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MEANING CONSTRUAL IN OLD ENGLISH RIDDLES

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the meaning construal in the Exeter Book Riddles, investigating riddles through a linguistic analysis of form and content, in an attempt to explore and describe their complexity from the primarily linguistic perspective, with an occasional comment on literary, and some historical, cultural and philosophical aspects. The analysis of formal categories revealed the following: a strong rule of alliteration and frequent occurrence of anacrusis as fundamental features of half-lines, several metrical patterns with a clear predominance of a single pattern, three different narrative principles expressing different viewpoints (*I-am*, *I-saw* and *There-is*), variations in opening and closing structures (X+VERB(+COMPLEMENT); imperative structure, \emptyset – ending), a flexibility of word order, an extensive vocabulary, some prominent syntactic structures (three different S-V positions, prepositional and infinitive construction, negative particle construction, X-link-Y) and meta-structures. The analysis of content discusses riddle solutions (the majority of which turn out to be objects), particular themes (such as power, independence, conquest) and motifs (such as nature, or human hands), figurative language (personification, metonymy and the kenning), and other poetic devices (namely vivid imagery, oppositions, and the servant-master paradox).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the riddle as a very old, and hence familiar form of linguistic communication, its functions range from fun, to ritualistic, to didactic. Uncovering what is “hidden” can be a rite of passage, an exercise of the mind, and a lesson which offers a new perspective on reality. As many authors ever since Aristotle have remarked, the riddle has been defined many times over, and deceit deemed its prominent structural device. In their paper *Towards A Structural Definition Of The Riddle*, Georges and Dundes (1963) attempt to reach a definition of the riddle through structural analysis and explain it as “a traditional verbal expression which contains one or more descriptive elements, a pair of which may be in opposition [while] the referent of the elements is to be guessed” (Georges and Dundes 1963, 116), and they proceed to construct two general categories of riddles, differentiated by the presence or absence of descriptive elements in opposition. And while this apt structural definition is focused on the riddle as a folkloric genre, as both “traditional” and “verbal” suggest, *The Exeter Book Riddles*, however, cannot be contained within this frame. The single manuscript containing this specific group of texts is dated to the 2nd half of the 10th c. AD, and its inclusion in the Exeter Cathedral library, to which the *Book* had been donated by Bishop Leofric (Baugh and Cable 2002), estimated no later than 1072, identifies them as a “product of monastic culture” (Smith 2000, 79). The expression “monastic culture” resonates with “scholastic” and “written”, while the fact that they are found within a single “book” reinforces their literary status.

The Exeter Riddles are, therefore, not riddles gathered from oral tradition, but skilfully crafted literary works, which show a debt to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of *enigmata*, some of them being modelled similarly to traditional riddling. Dieter Bitterli (2009) offers a reading of the Exeter Riddles in the context of the Anglo-Latin riddle-making tradition, focusing mainly on recurring themes and shared imagery, with regard to rhetorical conventions of Latin models. This “wedding of oral practice and Latin literary tradition” (Bitterli 2009, 7) is edited and translated anew in *A Feast of Creatures* by Craig Williamson (2011), who is greatly interested in the Exeter Riddles’ “projective play” (Williamson 2011, 8) and the way they “call forth our powers of recognition and realization” (Williamson 2011, 11). However, while Williamson and Bitterli comment on the Riddles’ many structural aspects, each of them offering a kind of classification based on riddle subjects, Patrick J. Murphy (2011) explicitly wonders what makes riddle a riddle; more specifically, what makes the Exeter Riddles riddles.

Considering the *Book* and the genre, Murphy (2011) starts off with a piece of information which should not be taken lightly, emphasizing that the titles provided by (modern) editors influenced the later interpretations. Thus, the specific group of texts found in the *Exeter Book* were officially named “riddles” in a 19th c. publication by scholar Benjamin Thorpe (1782 – 1870) to emphasize their “Englishness” and lend “a sense of unity to what we have come to see as a single “collection” of riddles, despite their placement in more than one section of the manuscript” (Murphy 2011, 27). Furthermore, different editors and scholars focus on different aspects of the Riddles and the genre itself proves to be underdefined (declaring something “enigmatic” or “riddling” does not automatically make it a riddle). Murphy considers two elements important in riddle context: metaphor and reception. Defining riddle via metaphor draws heavily on Aristotle’s definition¹ of metaphor, and riddles are, essentially, defined as metaphorical descriptions whose meaning is concealed from the recipient, i.e. they refer to something as if it were something else. However, Murphy observes that these ponderings “primarily [respond] to riddles circulating in oral tradition and [are] not necessarily meant to describe the kind of literary riddles that constitute the Exeter collection” (Murphy 2011, 32). The discovery that metaphor may not be key in determining how/why are those riddles leads Murphy to examine the element of reception.

The riddle may be closely connected to metaphor (on various levels), however, what makes their existence so specific is the necessity of a recipient, be it an imaginary or actual one. Rather than chasing the solution, Murphy is interested in the process of reasoning behind it, since “in practice, both literary and oral riddles offer a range of positions for posers, solvers and side participants” and most research on traditional riddling points that the solution “is to be known, and not guessed based on clues” (Murphy 2011, 33). Albeit required, the solution only names the riddle’s description, establishing a relationship of synonymy between the two (Murphy 2011, 34), and according to Murphy, a riddle with no answer or multiple answers is not really a riddle, because “the riddle’s [metaphorical] focus is one thing [and] its solution something else altogether” (Murphy 2011, 59).

In an attempt to better understand the linguistic craftsmanship of the Exeter Riddles, a quest for meaning construal will be conducted in a reconstruction of different linguistic elements that make up an Exeter Riddle.

¹ Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred to the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy (Aristotle 1987, 70-71).

1.1 CRITERIA OF ANALYSIS

For the analytical purposes of this paper, a sample of Old English riddles from *The Exeter Book*, with reference to *The Anglo-Saxon Riddles of the Exeter Book* translated by Paull F. Baum (1963), has been taken into consideration. The number of riddles to undergo the analysis was chosen by a purely mathematical method: the sample of riddles selected for the analysis makes up exactly one fifth of the entire Exeter corpus, as enumerated by Krapp and Dobbie, who divide the Exeter Book into 95 separate² riddles. The chosen amount is, therefore, 19 riddles, further selected according to the criteria of length, linearity and focus (on a specific riddle) among the main authors I will be referring to.

The criterion of length envelopes riddles that do not exceed the number of 16 lines, the average length of an Exeter Book riddle being approximately 12 lines. Taking into account both that the riddle in general is considered to be a somewhat short linguistic form (due to its educational and/or recreational purposes) and that the Exeter Book riddles are, despite their name which implies a specific form of expression, an exceptionally literary work, the longest chosen riddle (i.e. Riddle 23) is exactly 16 lines long. Next, the criterion of linearity provides that the chosen riddles stretch throughout the corpus, covering all its parts. As a rule of linearity, in this research there is at least one riddle chosen from every tenth of the entire Exeter corpus, the enumeration of which, as aforementioned, follows the Krapp-Dobbie edition. Finally, the selection was ultimately narrowed down according to the attention some riddles were previously given by the three main authors I will be referring to: Dieter Bitterli (2009), Patrick J. Murphy (2011) and Craig Williamson (2011). More specifically, the riddles were chosen with a tendency to primarily avoid the ones into which Murphy (2011) looks more closely, since both Bitterli (2009) and Williamson (2011) equally go over the entire corpus in their respective books.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF CATEGORIES

The analysis has been conducted according to the guidelines provided by a pre-devised table of elements to be taken into consideration. This was applied both on the micro-level of each riddle, which will not be specifically described but provides important groundwork for further study, and on the macro-level of the entire corpus, which I will focus on primarily

² This “separateness” becomes quite questionable with regard to different editorial and linguistic/theoretical interpretations of the Exeter corpus, and within the sample selected here there are two instances of separate riddles which can also be seen as heavily leaning on each other, both formally and semantically.

when describing the results of the analysis. The established elements indicate the most prominent/common features of an Exeter Book riddle, including both form and content.

In the next section, I will describe the results of the analysis. A general account of characteristics will be offered for each of the established categories of form and content: length and metre, narrative and grammatical structure, and underlying structures on the one hand, along with solutions, topoi and themes, metaphor, and some additional stylistic features on the other. This will be followed by a discussion connecting the said elements throughout the corpus.

2 FORMAL CATEGORIES

2.1 LENGTH AND METRE

The category of length and metre is, perhaps, the most formal of all established formal categories in this analysis. Being one of the criteria that determined the selection of riddles for the analysed corpus, length imposes itself as an important feature of a riddle's formal structure. First of all, none of the chosen Old English riddles exceed 16 lines, as opposed to the entire corpus of The Exeter Book where there are, albeit not many, riddles that are well over 30 lines long. This kind of limitation has been prompted primarily by a wish to speed up the analytical process; however, it is also based on the notion of the riddle as a fairly short linguistic (communicative) form. When looking at the Exeter corpus, despite the fact that many of the riddles are exceptionally lengthy³, it can be said that an average Exeter Book riddle is not sufficiently short so as to be placed solely in the category of linguistic exercises and crafty mind-challenges of secondary or poor literary value, nor is it so long as to be considered a linguistic realization which [completely] abandons the formal and semantic density of a riddle in favour of its literary characteristics. Any literary achievement is also a linguistic realization and, what is more, with a semantic complexity not unlike what could be described as a mind-challenge or a mental exercise. Creation, what is considered to be artistic or otherwise, is something that is thought through, and the thinking process inevitably

³ There is also the question of whether something is a somewhat cyclical succession of formally separate riddles or whether it is regarded simply as one exceptionally long riddle. Williamson, for example, blends what Krapp and Dobbie denote as three, in this 'formal' sense separate, *storm-riddles* into a sole long one (2011, 59; see commentary).

presupposes language. Therefore, it could be said that a literary creation, with language not only a part of its background process, but also its obligatory mode of expression, forms a double connection with mental exercising in a linguistic sense. This being said, what follows immediately after the observation of length is the observation of metre.

