations,” 294–95; Anlezark, *Solomon and Saturn*. (SK 2106)  
 SOLUTION: *VENTUS* (wind), although on the face of it others are feasible, including *DEUS* (God).

In this context, EXE 1 (*GODES WIND*, “the wind of God”) looks very much like an extended reverie on ALD 2, while in the parallel riddle in SOL 2, a quite different solution, “old age,” is explicitly given. See too ALC D46, BER 41, ps-BED 5 (all *VENTUS*). There are also some broad parallels to be found in *Hisperica famina* A479–96 (*DE VENTO*, “on wind”; see further Herren, *Hisperica Famina: The A-Text*; Orchard, “*Hisperica famina* as Literature”).

- 2.1 Compare SYM 58.1 (*Findere me nulli possunt*); TAT 1.8 (*Nulla manus poterit nec me contingere visus*) and 2.5 (*cernere que nullus nec pandere septa valebit*); BON 1.1 (*Vincere me nulli possunt*). See too Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate* 1730 (*prendere palmis*).

- 2.3 Compare BON 12.5 (*Viribus . . . valeo*).
- 2.3–4 Compare Aldhelm, *Carmen rhythmicum* 39–44, describing a mighty storm (*Cumque flatus victoriae / non furerent ingloriae / tremebat tellus turbida / atque eruta robora / cadebant cum verticibus / simul raptis radicibus*).
- 2.4 Compare BON 1.4 and LOR 2.6 (*rura peragro*).

{ ALD 3 }

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11r; L, fol. 84r–v; G, fol. 395r; B, fol. 60r; O, fol. 1v.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 100; Gl, 384–85; LR, 71; Sk, 103; Ju, 4–5 and 86. (SK 17143)  
 SOLUTION: *NUBES* (cloud). SYM 8 (*NEBULA*, “cloud”) has a similar answer.

The sympathetic reference to exile aligns this aenigma with a large part of the extant Old English tradition, here given a twist by the fact that this exile has no place in heaven or on earth, a feature emphasized by the chiasmic arrangement of “heaven . . . earth . . . earth . . . heaven” in ALD 3.1–2 (*caelum terramque . . . tellure . . . parte polorum*).

- 3.1 The form *versicolor* also appears in SYM 58.2, TAT 9.1, and BON 20.1 (as *vericolor*). Compare ALD 49.2 (*caelum . . . terramve*) and 97.16 (*caeli . . . terraeque*); ps-ALC 8.2 (*caeli terraeque*); BON 19.7 (*caelum terramve*); Statius, *Thebaid* 11.692 (*caelum terramque reliqui*).

{ ALD 4 }

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11r–v; L, fol. 84v; G, fol. 395r; B, fol. 60r; O, fol. 1v.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 100; Gl, 386–87; LR, 71; Sk, 104; Ju, 6–7 and 86–87. (SK 2848)  
 SOLUTION: *NATURA* (nature). See further Sebo, *In Enigmatē*, 73–74.

The phrase *crede mihi* is a loaded one, since it is so closely associated with Christ’s identical exclamation in the Vulgate (John 4:21). The combination of natural phenomena and the question of their controller which are shot through ALD 1–4 have many parallels in EXE 1.

- 4.1 Compare Lucan, *Bellum civile* 8.504 (*nulla manet*).
- 4.3 The extended gloss in L derives from Isidore, *Etym.* 13.5.6 (note the use of *convexa* here).
- 4.4 Compare Lucan, *Bellum civile* 9.6 (*lunaeque meatus*) and 9.693 (*lunaeque meatibus*); Wulfstan Cantor of Winchester, *Vita S. Swithuni* 1.392 (*lunaeque meatum*).

{ ALD 5 }

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11v; L, fol. 84v; G, fol. 395r; B, fol. 60r; O, fol. 1v–2r.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 100; Gl, 386–87; LR, 71; Sk, 105; Howe, “Aldhelm’s Enigmata,” 54–57; Ju, 6–7 and 87–88. (SK 16040)  
 SOLUTION: *IRIS* (rainbow); second-recension manuscripts include a Latin gloss (*DE IRI VEL ARCU CAELESTI*, “on the rainbow, which is to say the bow in the sky”).

