

8: Lyrics, Riddles, and Wisdom Literature



Figure: Óðinn vs Vafþrúðnir (1895; public domain / WMC)

Key Questions

- ▶ What is (Old English) lyric?
- ▶ What is (Old English) elegy?
- ▶ What are the themes and motifs that characterize Old English elegy?
- ▶ What is the role of religion in the elegies?
- ▶ What is the cultural background of the Old English riddles?
- ▶ What are the conventions and concerns of Old English and Old Norse wisdom literature?
- ▶ What considerations went into the making of the Exeter Book?

Part I: Lyrics

Part II: Riddles and Wisdom Literature

Part III: Connecting the Dots

Definitions

Lyric

Any verse text as much concerned with the communication of a sentiment as with the telling of a story

Elegy

A text of mourning

(Self-Contained) Old English Elegies

- ▶ *Deor*
- ▶ *(The Husband's Message)*
- ▶ *Resignation B*
- ▶ *The Rhyming Poem*
- ▶ *The Ruin*
- ▶ *The Seafarer*
- ▶ *The Wanderer*
- ▶ *The Wife's Lament*
- ▶ *Wulf and Eadwacer*

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- ▶ *Wulf and Eadwacer*
- ▶ *Azarias*
- ▶ *Bede's Death Song*
- ▶ *Caedmon's Hymn*
- ▶ *The Descent into Hell*
- ▶ *The Gloria*
- ▶ *The Kentish Hymn*
- ▶ *The Paternoster*
- ▶ *Psalms 51–151*
- ▶ *Resignation A*
- ▶ ...

The Conversion of King Edwin of Deira

“ The present life of man upon earth, O king, seems to me, in comparison with that time which is unknown to us like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the house wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your ealdormen and thegns, while the fire blazes in the midst, and the hall is warmed, but the wintry storms of rain or snow are raging abroad. The sparrow, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry tempest; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, passing from winter into winter again.

(Sellar, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.13) ”

Mourning a Loss: *The Ruin*

“

21 Beorht wæron burgræced, burnsele monige,
heah horngestreon, heresweg micel,
meodoheall monig mondreama full,
24 oþþæt þæt onwende wyrd seo swiþe.

”

“

The city's halls were bright, the bathhouses many, the
multitude of horns lofty, many a meadhall full of the joys of
men; until violent fate changed that.

”

Mourning a Loss: *The Ruin*

“

3 Hrofas sind gehrorene, hreorge torras,
hrungeat berofen, hrim on lime,
scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene,
6 ældo undereotone.

”

“

The roofs have collapsed, the towers are in ruins, the barred gate bereft, there is hoarfrost on the mortar, shards of the raincover have been shorn away, have fallen down, undermined by old age.

”

Opposites in Heroic

Social Ideal

- ▶ Service with a good lord
- ▶ Companions
- ▶ A well-stocked meadhall shutting out the seasons

Dystopia

- ▶ Unemployment
- ▶ Solitary exile
- ▶ Exposure to winter weather

The Tracks of Exile: *The Wanderer*

“

Ðonne onwæcneð eft wineleas guma,
gesihð him biforan fealwe wegas,
5 baþian brimfuglas, brædan feþra,
hreasan hrim ond snaw, hagle gemenged.
Ðonne beoð þy hefigran heortan benne,
sare æfter swæsne. Sorg bið geniwad,
þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð;
10 greteð gliwstafum, georne geondsceawað
secga geseldan. Swimmað eft on weg.

”

“

Then the friendless man comes to again. Before him he sees the pale waves, sea-birds bathing, spreading their wings, hoarfrost and snow falling, mingled with hail. Then the heart's wounds are the heavier, sore for the beloved man. Grief is renewed when the memory of kinsmen haunts the mind: he greets them joyfully, keenly looks upon the companions of men. Then they fade away.

”

Ubi Sunt: *The Wanderer*

“

Se þonne þisne wealsteal wise geþohte
ond þis deorce lif deope geondþenceð,
90 frod in ferðe, feor oft gemon
wælsleahta worn, ond þas word acwið:
‘Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom
 maþþungyfa?
Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
95 Eala þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat,
genap under nihthelm, swa heo no wære.
Stondeð nu on laste leofre duguþe
weal wundrum heah, wyrmlicum fah.
Eorlas fornoman asca þryþe,
100 wæpen wælgifru, wyrd seo mære,
ond þas stanhleoþu stormas cnyssað,
hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð,
wintres woma.’