An examination of the Exeter riddles quickly provides the recipient with a sense of metre and line/half-line distribution. Whether the riddle involved consists of only one line or whether it is over a dozen lines long, there is, as Mitchell and Robinson notice is the case for all Old English poetry (2012, 156), an unmistakable distribution of lines into a combination of two half-lines divided by a metrical pause. The pause, or caesura (Latin, *caesura* “a cutting”), is visually indicated by a blank space, making this division even more apparent, and bound together by certain laws of alliteration. Here may be the point where a reader unfamiliar with any specific details concerning Old English verse might fall victim to the varieties of Modern English versification, in an attempt to apply the rules of some other, more familiar metrical forms⁴ onto something that generated from “but one system of versification which was used for all poems”; a system “based upon accent, alliteration, vowel quantity, and specified patterns of unaccented and accented syllables” (Mitchell and Robinson 2011, 156). Being aware of these enables the reader to further notice that each half line has two accented⁵ syllables and, what is more, that they are inevitably bound together by alliteration (Latin, *ad* =“to” + *littera* =“letter, script”).

The rule of alliteration is a persistent feature of the Exeter riddles and can be described plainly like this: “one of the two accented syllables in the first half-line must alliterate with the first accented syllable of the second half-line. It is permissible for both accented syllables in the first half-line to alliterate, and both often do alliterate, but in the second half line only the first accented syllable may alliterate” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 157). Vowels are quite interesting in this case, because “any accented syllable beginning with a vowel alliterates with any other accented syllable beginning with a vowel” (Mitchell and Robinson

⁴ Such as trochaic tetrameter or iambic pentameter, which belong within the scope of four major types of versification (accentual, accentual-syllabic, syllabic and quantitative verse). Modern English relies on the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables, and does not differentiate between long and short type of syllable, unlike Old English, which shows the potential to distinguish between long and short syllables (a quantitative feature) in pronunciation. However, since there is no way of knowing how something was actually pronounced, Old English verse can be safely described as a type of accentual verse, governed by the rule of alliteration.

⁵ “That is, in normal speech they would be pronounced with a heavier accent than the other syllables in the line” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 156).

2012, 157), which means that the vowels do not have to be the same. Here are some examples of alliteration from the analysed corpus of Exeter riddles:

fere geond foldan, folcsalo bærne (R1, line 5)

ætren onga, ic beom eallgearo (R23, line 4)

stille stondan on stapolwonge (R34, line 8)

scearp on gescyldrum. His gesceapo dreogeð (R70, line 4)

Based on these examples, we might conclude that a half-line has at least two unaccented syllables. However, the distribution of accented and unaccented syllables is not that simple. Mitchell and Robinson (2012) describe five different types of basic patterns that combine not only the accented and unaccented syllables, but also those with a secondary⁶ accent. All of them include a certain number of unaccented syllables that can appear in between the accented ones. Borrowed from Mitchell and Robinson (2012), the scheme for each type looks like this:

Type A	Type B	Type C	Type D	Type E
' x (x x x x) ' x	(x x x x) x ' x (x) '	(x x x x x) x ' ' x	' (x x x) ' ' x	' ' x (x) '

Here is the example of Riddle 45:

(B)	x x ' x x '	' x ' x	(A)
	<i>Ic on wincle gefrægn</i>	<i>weaxan nathwæt,</i>	
(D)	' x x ' ' x	' x x ' x	(A)
	<i>þindan ond þunian,</i>	<i>þecene hebban;</i>	
(C)	x x ' ' x	' ' ' x	(D)
	<i>on þæt banlease</i>	<i>bryd grapode,</i>	

⁶ "That is, they are accented more than unaccented syllables but less than accented syllables" (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 158).

(A)	' x x ' x	' x ' x	(A)
	<i>hygewlonc hondum.</i>	<i>Hrægle þeahte</i>	
(E)	' ` x '	' x ' x	(A)
	<i>þrindende þing</i>	<i>þeodnes dohtor.</i>	

What the table does not show, but is worth mentioning, is that sometimes “one or even two unaccented syllables are allowed to come before a line of type A or D” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 160). These syllables, treated as an “extrametrical prelude” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 160), are called *anacrusis* (Greek, *anakrousis* = “a pushing back”) and marked by a vertical bar [|]. Anacrusis is possible at the beginning of both half-lines. Here are some examples:

(A)	x x ' x x '	' x x ' x	(A)
	<i>bewunden mid wuldre,</i>	<i>wedre gesomnad</i>	(R30, line 2)
(B)	x ' x '	x ' x ' x	(A)
	<i>Ic wiht geseah</i>	<i>in wera burgum</i>	(R34, line 1)
(A)	x x x ' x x '	x x ' x '	(B)
	<i>hƿra hælo to gode,</i>	<i>swa se hring gecwæð</i>	(R48, line 8)
(A)	x ' x x '	x x ' x ' x	(A)
	<i>mægeð ond mæcgas</i>	<i>mid gemete ryhte</i>	(R50, line 7)

Upon the examination of the half-lines of the Riddles, several things were noted concerning pattern distribution and frequency. Firstly, the vast majority of metrical patterns is of type A (233 times), followed by types B (44 times) and D (33 times), and finally by types C (20 times) and E (16 times). The most frequent combination of metrical patterns in a line could be described as: A + x, where the x potentially stands for any of the five patterns. The A-type pattern is present in every single one of the analysed riddles and it can appear in every possible combination. The combination of patterns that were *not* detected either within the same line or on a succession of lines are: CC, CE, DC and ED, while the combinations BD, EB and EE were not found within the same line but in a succession of lines, respectively in

Riddles 34, 48, 50 and 62 (see Appendix A: Metrical Patterns table). All types of pattern are most likely to be followed by a type A pattern; especially type D, which is frequently followed by type A both horizontally (within the same line) and vertically (in a succession of lines).

It is interesting to notice that the “closing” metrical patterns, i.e. semantic endings of a longer, syntactically complex whole, tend to follow the A or sometimes the E pattern (others appear as well but not as often), and that the following “opening” pattern is frequently of the A-type. This is especially obvious when it happens mid-line, making the two half-lines the end of one and the beginning of another syntactic whole:

A	(...) <i>haswe ofer hrofum. Hlin bið on eorþan, (...)</i> (R1, line 7)	A
A	(...) <i>somod on sunde. Saga hwa mec þecce, (...)</i> (R1, line 14)	A
C	(...) <i>ofer folc byreð. Frætwe mine (...)</i> (R7, line 6)	A
D	(...) <i>sittað nigende. Saga hwæt ic hatte, (...)</i> (R8, line 8)	A
A	(...) <i>eorþan yþum þeah; me biþ se eþel fremde.</i> (R16, line 3)	A
A	(...) <i>fæste gehabban. Frige hwæt ic hatte.</i> (R16, line 10)	A
C	(...) <i>seo þæt feoh fedeð. Hafað fela toþa; (...)</i> (R34, line 2)	A
A	(...) <i>feond his feonde. Forstrangne oft (...)</i> (R50, line 4)	E
A	(...) <i>werig þæs weorces. Hyre weaxan ongon (...)</i> (R54, line 10)	A
A	(...) <i>ryhtne geryme. Rinc bið on ofeste, (...)</i> (R62, line 4)	D
E	(...) <i>superne secg. Saga hwæt ic hatte.</i> (R62, line 9)	A
A	(...) <i>swifre þonne sunne. Sæs me sind ealle (...)</i> (R66, line 3)	A
A	(...) <i>grene wongas. Grundum ic hrine, (...)</i> (R66, line 5)	A
A	<i>Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to bane.</i> (R69, line 1)	A
A	(...) <i>scearp on gescyl drum. His gesceapo dreogeð (...)</i> (R70, line 4)	A
A	(...) <i>cyninges geselda. Cwen mec hwilum (...)</i> (R80, line 3)	A

Type A-type metrical pattern is also the pattern of a frequent half-line syntactic structure⁷ with a conjunction *ond*, which I will return to later, as well as prepositional half-line structures, indicative of poetic speech in their inverted order, with prepositions *on*, *in*, *mid*, *to* and *þurh*:

- A (...) *wrecen on wape* (...) (R1, line 11)
- A (...) *flæsc ond gæstas* (...) (R1, line 13)
- A (...) *somod on sunde*. (...) (R1, line 14)
- A (...) *flode ond foldan*, (...) (R7, line 9)
- A (...) *blisse in burgum*, (...) (R8, line 6)
- A (...) *stille on wicum* (...) (R8, line 7)
- A (...) *lace mid winde* (...) (R30, line 1)
- A (...) *monige mid miltse* (...) (R30, line 8)
- A (...) *blowan ond growan*. (R34, line 9)
- A (...) *dryhtum to nytte* (...) (R50, line 2)
- A (...) *mægeð ond mæcgas* (...) (R50, line 7)
- A (...) *life on lissum*. (...) (R50, line 9)
- A (...) *flodas on fæðmum* (...) (R66, line 4)
- A (...) *Singeð þurh sidan*. (...) (R70, line 2)
- A (...) *scearp on gescyltrum*. (...) (R70, line 4)
- A (...) *heah ond hleortorht* (...) (R70, line 6)
- A (...) *hond on legeð* (...) (R80, line 4)
- A (...) *herges on ende* (...) (R80, line 8)

Inversion (Latin, *inversionem*) makes the recipient notice what would not be as noticeable in common syntactic structure, putting an emphasis on certain parts of the sentence and making it sound quaint, somewhat unnatural in the light of the common way of speaking. Of

⁷ With the exception of “(...) *þindan ond þunian* (...)” (R45, line 2), which is of type D.

course, the standards are not the same for Old English, which could be perceived as, according to morphological typology, a highly inflected language more flexible in its grammatical and syntactic structure, and contemporary English, which has noticeably shifted away from the multitude of inflexions. What sounds uncommon to a speaker of contemporary English might not have sounded as uncommon to a contemporary speaker of Old English, a possibility that must always be borne in mind when dealing with texts such as the Exeter Riddles, in whose immediate context the contemporary recipient can never partake. Nevertheless, the unexpected syntactic order is further emphasised with a recurring metrical pattern, making it a recognizable feature of an Exeter riddle.