This is one of several aenigmata, generally clustering around the theme of heavenly bodies, in which Aldhelm appeals to an ancient etymology that is held to be false; the others are ALD 7 (*FATUM*, “fate”), 8 (*PLIADES*, “Pleiades”), 37 (*CANCER*, “crab”), and 79 (*SOL ET LUNA*, “sun and moon”). In other cases, too, the second-recension manuscripts include glosses, notably ALD 11–13, 15–18, 20, 21–24, 27, 30, 38, 41, 45, 49–51, 56, 59–62, 65, 67, 72, 76, 88, 92, and 95. There are some obvious sequences to be seen here, notably ALD 11–13, 15–18, 21–24, 49–51, and ALD 59–62; such clusters and sequences are commonplace throughout the tradition. The further extended gloss in L derives from Isidore, *Etym.* 13.10.1 (*Iris*).

- 5.1 On Thaumias, see too Virgil, *Aeneid* 9.2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.479. Compare BON 13.16 (*famine ficto*).
- 5.3 Compare Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.429 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.622 (*nubis aquosae*).
- 5.4 Note Aldhelm's customary wordplay on *lustr* in the double sense "wander" and "illuminate" (an ambiguity amply exploited by Boniface, as at BON 8.9 and 11.4); see too, for example, ALD PR.12 (*Cynthi . . . perlustro*) and 65.2 (*lustrabo latebras*), 81.2 (*lustrat qui limpidus orbem*), and 97.8 (*saecula dum lustrat lampas Titania Phoebi*). The same wordplay is also found at BED 17.

{ ALD 6 }

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11v; L, fol. 84v; G, fol. 395r; B, fol. 60r; O, fol. 2r.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 101; Gl, 388–89; LR, 72; Sk, 106; Ju, 6–7 and 88. (SK 10730)  
 SOLUTION: *LUNA* (moon).

- 6.3 Compare ALD 96.9 (*gloria formae*).
- 6.4 Reading *cumulatus* with the second-recension manuscripts; the first recension has *rēdūdans*, with false quantity: the normal scansion is *rēdūdans* (see further ALD 99.2). Retaining *redūdans* preserves an apparently original pun on the word *unda*, "wave," which reinforces the other two watery words in the same line, namely *latex* and *gurgite*; all three words scan in different ways.

{ ALD 7 }

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11v; L, fol. 84v; G, fol. 395v; B, fol. 60r–v; O, fol. 2r.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 101; Gl, 388–89; LR, 72; Sk, 107; Ju, 6–7 and 88–89. (SK 4925)  
 SOLUTION: The solution given is *FATUM* (fate); a broad clue is offered by the use of the term *fortuna* in line 2, who is presumably the feminine

*dominam* of ALD 7.3. O has the rather problematic rubric *FATUS VEL GENESIS*, which is ungrammatical, but offers the alternative solution "Genesis." See further Howe, "Aldhelm's Enigmata," 54–57; Sebo, *In Enigmate*, 73–74.

This is one of several riddles from across the Anglo-Saxon tradition where the solution is heavily hinted at through embedded clues, often etymological; other examples are found at ALD 25, 26, 28, 50, 52, 67, 88, and 92; BED 1; TAT 18 and 21; EUS 2, 9, 14, 19, 37, and 39; LOR 11; SYM 44 and 64; EXE 5, 6, 45, 51, 53, 55, 62, and 73; BER 19. This aenigma is noteworthy for its insistent use of alliteration, especially on *c-/q-*, *d-, f-/v-*, and *s-* in the first three lines, which deal with the classical and pagan past, and polyptoton on *regens . . . regnet* in the last, which turn to Christ (compare the similar polyptoton on *regmine . . . regale* in ALD PR.1–2). This is one of several aenigmata in which Aldhelm appeals to ancient etymology; see the note at ALD 5 (*IRIS*, "rainbow").

- 7.1 Compare Virgil, *Eclogue* 10.7 (*cecinsisse poetam*).
- 7.2 The line quoted is Virgil, *Aeneid* 12.677 (*quo deus et quo dura vocat fortuna sequamur*). For the use of direct quotation within riddles, compare ALD 57.1 (quoting Virgil); ALD 63.7 (quoting Caelius Sedulius), ALD 97.12–16 (quoting Virgil). See too EXE 31.9–13 (alluding to ps-SYM 1) and EXE 36.6–7 (apparently alluding to EUS 37.3–4).
- 7.4 Compare ALD PR.1 (*regmine sceptra*); ALD 99.2 (*regni sceptra regebat*). Note the polyptoton on *regens . . . regnet*.