”

Ubi Sunt: *The Wanderer*

“

Wise-minded, he will then reflect deeply on these walls and on this dark life. He will often remember many a slaughter-carnage and speak these words: ‘What has become of the horse? What of the strong one? What of the giver of treasure? What of the seats of banquet? Where are the hall-joys? Oh bright cup! Oh mailcoated warrior! Oh kingly glory! How the time has passed, grown dark under the cover of night, as if it had never been. Now stands in the tracks of the beloved retinue a wall wondrously tall, decorated with serpentine patterns. Hosts of ashen spears, weapons greedy for slaughter, unassailable fate has seized the men, and storms beat down upon these rocky slopes; the raging tempest, blast of winter, binds the earth.’

”

Ubi Sunt: *The Lord of the Rings*

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Figure: *The Two Towers* ubi sunt scene ([YouTube link](#))

Ubi Sunt: Isidore of Seville

“ Brief is the joy of this world, modest the glory of this life; the power of time is fallen and fragile. Tell me, where are the kings? where the princes? where the emperors? where those rich in possessions? where are the powerful ones of the world? where the riches of the earth? They have passed like shadows, vanished like a dream. They are sought, and they are not there.
(*Synonyma* §91)

”

Ubi Sunt: *The Seafarer*

“

82 Nearon nu cyningas ne caseras
ne goldgiefan swylce iu wæron,
þonne hi mæst mid him mærl̥pa gefremedon
85 ond on dryhtlicestum dome lifdon.
Gedroren is þeos duguð eal, dreamas sind gewitene,
wuniað þa wacran ond þas woruld healdap,
88 brucað þurh bisgo.

”

“

Now there are no kings, nor emperors, nor gold-givers as they once were, when they acquired the greatest fame for themselves and lived in the most splendid glory. All this troop has fallen; joys have passed. The weaker remain and govern this world, possess it by their toil.

”

Ubi Sunt: *The Ruin*

“

25 Crungon walo wide, cwoman woldagas,
swylt eall fornom secgrof wera;
wurdon hyra wigsteal westen stapolas,
28 brosnade burgsteall.

”

“

The slaughtered perished widely. Days of pestilence came;
death seized the whole host of men. Their battle-plains turned
to wastelands; the town crumbled.

”

Ubi Sunt: *The Ruin*

“

31 Hryre wong gecrong
gebrocen to beorgum, þær iu beorn monig
glædmōd ond goldbeorht gleoma gefrætwed,
34 wlōnc ond wingal wighyrstum scan;
seah on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas,
on ead, on æht, on eorcanstan,
37 on þas beorhtan burg bradan rices.

”

“

Broken into rubble, the ruin fell to the plain where long ago many a warrior shone in his war-trappings, cheerful and bright with gold, decked out with splendour, proud and merry with wine; he gazed on the treasure, on the silver, on the wondrous gems, on the riches, on his possession, on a precious stone, on this bright city of a vast kingdom.

”

Ubi Sunt: *Beowulf*

“

Now, earth, keep, now heroes cannot, the possessions of warriors. Listen, good men got it from you once; death in war, a terrible deadly attack, took everyone of them, my people, those who gave up this life; they saw the last of the joys of the hall. There is no one to carry a sword or bring forth a decorated cup, a precious drinking-vessel; the company has passed elsewhere. The hard helmet, decorated in gold, is deprived of its plating; the polishers sleep, those who ought to burnish the war-masks; and likewise the war-shirt that endured in battle the bite of iron weapons beyond the crash of shields decays after the warrior. Nor may the rings of the mail-coat travel far after the war-chieftains, beside the heroes. There was no harp's joy, pleasure from the glee-wood, nor does a good hawk swing through the hall, nor does the swift steed pound the fortified place. Violent death has dispatched many living creatures.

(Trans. Orchard, "Not What It Was," 109)

”

Elegiac Setting: *The Wife's Lament*

“

27 Heht mec mon wunian on wuda bearwe,
under actreo in þam eorðscræfe.
Eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad,
30 sindon dena dimme, duna uphea,
bitre burgtunas, brerum beweaxne,
wic wylna leas. Ful oft mec her wraþe begeat
33 fromsiþ frean.