2.2 NARRATIVE AND GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE

Moving on to the next category, there are several different structures noticeable in an Exeter Book riddle, all of them not necessarily appearing in the same riddle. The circumstances of their appearance will be further considered when commenting on the detected features/elements in connection to one another. This category examines the following: the type of narrative structure is used (i.e. *I-am*, *I-saw* or other), kinds of opening and closing structures (i.e. rhetorical questions, imperative formulations or other), and prominent features of an Exeter riddle's syntax (i.e. the word order, specific syntactic constructions and open word class dynamics).

2.3 THE NARRATIVE VOICE

It could be said that the narrative structure is an integral part of any literary⁸ work, be it prose or poetry. A certain "voice", whether it has something to recount or muse upon, is always present and recognizable. Mitchell and Robinson (2012) divide this narrative voice into two basic types: the one in which "the riddler speaks in his own voice describing the subject of the riddle and asking the reader to guess the answer" and the one in which "the subject of the riddle describes itself and asks to be identified" (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 239). The said two types can also be described as the *I-saw* (*Ic-seah*) type and the *I-am* (*Ic-eom*) type, both of which, according to Mitchell and Robinson (2012), preserve the quality of

⁸ When talking about literary works I will always be referring to written works, unless explicitly pointed out otherwise.

being vague and deliberately misleading, in addition to “much anthropomorphizing of animals and inanimate objects”.

True to Mitchell and Robinson (2012), these two types or principles of frequent and plainly obvious narration are indeed present in the Exeter riddles. The most frequent one is the *I-am* principle, called so because of its emblematic *Ic-eom* structure, and in which the narrative voice focuses on “itself”, i.e. talks about itself from its own perspective. Even though the *Ic-eom* structure is extremely likely to appear within the *I-am* principle (seeing as this structure is how the said principle earned its name; *ic-eom=I-am*), the principle does not necessarily require that specific formulation in order to establish a point of view. Here are the examples of the *I-am* principle detected in the ten riddles of the analysed corpus, which illustrate this:

(...) *þonne ic astige strong* (R1, line 3)

Hrægl min swigað, þonne ic hrusan trede (R7, line 1)

Ic þurh muþ sprece (...) (R8, line 1)

Ic beom strong þæs gewinnes (...) (R16, line 4)

Agof is min noma (...) (R23, line 1)

Ic eom wrætlic wiht (...) (R23, line 2)

Ic eom legbysig (...) (R30, line 1)

Ic eom heard ond scearp (...) (R62, line 1)

Ic eom mare þonne þes middangeard (R66, line 1)

Ic eom æþelinges eaxlgestealla (R80, line 1)

Min heafod is homere gēþuren (R91, line 1)

It is noticeable that not all of the *I-am* examples literally include the *ic-eom* pattern and that, when they do, it does not necessarily appear at the very beginning, as the opening line. However, all of the verbs used in this type of construction demonstrate the subject’s direct involvement in the described states, events and actions. The subject not only possesses qualities (*strong, wrætlic, legbysig, heard ond scearp, mare þonne þes middangeard, æþelinges eaxlgestealla, Agof is min noma*), but also moves (*astigan, treddan*), speaks (*sprecan*) and participates in the events that involve something closely connected to it (*hrægl*

min swigað, min heafod is homere gepuren). Regardless of the *ic-eom* pattern frequency, this kind of narrative description in which the subject focuses on itself, thus also simultaneously presenting itself as an object, is the specific factor which classifies these riddles within the *I-am* principle.

The *I-saw* principle differs from the *I-am* principle in the fact that the subject and the object of riddlic description are distinguishable as separate entities, i.e. that the narrative “voice” in this case belongs to a subject who is merely a spectator, involved in actions, states and events only through perceiving them. This element of perception reveals itself in the use of verbs: *seon* (the most frequent one, and also responsible for the name of this narrative principle; *ic-seah* = *I-saw*) and *frignan*, which in this case signifies perceptive activity, translating as “hear” or “learn”, rather than “inquire” or “ask”. Here are examples of the *I-saw* principle:

Ic on sipe seah (...) (R19, line 1)

Ic wiht geseah in wera burgum (R34, line 1)

Ic on wincle gefrægn weaxan nathwæt (R45, line 1)

Ic gefrægn for hælepum hring endean (R48, line 1)

Ic þa wiht geseah on weg feran (R68/69, line 1)

Ic swiftne geseah on swaþe feran (R75, line 1)

Ic ane geseah idese sittan. (R76)

Obviously, the most frequently used verb is *seon*, indicating visual perception, followed by *frignan*, here implying cognitive perception. It is also noticeable that the *I-saw* pattern appears at the very beginning, in the first half-line, and can, therefore, be described as a type of opening line in Exeter Book riddles. The subject’s viewpoint, however, differs from the one established via the *I-am* principle. Here the subject points to an object which exists outside of the subject’s physical or actual domain, and they are connected only through the subject’s ability of perception. This narrative approach involves the same amount of entities as the one in the *I-am* principle: the one addressing, i.e. the subject, what is addressed, i.e. the object, and the addressee, i.e. the recipient of the entire subject-object relationship. The main difference is that there is a clear separation between the subject and the object, introducing another narrative “voice”.

Both of the mentioned voice types speak from the 1st-person point of view, whether they focus on themselves or on something else, jumping into 2nd-person only when requesting their name be guessed: *Saga hwæt ic hatte* or *Frige hwæt ic hatte* (R16, line 10). Yet, one more type of narrative voice emerges in the Exeter riddles. This type is what Mitchell and Robinson (2012) classify⁹ as the *I-saw* principle, saying that “the riddler speaks in his own voice (*Ic seah, Wiga is*)” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 239). The *wiga-is* pattern does not, however, imply the 1st-person, but a 3rd-person, omniscient kind of narrative voice. There is a considerable difference between declaring “I saw a thing” and “there is a thing”, and these examples illustrate the use of 3rd-person narration in some of the Exeter riddles:

Wiga is on eorþan wundrum acenned (R50, line 1)

Hyse cwom gangan, þær he hie wisse

(...) *stondan in wincsele*, (...) (R54, lines 1-2)

Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to bane. (R69)

Wiht is wrætlic (...) (R70, line 1)

This type, a kind of *there-is* narration, even though not the most frequently employed, gives out a sense of prophetic, unquestionable knowledge, something that can only be achieved by removing the actual narrating persona (be it an observer or the observed itself) from the focus of attention.

2.3.1 OPENING AND CLOSING STRUCTURES

Now that the narrative principles have been established and commented on, further observations can be made with regard to the opening and closing structures of an Exeter riddle. The opening structures refer to structures that can be found at the beginning of an Exeter riddle, i.e. that are indicative of how a riddle begins. In the observed corpus, there are several possible riddle openings, closely connected to the narrative principles. Most of them, as shown in the previous examples, contain either the *I-am* (Riddles 30, 62, 66 and 80) or the

⁹ Craig Williamson (2011), in addition to a more theme-oriented classification, divides the Exeter Riddles into projective and nonprojective types (Williamson 2011, 23). The projective types often begin with *I-am* (*/was*) and end with an imperative, whereas the nonprojective types either consist of the *I-saw/I-heard*, or begin without reference to the riddler (what I refer to as *there-is*), often ending in an imperative, as well. He observes that the different narrative stances “constitute poles of a perceptual game” (Williamson 2011, 25), making the recipient identify with either the “riddler” or the “creature”.

I-saw structure (Riddles 19, 34, 45, 48, 68, 75 and 76). As already mentioned, the *I-am* principle is further sustained not only by verbs other than *beon* [“to be”], such as *sprecan* [“to speak”] (R8), *winnan* [“to struggle”] and *feohtan* [“to fight”] (R16), but also through another opening structure, one that could be described as *my-X + VERB*, as in Riddles 7 (*Hrægl min swigað* [i.e. “my garment is silent”]), 23 (*Agof is min noma* [i.e. “Agof is my name”]) and 91 (*Min heafod is* [i.e. “my head is”]). *There-is* narration jumps straight into the description, with no 1st person in the opening lines but with a pattern of *X + VERB (+ COMPLEMENT)*, such as: *Wiga is on eorþan* [i.e. “warrior is in the world”] (R50), *Hyse cwom gangan* [i.e. “a youth came by going”] (R54), *Wundor wearð on wege* [i.e. “wonder was under way”] (R69), *Wiht is wrætlic* [i.e. “a thing is wondrous”] (R70). One exception to these patterns is the opening of Riddle 1, which opens in the form of a (rhetorical) question (*Hwylc is hæleþa þæs horsc ond þæs hygecræftig (...)* [i.e. “who is of men so sharp and wise (so as to ...)”]), thus directly addressing an imaginary audience. If there is an interconnection between the narrative principles and opening structures in an Exeter Book riddle, it can be concluded that the opening line necessarily contains a structure denotive of the riddle’s narrative principle.

As for the closing structures in an Exeter riddle, the studied corpus indicates two possible endings. The frequently employed one is a fixed imperative construction: *Saga hwæt ic hatte*, i.e. “Say what I am called” (or *Frige hwæt ic hatte*, i.e. “Ask what I am called” in Riddle 16). This imperative construction is syntactically fixed (an exception found in R1: *Saga hwa mec þecce*) and often found in the very last half-line of a riddle, closing the description with a finality of a firm order, as in Riddles 1, 16, 19, 23, 62, 66 and 80. Alternatively, it can appear somewhat sooner, as it does in Riddle 8, dispersing the order with a final descriptive clue:

*Saga hwæt ic hatte,
þe swa scirenige sceawendwisan
hlude onhyrge, hælepum bodige
wilcumena fela woþe minre.* (R8, lines 8-11)

[i.e. “Say what I am called

who so brightly a jesting song

loudly imitate, (and) to men foretell

welcome things many with my voice.”]