{ ALD 8 }

MANUSCRIPTS: D, fol. 11v; L, fol. 84v–85r; G, fol. 395v; B, fol. 60v; O, fol. 2r.  
 EARLIER EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Eh, 101–2; Gl, 390–91; LR, 72; Sk, 108–9; Howe, "Aldhelm's Enigmata," 54–57; Ju, 6–7 and 89–90. (SK 10555)  
 SOLUTION: *PLIADES* (Pleiades).

# The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY ANDY ORCHARD

Also Available



DUMBARTON OAKS  
MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

## The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition



EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
ANDY ORCHARD



What offers over seven hundred witty enigmas in several languages? Answer: *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition*. Riddles, wordplay, and inscrutable utterances have been at the heart of Western literature for many centuries. Often brief and always delightful, medieval riddles provide insights into the extraordinary and the everyday, connecting the learned and the ribald, the lay and the devout, and the familiar and the imported. Many solutions involve domestic life, including “butter churn” and “chickens.” Others like “the harrowing of hell” or “the Pleiades” appeal to an educated elite. Still others, like “the one-eyed seller of garlic,” are too absurd to solve: that is part of the game. Riddles are not simply lighthearted amusement. They invite philosophical questions about language and knowledge.

Most riddles in this volume are translated from Old English and Latin, but it also includes some from Old Norse–Icelandic. *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* assembles, for the first time ever, an astonishing array of riddles composed before 1200 CE that continue to entertain and puzzle.

HARDCOVER \$35.00 • £28.95 • €31.50 DOML 69  
ISBN 9780674055339 PUBLICATION: MAY 2021

Visit [DOMEDIEVAL.ORG](http://DOMEDIEVAL.ORG) to purchase  
*The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition*  
or to browse the full list of titles.

## DUMBARTON OAKS MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

The Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library is a groundbreaking facing-page translation series that makes the written achievements of medieval and Byzantine culture available to the English-speaking world. It offers the classics of the medieval canon as well as lesser-known gems of literary and cultural value to a global audience through accessible modern translations based on the latest research by leading scholars in the field.

With works ranging from *The Vulgate Bible* to *Beowulf*, and genres as diverse as travelogues, scientific treatises, and epic and lyric poetry, this series brings a vibrant medieval world populated with saints and sinners, monsters and angels, kings and slaves, poets and scholars, to a new generation of readers who will discover cultures and literatures both hauntingly familiar and wondrously alien.



# Old English Legal Writings

WULFSTAN

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY ANDREW RABIN

Also Available



DUMBARTON OAKS  
MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

## Old English Legal Writings

Wulfstan



EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
ANDREW RABIN



**Archbishop Wulfstan of York** (d. 1023) was a powerful clergyman and the most influential political thinker of pre-Conquest England. An advocate for the rights and privileges of the Church, he authored the laws of King Aethelred and King Cnut in prose that combined the rhetorical flourishes of a master homilist with the language of law. Some works forged a distinctive style by adding rhythm and alliteration drawn from Old English poetry. In the midst of Viking invasions and cultural upheaval, Wulfstan articulated a complementary relationship between secular and ecclesiastical law that shaped the political world of eleventh-century England. He also pushed the clergy to return to the ideals of their profession. *Old English Legal Writings* is the first publication to bring together Wulfstan's works on law, church governance, and political reform. When read together, they reveal the scope and originality of his thought as it lays out the mutual obligations of the church, the state, and the common people. This volume presents new editions of the Old English texts alongside new English translations.

HARDCOVER \$35.00 • £28.95 • €31.50 DOML 66  
ISBN 9780674247482 PUBLICATION: NOVEMBER 2020

Visit [DOMEDIEVAL.ORG](http://DOMEDIEVAL.ORG) to purchase  
*Old English Legal Writings*  
or to browse the full list of titles.

## DUMBARTON OAKS MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

The Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library is a groundbreaking facing-page translation series that makes the written achievements of medieval and Byzantine culture available to the English-speaking world. It offers the classics of the medieval canon as well as lesser-known gems of literary and cultural value to a global audience through accessible modern translations based on the latest research by leading scholars in the field.

With works ranging from *The Vulgate Bible* to *Beowulf*, and genres as diverse as travelogues, scientific treatises, and epic and lyric poetry, this series brings a vibrant medieval world populated with saints and sinners, monsters and angels, kings and slaves, poets and scholars, to a new generation of readers who will discover cultures and literatures both hauntingly familiar and wondrously alien.