”

“

I was told to live in a wooded grove, in an underground cave below an oak. This earthen hall is old; I am entirely beset with longing. The valleys are dark, the hills high, the home-enclosures bitter, overgrown with briars; the dwelling-places are joyless. The departure of my lord has very often cruelly afflicted me here.

”

Seascapes: *The Wanderer*

“

Ðonne onwæcneð eft wineleas guma,
gesihð him biforan fealwe wegas,
5 baþian brimfuglas, brædan feþra,
hreosan hrim ond snaw, hagle gemenged.
Ðonne beoð þy hefigran heortan benne,
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þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð;
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Then the friendless man comes to again. Before him he sees the pale waves, sea-birds bathing, spreading their wings, hoarfrost and snow falling, mingled with hail. Then the heart's wounds are the heavier, sore for the beloved man. Grief is renewed when the memory of kinsmen haunts the mind: he greets them joyfully, keenly looks upon the companions of men. Then they fade away.

”

Seascapes: *The Seafarer*

“ Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan,
siþas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum
earfoðhwile oft þrowade,
bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe,
5 gecunnad in ceole cearselda fela,
atol yþa gewealc, þær mec oft bigeat
nearo nihtwaco æt nacan stefnan,
þonne he be clifum cnossað. Calde geþrunge
wæron mine fet, forste gebunden,
10 caldum clommum, þær þa ceare seofedun
hat ymb heortan; hungor innan slat
merewerges mod. Þæt se mon ne wat
þe him on foldan fægrost limpeð,
hu ic earmcearig iscealdne sæ
15 winter wunade wræccan lastum,
winemægum bidroren,
bihongen hringicelum; hægl scurum fleag.
Þær ic ne gehyrde butan hlimman sæ, / iscealdne wæg. ”

Seascapes: *The Seafarer*

“

I can tell a sorrowful song about myself, recount my travels, how I have often suffered times of hardship on days of toil, experienced bitter sorrows of the chest, known many abodes of sorrow, the terrible billowing of the waves, where many an anxious nightwatch afflicted me at the ship's prow as it tosses below the cliffs. My feet were pinched with cold, bound with frost, with cold bonds, while hot sorrows grieved around the heart. Hunger stabbed at the courage of the sea-weary one from within. He whose life on land passes most pleasantly does not know how, sorrowful at my wretched condition, I spent the winter on the ice-cold sea, on the exile's path, deprived of friends and kinsmen, weighed down with icicles; hail came flying down in showers. I heard nothing there but the sea roaring, the ice-cold wave.

”

Seascapes: *The Seafarer*

“

- 31 Nap nihtscua, norþan sniwde,
hrim hrusan bond, hægl feol on eorþan,
corna caldast. Forþon cnyssað nu
34 heortan geþohtas, þæt ic hean streamas,
sealtyþa gelac sylf cunnige;
monað modes lust mæla gehwylce
37 ferð to feran, þæt ic feor heonan
elpeodigra eard gesece.

”

“

The shade of night grew dark, it snowed from the north,
hoarfrost bound the earth; hail fell on the earth, the coldest of
grains. That is why the thoughts of my heart are now urging me
to explore the high currents, the expanse of the salty waves,
myself; every time, my heart's desire compels me to undertake
a journey, to seek the homeland of foreigners far from here.

”

The Voyage of Life: *Christ B*

“

850 Nu is þon gelicost swa we on laguflode
ofer cald wæter ceolum liðan,
geond sidne sæ sundhengestum,
flodwudu fergen. Is þæt frecne stream
yða ofermæta þe we her on lacað
855 geond þas wacan woruld, windge holmas
ofer deop gelad. Wæs se drohtað strong
ærþon we to londe geliden hæfdon
ofer hreone hrycg. Þa us help bicwom,
þæt us to hælo hyþe gelædde
860 godes gæstsunu ond us giefe sealde
þæt we oncnawan magun ofer ceoles bord
hwær we sælan sceolon sundhengestas,
ealde yðmearas, ancrum fæste.

”

The Voyage of Life: *Christ B*

“ The present time is most like the way we travel on the ocean, by ship across cold water, with swimming-horses across the wide sea, journey by water-wood. The perilous stream of the waves on which we toss here throughout this insubstantial world is beyond measure; the waves are windy over the deep way. The conditions were rough before we made it to land across the stormy ridge. Then help came to us, so that God's spirit-son led us into the safe harbour and gave us his gift, that we might know where firmly to moor our swimming-horses, the old wave-mares, with the anchor over the ship's board. ”

The Voyage of Life: *The Seafarer*

“

1 Oft him anhaga are gebideð,
 metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig
 geond lagulade longe sceolde
4 hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ,
 wadan wræclastas.