Another closing structure is what could be described as a zero-ending (or \emptyset -ending), because it consists exclusively of descriptive segments, which come to an end at some point¹⁰. Such is the case in Riddles 7, 30, 34, 45, 48, 50, 54, 68, 69, 70, 75, 76 and 91.

Since only one opening and one closing structure can formally exist per Riddle, there are no observable patterns considering these two aspects in isolation; for example, there cannot be more than one imperative ending, etc. However, patterns emerge when studying the relationship between opening and closing structures, i.e. narrative principles and riddle endings. There seems to be a close connection between a narrative principle indicated at a riddle's beginning and an ending that follows. The *I-am* principle frequently concludes with an imperative, even though a \emptyset -ending is also a possibility, as in Riddles 7 and 91. While the imperative is somewhat of the *I-am* principle's trademark, the *I-saw* and *There-is* narrative principles are consistent in their \emptyset -endings. This pattern is fairly predictable; seeing as the *I-am* principle engages in self-description, i.e. has its own "voice", it is only probable for it to also include the possibility of ordering the recipient about. The other two principles are less personalized, and thus have no use of the imperative. The one exception is found in Riddle 19, where an *I-saw* opening structure ends up with a *Saga hwæt ic hatte*.¹¹ In any case, there is an observable interconnection between opening structures (indicative of a narrative principle) and closing structures in an Exeter Riddle.

2.3.2 SYNTAX AND WORD CLASS DYNAMICS

Lastly, there are also some prominent syntactic features of an Exeter riddle. This part will discuss word order, specific syntactic constructions and open word class dynamics.

As Mitchell and Robinson (2012) point out, "OE syntax is recognizably English; in some passages the word-order at least is almost without exception that of MnE. At other times, we seem to be wrestling a foreign language" (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 61). One specific feature of any Old English text is the word order, i.e. the main difficulty in wading through Old English. Modern English "depends on the word order and prepositions to make distinctions which in an inflected language are made by the case endings" (Mitchell and

¹⁰ The description does not go on forever, even though a literary riddle has the potential to embrace many a lengthy description. This is evident in some of the longer Exeter riddles.

¹¹ Williamson translates this last imperative as "Say what I mean" (2011, 77), which then accommodates the construction seamlessly into the narrative principle. Williamson also points out that an important part of understanding this specific riddle is the recipient's familiarity with the kenning *ship=sea-horse*; this will be further commented on in the analysis.

Robinson 2012, 62). Retaining four cases, Old English also maintains a quite flexible word order, and seeing as this paper is focused on Exeter Riddles, which are works of poetry rather than prose works, this feature of Old English becomes even more pronounced. It is to be taken into consideration that poetry is less linear than prose, a trait which enables the language to be used “more freely” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 63). Rules that influence sentence-forming, such as recapitulation, splitting of heavy groups and correlation (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 66-70) are harder to apply in poetry precisely because it defies linearity.

Mitchell and Robinson (2012) define three Subject-Verb arrangements common in Old English prose, all of which can be found in poetry as well: the *S.V.*, in which the verb immediately follows the subject; the *S. . . . V.*, with other sentence elements appearing between subject and verb; and the *V.S.*, in which the subject follows after the verb (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 63).

S.V. can occur in both principal and subordinate clauses, while the *S. . . . V.* is more common in subordinate clauses. The sentence structure in Exeter Book riddles becomes quite complex because of the embedded clauses and asyndetic tendencies which coordinate sentences without the use of a conjunction (Greek, *asyndeton* “unconnected”). This effectively postpones expressing the main thought and breaks the entire formal structure in order to –successfully– build anticipation. It is not unusual for the structure to include more than one object, and a single subject complementation is rarely the case. Clauses also show a tendency to be elliptical, which adds to structural density. Here are some examples which illustrate all of these features:

Example 1 (R7, lines 1-2)

<i>Hrægl min swigað, þonne ic hrusan trede, / oþþe þa wic buge, oþþe wado drefe.</i>												
S	V		(A)	S ₁	O _{1A}	V ₁		O _{2A}	V ₂		O _{3A}	V ₃

Example 2 (R30, lines 5-6)

<i>Ful oft mec gesiþas sendað æfter hondum, / þæt mec weras ond wif wlonce cyssað.</i>										
A ₁	O _A	S	V	A ₂		O _A	S	Co	V	

Example 3 (R34, lines 1-2)

<i>Ic wiht geseah in wera burgum, / seo þæt feoh fedeð. (...)</i>									
S	O _A	V	A		(S	O _A	V)	=	C ₀

Example 4 (R34, lines 7-9)

<i>læteð hio þa wlitigan, wirtum fæste, / stille stondan on stapolwonge,</i>									
V	O _A	C ₀		C ₁₀		A	V ₁	A ₁	
<i>/ beorhte blican, blowan ond growan.</i>									
		A ₂	V ₂	V ₃	V ₄				

Example 5 (R45, lines 4-5)

<i>(...) hrægle þeahte / þrindende þing þeodnes dohtor.</i>									
	O _D	V		O _A		S			

Example 6 (R69)

<i>Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to bane.</i>									
S	V	C _s		S	V	C _s			

Example 7 (R70, lines 2-4)

<i>Singeð þurh sidan. Is se sweora woh, / orþoncum geworht; hafap eaxle tua /</i>										
V	A		V	S	C _s		C _{1s}		V	O _A
<i>scearp on gescyl drum. (...)</i>										
			C ₀	A						

Example 8 (R80, lines 3-5)

<i>(...) Cwen mec hwilum / hwitlocedu hond on legeð, / eorles dohtor, þeah hio æþelu sy.</i>										
S	O _{2A}	A	C _s	O _{1A}	V	/	C _s	/	A (= S	C _s V)

The V.S. arrangement is not the most frequent one; in Modern English, this arrangement is reserved for questions. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for it to appear in Old English texts. The examples show that this also occurs beyond the imperative form, which puts the verb into the primary position, as in *saga hwæt ic hatte* or, structurally: V O_A(=SVCs).

In addition to the S. . . . V. arrangement, which postpones the verb element, a participle or an infinitive construction also frequently holds final position in a clause:

(...) *stille on wicum sittað **nigende*** (R8, half-lines 7-8);

*Oft ic sceal wiþ wæge **winnan** ond wiþ winde **feohtan*** (R16, line 1);

*Ic on siþe seah (...) swiþe **þrægan**.* (R19, lines 1-3);

*Agof is min noma eft **onhwyrfed**; ic eom wrætlic wiht on gewin **sceapen**.* (R23, lines 1-2);

(...) *læteð hio þa **wlitigan**, wirtum fæste, stille **standan**, (...) beorhte **blican**, **blowan** ond **growan**.* (R34, lines 7-9);

*Wiga is on eorþan wundrum **acenned** (...)* (R50, line 1);

*Ic þa wiht geseah on weg **feran**; heo wæs wrætlice wundrum **gegierwed**.* (R68);

*Ic ane geseah idese **sittan**.* (R76);

*Min heafod is homere **geburen** (...)* (R91, line 1)

Another trait of Old English word order is the specific position of the negative particle *ne* [i.e. “not”]. This is always found immediately before the verb, regardless of the S-V arrangements. Here are the examples:

SV: (...) *þonne ic getenge **ne beom*** (R7, line 8);

S. . . . V: (...) *healde mine wisan, hleopre **ne miþe** (...)* (R8, line 4); [*Wiht is wrætlic*]
*þam þe hyre wisan **ne conn**.* (R70, line 1)

VS: ***Ne togongeð** þæs gumena hwylcum (...)* (R23, line 10); ***Nelle** ic unbunden
*ænigum hyran (...)*¹² (R23, line 15)*

Also, a prominent syntactic construction in some of the riddles is what could be described as X-*ond*-Y structure, which appears in Riddles 1 (line 13: *flæsc ond gæstas*), 7 (line

¹² The focus in this example is on the verb *willan*, which merges with the negative particle and becomes the 1st person of *ne + willan*.

9: *flode ond foldan*), 34 (line 9: *blowan ond growan*), 45 (line 2: *þindan ond þunian*), 50 (line 7: *mægeð ond mæcgas*) and 70 (line 6: *heah ond hleortorht*). This construction is characterized by two corresponding elements linked with the conjunction *ond*. A necessary observation is that the said elements always share the same word class, which is always an open¹³ class (i.e. noun + noun, verb + verb, adjective + adjective) and that the two elements always form one half-line, within which they share an alliterative feature (e.g. *flode ond foldan*). Seeing as alliteration is key to any Old English verse, this is far from surprising; however, combined with a prominent structure making up an entire half-line, it draws attention to similar structures. *X-ond-Y* can be, therefore, more broadly described as *X-link-Y*, in which case the elements, coupled within a half-line, always belong to an open word class, albeit not necessarily the same one, and share an alliterative feature. The following examples illustrate the flexibility of the structure's collective features:

<i>wrecen on wape</i> (R1, line 11);	noun-link-noun
<i>somod on sunde</i> (R1, line 14);	adverb/adjective-link-noun
<i>blisse in burgum</i> (R8, line 6);	noun-link-noun
<i>stille on wicum</i> (R8, line 7);	adverb/adjective-link-noun
<i>lace mid winde</i> (R30, line 1);	verb-link-noun
<i>monige mid miltse</i> (R30, line 8);	noun-link-noun
<i>dryhtum to nytte</i> (R50, line 2);	noun-link-noun
<i>feond his feonde</i> (R50, line 4);	noun-link-noun
<i>life on lissum</i> (R50, line 9);	noun-link-noun
<i>werig þæs weorces</i> (R54, line 10);	adjective-link-noun
<i>hæleð mid hrægle</i> (R62, line 6);	noun-link-noun
<i>flodas on fæðmum</i> (R66, line 4);	noun-link-noun
<i>singeð þurh sidan</i> (R70, line 2);	verb-link-noun
<i>scearp on gescyl drum</i> (R70, line 4);	adjective-link-noun

¹³ Adjectives and adverbs in OE frequently have the flexibility to be interchangeable; therefore, the potential adverbs used in these situations could be observed as adjectives.

<i>herges on ende</i> (R80, line 8);	noun-link-noun
<i>hearde wið heardum</i> (R91, line 5);	noun-link-noun
<i>hyrde þæs hordes</i> (R91, line 9)	noun-link-noun

Always alliterative and within a half-line, it can be observed that nouns are, again, the most frequent open word class (the pronoun *monig* and adjective *heard* in this context behaving as nouns), and that they can also be combined with verbs (R30 and R70) and adjectives (R1: line 14, 8: line 7, R54 and R70). The linking element can be, and frequently is, a preposition (*mid*, *to*, *in*, *on*, *þurh*, *wið*, and *þæs*). The link is recognizable even in specific possessive constructions such as *feond his feonde* [i.e. “enemy of his enemy”] (R50, line 9).

Now may be a good time to reiterate the literariness of Exeter Riddles, i.e. the roots that run deep within literary and scholarly tradition or, according to Bitterli (2009), “an intellectual milieu of monastic literature and Latin book-learning” (Bitterli 2009, 5), but are also connected to “indigenous tradition of vernacular poetry” (Bitterli 2009, 5). Formal observations, including observations concerning open word classes and their dynamics within an Exeter Riddle, make these dichotomies more obvious. With the assistance of the separate tables, some features of nouns, verbs and adjectives in an Exeter Riddle will be described. This commentary will not be focused on grammatical inflexions denoting gender, number, and weak or strong cases, but on distribution and qualitative properties of the three word classes. Further discussion of the specific semantic categories and their importance in this context will be offered in the second part of the analysis, oriented towards riddle content and semantic devices.

Let us first observe the most abundant class: nouns. Out of 263 instances detected in this sample, many of them are abstract but so many more of them are concrete, the rate being approximately 1:4. This outcome is expected, since it may be said that a riddle’s *modus operandi* is taking something familiar to point out to something unfamiliar, and thus familiarize it in the process. The concrete nouns referring to space or dwellings, natural phenomena, objects and creatures are, therefore, the most frequently employed in the Exeter Riddles. Out of these nouns, 108 refer to some sort of creature or something creature-related. Statistically and, as will be further discussed later on, semantically speaking, it is very interesting to note that more than half of these nouns denote what is recognized as a human being, employing 16 different nouns to express the meaning of “man” or “human”, and 35 different nouns (some of them directly overlapping with the meaning “man” or “human”) to

designate specific social roles. In contrast to that, only five nouns are devoted to animals and only two refer to a supernatural entity, while those denoting body parts can always be interpreted as *human* body parts. Following this observation, it is not an unexpected discovery that all the other categories also gravitate towards what is of significance to human beings; however, this is a semantic category, so it will be left alone, for the moment.

Observing nouns, it is possible to visualise a distributional pattern which shows how specific riddles generally gravitate towards using specific categories. This is based on a quantitative approach; i.e. in comparison to a total number of nouns per Riddle, it can be said that, for example, Riddles 7 and 16 emphasise “nature” and Riddles 23 and 54 lean more on the “abstract”, whereas Riddle 1 exploits both; Riddle 34 is focused on “space/dwelling”, while Riddles 50 and 80 focus on the “human” categories. However, it can also be said that there is a balanced distribution of nouns among categories; i.e. despite relying on the abstract, Riddle 48, for example, employs nouns in many other categories, same as Riddle 91. Again, this is connected to quantitative factors – longer Riddles have a better chance of covering more different categories; yet, not one of these Riddles actually employs nouns from all of them. It is, nevertheless, worth noticing that at least one abstract noun can be found in every¹⁴ Riddle, and at least one noun denoting some kind of a natural phenomenon is a frequent occurrence. A common yet very important word-forming process, especially in the context of nouns, is compounding, i.e. “joining together two separate words which already exist” in Old English (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 56). Compounds make up both nouns and adjectives, combining them with each other (e.g. *hyge-cræftig* [i.e. “mind-strong”], *folc-sæl* [i.e. “people-hall”], *æften-sceop* [i.e. “evening-poet”], *heafod-beorht* [i.e. “head-bright”]) or with adverbs (e.g. *nipreweard* [i.e. “nether-ward”], *forð-sib* [i.e. “forth-going”]).

The second most abundant class are, of course, verbs. Out of 196 instances, action verbs take up the majority, seeing as almost every Riddle involves some kind of action, be it physical or abstract. Physical action is frequently employed, whether it denotes movement, perception, reporting or other, granting the Riddles a dynamic disposition which would be a lot less prominent if the structure relied on states and events. Out of the entire sample, there is one Riddle which prefers states and events (R70), one which maintains a balance between action and state/event verbs (R80, with Riddles 16 and 19 following closely), and only one which lacks action verbs altogether (R69). There are eight different auxiliary verbs: *beon* [“to be”], *mogan* [“to be able to”], *habban* [“to have”], *sculan* [“shall/ought to”], *weorþan* [“to

¹⁴ Save for Riddles 75 and 76, which are disputable.

come to be”], *willan* [“will”], *motan* [“may”] and *cunnan* [“to know”]. Unsurprisingly, the verb *beon* is by far the most frequently used, followed closely by *habban*. As is the case with nouns, both physical and mental (or abstract) action verbs gravitate towards what is distinctively and sometimes specifically human behaviour (e.g. *cwæðan* [i.e. “to speak”]).

Lastly, adjectives occur in 146 instances, at least one per riddle (except for Riddle 69, in which there are no adjectives), and the majority of them describe some kind of physical trait. Save for R69, there is at least one descriptive adjective in every Riddle referring to a physical trait, the most exploited being the adjective *strong* [i.e. “strong”], which appears on its own in five respective Riddles (1, 16, 48, 54 and 62), and as a part of another adjective in two more (*rynestrang* [i.e. “course-strong”] in R19 and *forstrang* [i.e. “very-strong”] in R50). Other frequently employed adjectives are: *hea(h)* [i.e. “high(ly)”], *wide* [i.e. “wide”], *hlud(e)* [i.e. “loud(ly)”], *still(e)* [i.e. “still”], *stip* [i.e. “stiff/hard”], *fæst(e)* [i.e. “firm(ly)”], *swift* [i.e. “fleet”], *beorht* [i.e. “brilliant/bright”], *wrætlic(e)* [i.e. “artistic(ly)/wondrous(ly)”], *heard* [i.e. “hard”], *scearp* [i.e. “sharp”], *wlonc* [i.e. “splendidly adorned with gold”](which occurs twice more as *hygewlanc* [i.e. “proud”] in Riddles 19 and 45), *torht(e)* [i.e. “radiant(ly)/bright(ly)”] and *swip* [i.e. “strong/powerful”]

With regard to open word class dynamics, it follows that one of the prominent Exeter Riddles’ traits is a diversity of vocabulary. Even though specific parts of the vocabulary are used more frequently than others in the context of the Exeter Riddles as a corpus, no repetitive words or expressions are found within the same Riddle, thus making them distinctively literary pieces. What also follows is that the Exeter Riddles, through their extensive vocabulary, seem to be designed to discuss ideas associated with humanity, regardless of their presupposed themes and solutions.

2.4 META-STRUCTURES

The last formal category is the meta-structure or code; i.e. alternative scripts and formal layering. This includes runic script, anagrams and other potential forms of formal textual coding.

Runic script is a feature of Old English that inevitably adds to an air of mystery and remoteness, culturally reflected in a shared set of ideas, as author Martin Findell (2014) observes, which strongly present runes as “inherently magical”, “iconic” symbols, with their “power and significance expressed chiefly through the rune-name” (Findell 2014, 94). Their

“magical functions” set aside, Findell emphasizes that runes are primarily elements of a writing system¹⁵; something this analysis does not seek to devalue. Despite the widespread use of the Latin alphabet, which was, along with Latin, introduced during the Roman conquest, a period in British history that started somewhere in 43 AD, when the Romans first successfully invaded Britain under the emperor Claudius (from 41 AD to 54 AD) and ended around 410 AD, Old English orthography retained some runic symbols. Findell (2014) describes the 7th c. as a period of dramatic social, political and economic changes in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, since the adoption of Christianity required the establishment of religion communities and encouraged Latin literacy. Nevertheless, the old writing system was not abandoned, “if anything, the spread of literacy in religious communities seems to have encouraged the reform of futhorc and a growth in the use of runes for writing the vernacular” (Findell 2014, 38). Latin had been highly influential during the big spread of Christianity in the late 6th c., functioning as the language of both service and ecclesiastical learning, and learning in general, since most of the monasteries and churches were places where education flourished (Baugh and Cable 2002, 83). Even though runes gradually disappeared from use with the (re)introduction¹⁶ and embracement of Christianity, at first the Christian church encouraged their extended use; sometimes they were used beside Roman script, sometimes the two were intermingled, and sometimes runes were used instead of it (Page 2005, 34). Obviously, the Roman script prevailed and was used for writing manuscripts, albeit with certain runic modifications. The evidence of this are runic symbols “ash” (æ), “thorn” (þ), “eth” (ð) and “wynn” (ƿ) which represent different letters (and sounds), and three of them remain in contemporary language as symbols of phonetic value (“ash” and “eth” in their original form; “thorn” in a changed version: θ). There are, however, Riddles which make use of the runic script in different, somewhat more complicated ways than their regular, one could say everyday alphabetic use.

Riddles 19 and 75 (which, arguably, is semantically bound to the single line of Riddle 76) are Riddles which employ “runic strategies”, according to Bitterli’s *Say What I Am Called* (2009). In both of these Riddles, runic script is used as substitution for Latin letters, literally: one runic symbol=one letter of the alphabet. This diversion adds another layer of mystery to a

¹⁵ The runic script is a form of alphabetic writing, in which each symbol represents a sound. There are different theories concerning the origin of runic writing, all of them in connection with other models of alphabet (such as Roman or Greek), and it has been estimated that the earliest surviving runic inscriptions date from mid to late 2nd c. AD (Page 2005; Findell 2014).