[...]

114 Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
 frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung
 stondeð.

”

“

The solitary often experiences grace, the Lord's mercy, even if sorrowful across the waterways he has to stir the rime-cold sea with his hands for a long time, travel the paths of exile. [...] It will be well for those who seek grace, comfort from our Father in heaven, where resides all that is lasting for us.

”

The Wise (Hu)man's Virtues in *The Wanderer*

Desirable Characteristics

- ▶ Patience
- ▶ An awareness of the terror of days to come

Undesirable Characteristics

- ▶ Hotheadedness
- ▶ Impatience
- ▶ Cowardice
- ▶ Foolhardiness
- ▶ Greed
- ▶ Boastfulness

Part I: Lyrics

Part II: Riddles and Wisdom Literature

Part III: Connecting the Dots

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Figure: *The Hobbit*: “Riddles in the Dark” ([YouTube link](#))

Exeter Book Riddle 7

“

I was an orphan before I was born
Cast without breath by both parents
Into a world of brittle death, I found
The comfort of kin in a mother not mine.

5 She wrapped and robed my subtle skin,
Brooding warm in her guardian gown,
Cherished a changeling as if close kin
In a nest of strange siblings. This
Mother-care quickened my spirit, my natural
10 Fate to feed, fatten, and grow great,
Gorged on love. Bating a fledgling
Brood, I cast off mother-kin, lifting
Windward wings for the wide road.

(Trans. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 67)

”

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”



Figure:
Cuckoo hatchling
forces out stepsibling
(crop; CC-BY M. Bán)

Exeter Book Riddle 76

“

I am a prince's property and joy,
Sometimes his shoulder-companion,
Close comrade in arms, king's servant,
Lord's treasure. Sometimes my lady,
5 A bright-haired beauty, lays serving
Hands on my body, though she is noble
And the daughter of an earl. I bear
In my belly what blooms in the wood,
The bee's delight. Sometimes I ride
10 A proud horse in the rush of battle —
Harsh is my voice, hard is my tongue.
I bear the scop's meed when his song is done.
My gift is good, my way winning,
My color dark. Say what I'm called.

(Trans. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 138)

”

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(Trans. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 138)

”



Figure:
Drinking horn (CC-BY
NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet)

Exeter Book Riddle 23

“

I am a wonderful help to women,
The hope of something to come. I harm
No citizen except my slayer.
Rooted I stand on a high bed.

- 5 I am shaggy below. Sometimes the beautiful
Peasant's daughter, an eager-armed,
Proud woman grabs my body,
Rushes my red skin, holds me hard,
Claims my head. The curly-haired
10 Woman who catches me fast will feel
Our meeting. Her eye will be wet.

(Trans. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 83) ”

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Figure: Onion
(crop; public domain
/ USDA)

Aldhelm (c. 639–709)

- ▶ House of Wessex
- ▶ Abbot of Malmesbury
- ▶ Notable works:
 - ▶ *De laude virginitatis*
 - ▶ *Carmen de virginitate*
 - ▶ *Enigmata*: 100 verse riddles



Figure: Aldhelm (public domain / WMC)

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Figure: *The Hobbit*: “Inside Information” ([YouTube link](#))

Fáfnismál

“ Sigurd hid his name because in olden days it was believed that the words of the dying man had great power, if he cursed his enemy by name. He said:

2 ‘Noble Beast’ I’m called, and I’ve wandered a
 motherless boy;
I have no father, like other sons of men;
I always wander alone.

(Trans. Orchard, *The Elder Edda*)

”

Fáfnismál

“

Fáfnir said:

- 11 ‘The norns’ decree you’ll get at the nesses:
that of a foolish blockhead;
you’ll drown in the water, if you row in the wind:
all’s a danger to the doomed.’

Sigurd said:

- 12 ‘Tell me, Fáfnir, since they call you wise,
and you know very much:
who are the norns, who come to those in need,
and deliver mothers of children?’

Fáfnir said:

- 13 ‘Those norns, I say, are born from different kin,
they don’t share a common family;
some are born of the Æsir, some of the elves,
some are the daughters of Dawdler.’