¹⁶ A precise account of origins of Christianity in Britain is unattainable; however, after the Roman legalisation of it in 313 AD, it is safe to presume that Christianity was starting to emerge more freely and that it gradually became a part of Britain by 5th century, taking full swing after the collapse of the Roman Empire.

text which is obviously already devised in a challenging way, intent on being misunderstood and pondered upon. In the case of Riddles 19 and 75, the recipient is expected to be familiar with runic symbols and, furthermore, recognize their function as letters (which, as will be demonstrated soon, is not the only possible function of runic script), replacing them with their Latin equivalents. Unfortunately, the letters make little sense still after being replaced, because specific words in Riddles are double-coded as anagrams, which suggests the Latin symbols have to be deciphered, too. In this case, it means rearranging:

† ƿ 𐌺 → N O M → M O N (R19, line 5) [i.e. “man”]

ƿ † 𐌺 ƿ → A G E W → W E G A (R19, line 6) [i.e. “way”]

Riddle 19 also visually separates some coded words (i.e. “hors” and “hawk”), making one line end and another begin in two different parts of the same word:

Ic on siþe seah 𐌺 𐌹 ƿ → S R O

𐌺 *hygewloncne* (...) → H

S R O (+) H → H O R S
(R19, lines 1-2)

(...) *rofne* 𐌺 ƿ → C O

𐌺 ƿ ƿ 𐌺 → F O A H

C O (+) F O A H → H A O F O C
(R19, lines 7-8)

Riddle 75 also employs an anagram, however, with a potential twist. The coded word consists only of consonants, leaving a solution gap to be filled with adequate vowels.

𐌺 † † 𐌺 → D N L H → H ? L ? N ? D (R75, line 2)

The Krapp and Dobbie edition suggests *HæLeND* [i.e. “saviour”], while Williamson (2011, 208) decodes it as *HLaND* [i.e. “piss”] in connection to Riddle 76, insisting that the two comprise a single Riddle turning “on the visual distinction between men’s and women’s¹⁷ modes of urination”. On the other hand, with regard to Riddles 75 and 76 Bitterli observes “the capitalization and punctuation leave no doubt that, despite the brevity and uniformity, the two entries constitute two individual riddles” (Bitterli 2009, 106), and proposes *HUND* [i.e. ”dog/hound”]. He elaborates that the runes should be emended before any kind of interpretation, which is then the basis of *hund*, correcting a supposed scribal error¹⁸ of the rune \uparrow (*lagu* [i.e. “water”]) to Π (*ūr* [i.e. “aurochs” or “wealth”]), which stands for Latin letter U, and then further promotes the appropriateness of *hund* in the metaphoric context of Riddle 75 which, according to Bitterli, “describes a linguistic ‘track’ that the reader has to follow, first from left to right and then from right to left” (Bitterli 2009, 110). This interpretation encourages viewing Riddle 75 as, albeit structurally similar, a separate entity from Riddle 76. More importantly, it shows how Riddle 75 formally corresponds to patterns already observed in Riddle 19, i.e. there are no gaps to be filled, only existing letters to be deciphered and then re-arranged into a solution:

$$\mathfrak{M} \uparrow \Pi \mathfrak{H} \rightarrow D N U H \rightarrow H U N D$$

In the wake of *hund*, but also an alternative to it, is an arguable “doublet” solution, something that Murphy (2011, 173) points out has “the advantage of being a simple, balanced and rhyming Old English phrase”. The Old English alliterative tendencies speak in its favour; however, this approach also relies on runic emendation, correcting the rune \uparrow into either Π or \mid (*īs* [i.e. “ice”]), thus respectively forming *hund* and *hind* [i.e. ”doe”]:

$$\mathfrak{M} \uparrow \Pi \mathfrak{H} \rightarrow \mathfrak{M} \uparrow \Pi \mathfrak{H} \rightarrow D N U H \rightarrow H U N D$$

$$\mathfrak{M} \uparrow \Pi \mathfrak{H} \rightarrow \mathfrak{M} \uparrow \mid \mathfrak{H} \rightarrow D N I H \rightarrow H I N D$$

Regardless of the solution, these examples show how Exeter Riddles make use of runic script in substitution for Latin letters, arranging it into an anagram. Somewhat less complicated, but just as important, are separate versions of these, in Riddles 91 and 23.

Riddle 91 contains only one symbol of the runic script, the rune \mathfrak{P} (*wynn* [i.e. “joy”]):

¹⁷ R76 mentions a “woman sitting alone” (Krapp and Dobbie 1963).

¹⁸ While Bitterli claims that “actually, the lateral stroke is a broken line, and the whole can only be a poorly made *u*” (2009, 107), not all scholars agree there is a scribal error.

mod ꝥ freoþað middelnihtum (R91, line 7) [i.e. “with JOY protects at midnight”]

Here the runic symbol is not a substitute for a letter of the Latin alphabet, but an example of “one of the most widely known properties of runic writing” (Findell 2014, 72), i.e. a symbolic rune-name, a meaningful word contained within a single character. Rune-names are words usually beginning with a sound that the character represents and abbreviating the rune-names with a single rune is not an uncommon practice in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts (Findell 2014, 78). Findell (2014) mentions that “it is common in both scholarly and popular accounts of the rune-names to find a list of reconstructed names in an early form of Germanic language, with the implication that these represent the ‘original’ rune-names” (Findell 2014, 77), even though the reconstructed originality is arguable. Important evidence of this tradition, however elusive, are rune-name abbreviations found in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in which the scribes sometimes used a runic symbol instead of a word to express an idea or a concept. Therefore, even though the original forms and meanings of rune-names are disputable, this is a good example of coding, in which the recipient must be aware not only of runes and their sound value as belonging to characters of an alphabet, but also the rune’s symbolic name and the meaning it contains (in this case: “wynn” = “joy”).

As for Riddle 23, its first line both contains an anagram and explicitly warns about it: *Agof is min noma eft onhwyrfed* [i.e. “Agof is my name when inverted”] (R23, line 1). There is no runic script and we are told to spell the word backwards; however, the Riddle requires some etymological prowess in order to detect its meaning:

$$a g o f \rightarrow f o g a (=?) \rightarrow b o g a$$

As Krapp and Dobbie suggest, *foga* is an etymologically older version of the word *boga* [i.e. “bow”], something the recipient is expected to be familiar with. A similar situation arises in R68/69, where the duality of *wæg* [i.e. “way”] and *wēg* /wæg/ [i.e. “wave”], codes the expression on a semantic level into a “wave-way”; however, this last example is already entering metaphor territory, which shall be discussed later on.

3 CATEGORIES OF CONTENT

3.1 SOLUTIONS

The chosen sample of Exeter Riddles displays a variety of solutions, taken as suggested by Baum (1963) and Williamson (2011). The answers can be sorted into several thematic groups: nature, i.e. entities from the natural realm such as *wood*¹⁹ (R30) or elements like *wind* (or possibly, *storm*) (R1), *fire* (R50) and *ice* (R68), animals, i.e. birds such as *swan* (R7) and *jay* (or possibly, *nightingale*) (R8), objects, i.e. devices crafted for a specific purpose such as *anchor* (R16), *ship* (R19), *bow* (R23), *rake* (R34), *chalice* (R48), *churn* (R54), *gimlet* (or possibly, *poker*) (R62), *pipe* (R70), *horn* (R80) and *key* (R91), organic substances such as *dough* (R45), and finally, processes such as *creation* (R66). This kind of arrangement illustrates both a certain range of interests, from concrete to metaphysical, and also the way these interests are carefully contained within the scope of everyday, even mundane human experience. There is nothing extraordinary about these answers; they are familiar to the point of uninteresting, which is exactly how they should be, if we are to recall that riddles are supposed to take something familiar and disguise it as something else. Furthermore, it can be observed that the majority of solutions are carefully devised objects, crafted for a purpose and somewhat indicative of technology and cultural achievements (*ship*, *bow*), life and settlement (*rake*, *gimlet*, *churn*, *key*, as well as *ship*, *bow*), religion (the disputable *cross*, *chalice*) and customs (*pipe*, *horn*). Vital to the riddle-structure, the solution is also an important part in the sense that it is a fixed point – there is only one answer to a riddle, the riddle’s metaphorical focus and its solution being two different things (Murphy 2011, 59), and that answer is meant to be exceptionally plain. In their totality, riddles surpass this question-answer relationship nevertheless present in their structure. In “solving” a riddle, only one solution counts as correct and is, as shown here, something we already know.

3.2 THEMES AND MOTIFS

While Riddles’ solutions offer an insight into the “everyday”, some prominent themes, motifs and topoi could offer an indication of specific cultural norms and world-views

¹⁹ Which was also thought to be *the cross*. Some other solutions, like the one of R75/6 have been thoroughly discussed and disputed; however, this paper is not so much interested in the accuracy of the suggested solution as it is interested in its function within an Exeter Riddle.

connected to the temporal and spatial circumstances of the Riddles' production. It has been suggested that riddle-studying requires "the command of the material" and "the riddle-sense" developed through a careful examination of many different riddles (Tupper 1903, 97). Seeing how the Exeter Riddles display a complexity beyond traditional/oral riddling, an effort to observe their motifs proves gratifying in both the traditional and the literary sense (see Appendix B: Themes and Motifs table).

Let us first distinguish between themes and motifs. A theme is a broader, central concept, an idea which is contained and conveyed in a literary work, whereas a motif is a recurring element expressing the said theme, i.e. the smallest part of a literary work which can express meaning on its own (Solar 1984, 43). Furthermore, a *topos* (Greek: "place") is a standardised motif, i.e. an established literary subject or idea.