(Trans. Orchard, *The Elder Edda*)

”

Vafþruðnismal

“

Vafþrúðnir said:

- 11 ‘Tell me, Gagnrád, since you wish from the floor
to make a test of your talents,
what’s the name of the horse who always drags
the day over troops of men?’

Gagnrád said:

- 12 ‘He’s called Shining-mane who always drags
the day over troops of men.
The glorious Goths think him the best horse:
his mane shines always aflame.’

(Trans. Orchard, *The Elder Edda*)

”

Vafþrúðnismál

“

Odin said:

52 ‘Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers:
what end of life will Odin have
when the powers are rent?’

Vafþrúðnir said:

53 ‘The wolf will swallow the Father of Men;
this Vídar will avenge:
he’ll rip apart the wolf’s cold jaws
in battle with the beast.’

(Trans. Orchard, *The Elder Edda*)

”

Vafþrúðnismál

“

Odin said:

54 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers:
what did Odin himself say into the ear of his son
before he mounted the pyre?'

Vafþrúðnir said:

55 'No one knows what you said in ancient days
into the ear of your son;
with a doomed mouth did I tell my ancient lore
and speak of Ragnarök.
It was with Odin I've now traded my wits:
you are always the wisest of men.'

(Trans. Orchard, *The Elder Edda*)

”

The Judgement of Solomon

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image available**

Figure: The Judgement of Solomon (1 Kings 3; [YouTube link](#))

Wisdom Books of the Old Testament

- ▶ Job
- ▶ Psalms
- ▶ Proverbs
- ▶ Ecclesiastes
- ▶ Song of Songs
- ▶ **Wisdom**
- ▶ **Sirach / Ecclesiasticus**

The Solomon Tradition

Biblical books attributed to King Solomon (s. X BCE) of the Kingdom of Israel and Judah:

- ▶ **Proverbs** (aphorisms and advice on wisdom)
 - ▶ “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (1:7)
- ▶ **Ecclesiastes** (aphorisms with an emphasis on the vanity of all worldly affairs)
 - ▶ “And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun.” (2:11)
- ▶ **Song of Songs** (erotic religious poetry)
 - ▶ “Thy two breasts like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.” (4:5)
- ▶ **Wisdom** (advice on and prayers for wisdom)
 - ▶ “Wisdom is better than strength, and a wise man is better than a strong man.” (6:1)

Hávamál

- “ 6 No man ought to boast about his brains,
but rather beware with his wits;
when one sensible and silent comes to the house
seldom wrong befalls the wary;
no man ever had a friend more faithful
than a good store of common sense.
- 19 A man shouldn't clutch at a cup, but moderately
drink his mead;
he should be sparing of speech or shut up;
no man will blame you for bad behaviour
if you go early to bed.

(Trans. Orchard, *The Elder Edda*)

”

Saturn

- ▶ Unique to Anglo-Saxon England; elsewhere, the interlocutor is **Marcolfus**, whose name is thought to derive from “Mercurius”
- ▶ By name, both interlocutors representatives of Roman paganism
- ▶ In *Solomon and Saturn II* represented rather as a representative of Babel (= Babylon)
 - ▶ “Your people [...] strove against the Lord’s might, therefore they did not complete that work.” (Trans. Anlezark ll. 150–51)

Solomon and Saturn II: Questions and Answers

1. Q (Sol) Tell me of the land near Sennaar where no one can step with their feet.
1. A (Sat) The poisonous race (? dragons) arose from there.
2. Q (Sat) What is mute but wise?
2. A (Sol) A book.
3. Q (Sat) Explain to me about the sorrowing spirit.
3. A (Sol) Well see, there's this bird. . .
4. Q (Sat) What consumes 40,000 creatures per year?
4. A (Sol) Old age.
5. Q (Sat) Why snow?
5. A (Sol) LACUNA
6. ?Q (?) LACUNA
6. A (Sat) "Night is the darkest weather, need the hardest of fates, sorrow the most oppressive burden, sleep is most like death." (Trans. Anlezark l. 135)
7. ? (Sol) Sinners are like the leaves on trees.

Solomon and Saturn II: Questions and Answers

7. ? (Sat) On Judgement Day, the waves will not stop at the land.

7. ? (Sol) Your people too will take note of Judgement Day.