Murphy describes "a blend of heroic and Christian elements" as "a hallmark of OE poetry" (2011, 124). The Riddles sustain prominent themes of power (conquest), strength, battle, journey and independence. Through certain motives, such as the flood (R1), the cross (R30), the cup (R48 and 23) and the theme of creation which relates to the events of Genesis²⁰ (R66), Christianity indeed meets Germanic philosophy on life which is based on "physical courage and independence, loyalty to one's family/leader that leaves no wrong unavenged" (Baugh and Cable 2002, 83). A connection to the natural world is apparent, nature being a great source of motifs for the Exeter Riddles, regardless of the thematic direction the Riddle takes.²¹

Another source of motifs are everyday human situations (such as travelling, baking, copulation, etc.), and there is a special focus on manual labour, frequently expressed using the motif of human hands. Furthermore, there is a specific emphasis on woman's hands grasping and touching mysterious objects (respectively revealed to be "dough" and "horn"), even though the making and handling of some other objects (such as "bow", "poker" or "key"), requires an elaborate employment of hands as well. A woman's touch explicitly connects manual labour with sexual activities; the placement of a woman's hand either contrasts with her social station (*bryd grapode (...) hygewlonc hondum (...) þeodnes dohtor* [i.e. "a prince's daughter"]; *cwen mec (...) hond on legeð (...) þeah hio æpelu sy* [i.e. "even though she is of

²⁰ Murphy indicates this suggests a thematic link between "riddle creatures" and the "larger sense of creation they embody" (2011, 149).

²¹ Of course, the motifs' consistency is carefully connected to the Riddles' development towards a solution.

noble birth”]), which is indicative of some kind of “undignified” or “primal” activity,²² or with her physical abilities/disposition when she “binds” the strong one despite being a woman (*fer strangne oft, wif hine wrið*). The only example when a male hand explicitly touches something, in R54, also exhibits the most conspicuous sexual focus, in which “an eager young man” uses his *hand* to lift up the garment (*hrægl*) covering some part of an entity described as “she”, the action followed by thrusting “something stiff” under her “girdle”. The ambiguous garment is mentioned in R45, a woman using it to cover the “swelling thing” (which she previously grasped with her hand), as well as in Riddles 7 and 62, shifting between “cloth”, “skirt” and even “adornments”/“armour”. Even though a (woman’s) hand suggests a sexual focus, the Riddles show that any implied touch possibly holds a connection to both craft and sexuality, undeniably empowering the one who touches and making them a master of their craft.

Transformation and animation of objects is also a prominent motif, generally connected to the riddle genre. Here it also serves to amplify the effect of the power dynamics, expressed through a servant-master relationship. This relationship is often shown as paradoxical in a sense that the roles usually have the potential to become reversed (something which will be discussed later on), while the stress placed on this specific paradox is what, according to Murphy, distinguishes the Exeter Riddles notably from many analogous folk riddles (2011, 183). The power is also manifested with the use of motifs implying nobility such as lords, ladies, kings, etc. and, of course, the motif of warrior.

3.3 MANIFESTATIONS OF METAPHOR

As an important linguistic and literary device, metaphor and its manifestations need to be considered apart from other poetic devices in the Exeter Book Riddles. In short, cognitive linguistics views metaphor as a way of mentally explaining one concept in the *target domain* by drawing reference from another concept in the *source domain*, which is manifested via certain linguistic expressions (Kövecses 2002). The revolutionary approach here consist in the idea that metaphor is not a linguistic device restricted to the artful language of poetry but, in fact, an everyday tool upon which human thought process heavily relies. Common metaphors are often connected to cultural features of a linguistic community, the knowledge of a concept

²² However much the extent to which something might have been interpreted as obscene or brazen in an Anglo-Saxon linguistic community is unknown, the implied contrast is what supports the interpretation of this activity as such.

and images based on a recurrent experience with a generic structure. The images can also be one-shot, meaning they are not based on recurrent experience with a generic structure, but capture a specific experience. Metaphor thus possesses two levels of generality: the specific-level metaphor, which encompasses most conceptual metaphors, and the generic-level metaphor, which provide with the generic interpretation of something that is specific. Cultural variation in conceptual metaphor mostly occurs at a specific level, whereas universality occurs at the generic level (Kövecses 2002, 195). Metaphor, therefore, provides some linguistic structure in human cognition of the world. In literature, this proves an excellent device to create unconventional language and generate new images from the existing material, whether by extension and elaboration of conventionalized concepts, questioning and rethinking of what is conceptually familiar, or simply combining the existing metaphors (Kövecses 2002, 49). Riddlic back-and-forth transformation aside, the Exeter Riddles prominently sustain metaphor by means of abundant personification and image-based²³ metaphors, often via metonymy or in the specific form of a *kenning*.

3.3.1 PERSONIFICATION

Personification, like conceptual metaphor itself, occurs in everyday language, but is also commonly applied in literature, permitting human beings to use knowledge about themselves in order to comprehend other aspects of the world (Kövecses 2002, 50). The Exeter Riddles abound in personified entities with human, or sometimes even animal characteristics. The entities which are given these characteristics are either natural forces/elements, entities from the animal world, or, most frequently, objects. The personification is often directly connected to the entity uncovered in the Riddle's solution, especially if the narration unfolds in the 1st person, and it can be said that the Riddles provide two levels of personification: a personification on the general level of the entire Riddle, and a smaller-scale personification, sometimes contained within the general one. For example, in R7 there is a personified entity (*þōn ic hrusan trede, oþþe þa wic buge* [i.e. “when I the ground tread, or the dwelling-place inhabit”]) narrating the entire Riddle but there is also a focus on a specific object which can both sing and stay silent, and even lift things into the air (*frætwe mine swogað hlude ond swinsiað* [i.e. “my adronments sound loudly and produce a melody”]; *hrægl min swigað*; [i.e. “my garment is silent”]; *mec ahebbað hyrste mine* [i.e. “my

²³ Defined as a literary device of one-shot images that require mapping of several elements of one image into another (Kövecses 2002, 53).

ornaments lift me”]), while the air and the clouds have the strength to bear (*þeos hea lyft ond mec þōn wide wolcna strengu byreð* [i.e. “this high air and the strength of the clouds then bear me wide”]). In R34, the tool from the solution is an animalistic entity with many teeth (*hafað fela toþa*) which, in a broad description, takes care of the cattle (*feoh fedeð*); however, its snout metonymically ravages, pulls, wanders and seeks (*hipeð holdlice; to ham tyhð; wæpeð geond weallas; wyrte seceð*).

Natural forces and elements tend to always be in control and show immense power, often in a warlike fashion. The storm from R1 is a warrior, a burden-bearing avenger (*ic astige strong, stundū reþe; wrecan on wape; ic (...) þe þa hlæst bere* [i.e. “I rise strong, sometimes furious; vengeance on its way; I (...) which the burden bear”]). The element of fire in R50 is also a vengeful warrior (*wiga is on eorþan, fer strangne oft*), although tameable when treated carefully. In contrast, the humanized creation force of R66 (*me sind ealle flodas on fæðmum ond þas foldan bearm grene wongas* [i.e. “all waters are in my lap and in my arms I bear the green plains”]) does not seem harmful, despite its all-encompassing power (*helle underhnige, heofonas oferstige* [i.e. “below hell I go, heavens surpass”]). Some other examples of personification animate various objects: the anchor (R16) fights and guards the ship (*wiþ wæge winnan ond wiþ winde feohtan; þæt ic friþian sceal*); the bow (R23) has a belly and a mouth to swallow with (*me of bosme fareð; þæt ic ær geap*), along with the ability to (dis)obey (*nelle ic ænigum hyran*), similarly to the poker of R62 (*freat unforcuð*). The piece of wood (R30) first plays with the wind (*lace mid winde*), then proudly presents itself with prophetic words on oncoming bliss (*ycan upcyme eadignesse*). The ring of R48 talks with “strong” words (*þeah he hlude stefne ne cirmde strongum wordū; sinc for secgum swigende cwæð* [i.e. “with a loud voice it did not shriek its strong words; a treasure of men silently spoke”]), while the mysterious thing of R45 lifts its covers (*þecene habban*). Impossible as it is to isolate personification from metaphor in general (e.g. throughout R54, what is later discovered to possibly be the *churn* is personified as a *she*), being not only a prominent but also a broadly familiar poetic device makes it a good starting point for further observations about metaphor in the Exeter Riddles.

3.3.2 METONYMY

While Williamson (2011) shows his interest in metaphor categorizing Riddles based on what the subject is compared to, as well as elaboration on the *kenning*, Murphy (2011)

talks about multiple metaphorical foci through which a Riddle can be viewed, which account for the existence of “double solutions” in some other readings. Upon examination of patterns in the Exeter Riddles, Murphy distinguishes metonymy as the Riddles’ unmistakable pattern, one which emerges when same words are read against different foci (Murphy 2011, 61). Distinguishing between Riddles’ solution, which is only one, and metaphorical foci, which can be multiple, Murphy introduces a term “riddle propositions” i.e. “descriptions to be posed”, finding it essential to distinguish between that and the riddle as a unified whole. Furthermore, the propositions and the solution have some overlapping characteristics and are thus connected through the notion of “slim chances”, i.e. “the potential of something to be in the semantic range of a possible solution” (Murphy 2011, 39). In short, these “slim chances” are in fact numerous indirect metaphoric clues between a Riddle’s description and its solution. A Riddle’s focus, then, gives rise to “slim chances”, which are decidedly not arbitrary in the context of the way in which the metaphorical core of a riddle organizes the rest of the proposition (Murphy 2011, 47). Here are some examples of reading against different foci:

Example 1: *epel* of R16 can be read as “a hero’s native homeland” (against *warrior*), but also as a specific poetic lexical item denoting “the home of fishes”, i.e. the sea (against *anchor*). Similarly, in R68/9 *wæg* can both be indicative of a trajectory (against *movement*, which is indicated by the specific use of the verb *feran*²⁴), but can also be interpreted as “water” or “wave” (against *ice*).