8. Q (Sat) What are the four ropes of the fated man?

8. A (Sol) Accomplished fates (*gewurdene wyrda*)

9. Q (Sat) Who will judge Christ the judge on Judgement Day?

9. A (Sol) Who would dare judge his own creator?

10. Q (Sat) Why does the sun cast shadows?

10. A (Sol) In this life, things are unevenly distributed; placement in the next will be according to merit.

11. Q (Sat) Why do weeping and laughter occur side by side?

11. A (Sol) Mopers are the most offensive to God.

12. Q (Sat) Then why can't we all go to heaven?

12. A (Sol) Frost and fire, snow and sun, cannot coexist.

13. Q (Sat) Why do worse people live longer on earth?

13. A (Sol) The terrible journey cannot be deferred.

Solomon and Saturn II: Questions and Answers

14. Q (Sat) Why do twins fare differently, and which of the two is better off?

14. A (Sol) It is an ancient decree (*eald gesceaft*), not the mother, who determines their outcome.

15. Q (Sat) Why will young people not apply themselves?

15. A (Sol) The blessed young person can easily seek out a generous lord; the unfortunate [*or wicked?*] ones cannot.

16. Q (Sat) Why does water not rest, even at night?

16. A (Sol) LACUNA

17. A (Sol) A blessed morsel is better than a week of feasting.

18. A (Sol) Fire is visible because it partakes of the nature of all things.

19. Q (Sat) I know for a fact no one in this world can resolve the tension between fate and providence.

19. A (Sol) Fate is difficult to overturn, but the wise man can temper it.

20. Q (Sat) Why does fate afflict us?

20. A (Sol) The disobedient angels incurred their own misery.

21. Q (Sat) Can anyone be summoned before his time? [*corrupt*]

21. A (Sol) An angel and an evil spirit vie for each individual's will.

Part I: Lyrics

Part II: Riddles and Wisdom Literature

Part III: Connecting the Dots

The Exeter Book: In Order of Appearance

- ▶ *Christ A*
- ▶ *Christ B*
- ▶ *Christ C*
- ▶ *Guthlac A*
- ▶ *Guthlac B*
- ▶ *Azarias*
- ▶ *The Phoenix*
- ▶ *Juliana*
- ▶ *The Wanderer*
- ▶ *The Gifts of Men*
- ▶ *Precepts*
- ▶ *The Seafarer*
- ▶ *Vainglory*
- ▶ *Widsith*
- ▶ *The Fortunes of Men*
- ▶ *Maxims I*
- ▶ *The Order of the World*
- ▶ *The Rhyming Poem*
- ▶ *The Panther*
- ▶ *The Whale*
- ▶ *The Partridge*
- ▶ *Soul and Body II*
- ▶ *Deor*
- ▶ *Wulf and Eadwacer*
- ▶ *Riddles 1–59*
- ▶ *The Wife's Lament*
- ▶ *Judgement Day I*
- ▶ *Resignation A*
- ▶ *Resignation B*
- ▶ *The Descent into Hell*
- ▶ *Alms-Giving*
- ▶ *Pharaoh*
- ▶ *The Lord's Prayer I*
- ▶ *Homiletic Fragment II*
- ▶ *Riddle 30b*
- ▶ *Riddle 60*
- ▶ *(The Husband's Message)*
- ▶ *The Ruin*
- ▶ *Riddles 61–95*

The Husband's Message

“

Nu ic onsundran þe secgan wille

:::: treocyn ic tudre aweox;

in mec æld::: sceal ellor londes

settan::::: sealte streamas

5 ::sse Ful oft ic on bates

::::: gesohte

þær mec mondryhten min:::::

ofer heah hafu. Eom nu her cumen

on ceolþele, ond nu cunnan scealt

10 hu þu ymb modlufan mines frean

on hyge hycge.

”

Exeter Book Riddle 60

“

Rooted near water, raised by the shore,
I was earth-fast, bound in a bed,
My native land. Few men walked
In this wilderness, watched as the wave
5 Played round my body with its dark arms
At dusk and dawn. I did not dream
That someday I should speak, slip words
Over benches, mouthless in the mead-hall.
That is a miracle to men who do not know
10 This craft — how the point of a knife,
A skilled right hand and a man's intent
Tooling together should shape me so
That boldly I bring you my message,
Singing in silence so no man in the wider
15 World may share our words and understand.
(Trans. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 120)

”

Exeter Book Riddle 60

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(Trans. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 120)

”



Figure: Rune stave
(crop; CC-BY WMC
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Up Next:

Dr László Sándor
Chardonnens

on

MAGIC

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7 January 2016

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