Example 2: *ætren onga* in R23 can both be an “arrow” (against *battle*) and “anything pointy”, including a “sting” or a “snake” with a poisonous bite (against *creature*), while *mandrinc* is “the final drink”, not simply poison (against *death*), but also a holy sacrament of healing, providing “life’s full atonement” (against *Christianity*).

Example 3: A sexual focus in some of the Riddles has encouraged the notion of “double solutions”; however, the “sex-riddles” only show a “coherent strategy of obfuscation” (Murphy 2011, 200). For Murphy, the “sex-riddles” also show a strong familiarity with traditional riddling motifs, relying mostly “on an allusive relationship to well-worn riddling conceits, some of which are quite elusive to a modern sense of wit” (Murphy 2011, 181), which is to say that here is no way of knowing the degree of “obscenity” the motives seen as sexual would have produced from an Anglo-Saxon perspective. Nevertheless, in Riddle 45 the sexual focus is very coherent: *nathwæt* that grows/swells and lifts what covers it, specifically

²⁴ *Feran* is a specific verb in OE poetic vocabulary, used to indicate motion or movement.

banleas (when we know that not many living things are), could be both a body part and something else. The coherence is similar in Riddle 54, where there is a “she” that can be both woman and an object, a *hægstealdmon* which is both “a young man” and “a young virgin” or “bachelor”, and not to mention the specific procedure of “thrusting under a girdle” which wears the said *hægstealdmon* out. In some other Riddles this focus is active only for a short while. *Wiga* of R50 can both be a man and a useful part of man (made of *dumbum twam* [i.e. “two dumb things”]); in R62 the “warrior” hastily pushes the mysterious something into a narrow hole; R80 briefly suggests that a fair-haired lady touches something with her hand in spite of being noble, while the *hord* which needs to be held by its *hlaford*, which can mean both “master” and “husband”, when overcome with such desire in R91 can be both “gold” and “woman”. The motif of woman’s hands is a frequent component of a sexual focus in a Riddle, connecting manual labour with sexual activity.

According to Murphy, the metaphor doesn’t have to be sustained throughout the text before its role in the riddle’s obfuscation is acknowledged, nor does the focus have to be expressed explicitly. This, being conveniently flexible, gives the Exeter Riddles a complex dynamic in which the back-and-forth transformation from one entity into another unravels simultaneously with the Riddle.

3.3.3 THE KENNING

A special metaphorical feature of Old English, both formally and semantically, is the *kenning*, described by Mitchell and Robinson as a “sort of condensed metaphor in which (a) is compared to (b) without (a) or the point of comparison made explicit” (Mitchell and Robinson 2012, 57).

Craig Williamson (2011) notes that “the most common riddlic game is to give something nonhuman a human disguise,” in a “metaphoric movement [which] carries us out into the Other where we find an image of the self” (Williamson 2011, 23); or as he even more poetically puts it, “through other eyes we see our own symbolic systems” (Williamson 2011, 25). To consider the symbolic, we must first attempt to explain the rhetorical and literary device found in certain kinds of poetry²⁵, including the Exeter Book Riddles. In a definition somewhat broader than Mitchell and Robinson’s, John Lindow describes the *kenning* as “a

²⁵ In his text “Riddles, kennings and the complexity of Skaldic poetry” (1975), Lindow considers differences and similarities between the kenning as a device and the riddle as a form.

metaphor consisting of two *or more* parts where one part [=“baseword”] is modified by another part(s) [=“modifier(s)”] so as to provide the meaning [=“referent”] of the entire expression” (Lindow 1975, 311). Comparing the structure of kennings with the structure of riddles, Lindow reflects that the kenning consists entirely of nominative elements (i.e. nouns), and structurally displays the following binarity:

BASE (=always a noun) + MODIFIER (=a noun in the genitive case/another kenning)

The second part of the equation reveals a complexity in structure which potentially allows “a theoretically infinite number of components within a kenning” (Lindow 1975, 316); a kenning within a kenning within a kenning, etc. Here’s an example taken from R19, which offers a “kenningized” solution:

SHIP → SEA-HORSE

The kenning SEA-HORSE can be divided into two-part structure, with the base (B)= HORSE and the modifier (M)= SEA. Therefore, a *ship* can be a *horse* (B) *of the sea* (M).

In the section about metaphor, which he identifies²⁶ with the riddle in that they “both disguise one creature in grab of another” (Williamson 2011, 26), Williamson uses the I. A. Richards’ terms of *tenor*, i.e. the real creature (a), *vehicle*, i.e. the disguise (b), and the *common ground*, i.e. what enables the comparison between the two. He also adds a *metaphoric gap*, i.e. the characteristics which separate the true tenor from the vehicle, something to “recall the separate worlds of tenor and vehicle” (Williamson 2011, 27) when they find themselves on common ground responsible for reinforcement of “the metaphoric equation”. Williamson (2011) describes the kenning as the kernel form of riddlic metaphor in Old English poetry, further defining it as “a Nordic device for calling something by a name it is not, then modifying it with a contextual clue” (Williamson 2011, 29). In the structure of a kenning, the tenor is hidden in “riddlelike fashion”, within a compound structured in two elements: the gap, which gives a contextual clue, always followed by the vehicle, i.e. “disguise”. Here is the same kenning, analysed according to Williamson:

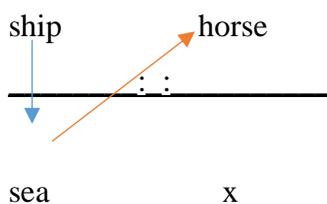
SHIP → SEA-HORSE

The structure of the kenning is still bipartite; however, with the *vehicle* and the *metaphorical gap* as two elements on one side of the equation, and the true *tenor* on the other:

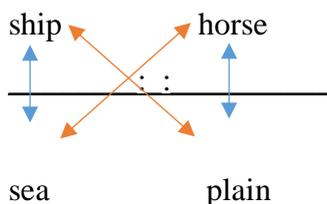
²⁶ Riddle and metaphor have been brought into a relationship as early as Aristotle, who defines riddle via metaphor in *Rhetoric*.

SHIP (=t) → SEA (=mg) – HORSE (=v)

The “horse” is, therefore, a disguise which needs to be examined from the viewpoint of possible clues offered by the *metaphorical gap*. The first step is determining the possible characteristics of “horse”, while the second is to examine them in the context of “sea” and see how they fit together. So, the question here is something like this: what is horse-like but can be found at sea? Let’s say a horse can be fast and strong enough to carry heavy loads, as well as people, it can go into battle and be a means of travel. All of that information put against “sea” produces the answer “ship”. A ship is a horse of the sea. Williamson’s view on the kenning is closer to a definition of conceptual metaphor, while Lindow’s binary formula focuses on the specific elements of expression. Nevertheless, both of them are interested in structural correspondences between the kenning and the riddle, emphasizing the kenning’s potential as “a miniature riddle” (Williamson 2011, 31), its *modus operandi* calling an entity something it is not, and its ability to generate more kennings. Discussing the kenning in *A Feast of Creatures*, Williamson (2011) devises a fractional pattern for kennings, which generates three more kennings from the existing one. The pattern groups the solution (*tenor*) and its clue in one fraction juxtaposing it to the disguise (*vehicle*) which forms another fraction, along with an unknown element. All four elements have the potential to become a *tenor*, thus generating separate kennings. Here’s the fraction of the SEA-HORSE kenning:



According to this pattern, if a ship can be a “horse of the sea” (SHIP → SEA-HORSE), other elements of the fraction can be identified in the same manner: SEA → SHIP-X, HORSE → X-SHIP, X → HORSE-SEA. The most important question, of course, is what is X. Applying the same method as before, only now with the additional knowledge that a horse is like a ship, one wonders: what is (like) the sea to a horse (which is like a ship), i.e. a horse’s sea? If a ship’s vast roaming place is the sea, then a horse’s is – the plain. The sea is a ship’s plain (SEA → SHIP-PLAIN), the plain is a horse’s sea (PLAIN → HORSE-SEA), and a horse is a ship of the plain (HORSE → PLAIN-SHIP), just as the ship is a horse of the sea. The fraction now looks like this:



The SEA-HORSE kenning is one of many contained in the Exeter Riddles. The best kennings are born from the most carefully hidden comparisons, where the connection is both unexpected and wonderful.

3.4 OTHER DEVICES

Out of other poetic/literary devices, the Exeter Riddles unanimously rely on opposition and contrast. Contrast between life and death often appears, especially when the mysterious objects were once alive, albeit in a different form, like the piece of wood in R30, or the horn in R80. In R23, vitality is “traded” for poison (*bæt þone mǎn drinc mægne **geceapap*** [i.e. “that the poison with might trades”]), and both realm of the dead and realm of the living are mentioned in R66.

An even more frequent opposition is one of strength (or power) and weakness, expressed usually via what Murphy (2011) calls “a servant-master paradox” (Murphy 2011, 183). In many a Riddle, there is an explicit servant-master relationship between two entities, usually an object and a human being. A master controls the deadly bow’s “limbs” (R23), men and women bow to the magnificent piece of wood (R30), a woman controls the “swelling thing” (R45) and binds the fierce warrior (R50) with her hands, the poker is good and true to its master (R62), as are the mysterious horn (R80) and key (R91). In a contrast of dominant and docile behaviour the roles are also easily reversed: the anchor-guardian is strong but can easily be defeated if it fails to be still (R16), the bow does not obey anyone unless skilfully handled (R23), the quietly serving flame can easily become grim and dangerous (R50), and the man who “works its will” is both a conqueror and a useful slave turned useless (R54).

Another opposition is between force and gentleness, with the harshest of entities possessing the capacity to be gentle, kind or beautiful: the thing of many teeth which hunts down roots and crops also lets them be (R34); the splendid object which “sings through its

sides” has sharp²⁷ shoulders (R70); a royal companion with a “hard tongue” also rewards singers of songs (R80).

Some of the oppositions are a one-time image, a contrast. A final product in R54 is loved with the mind but obtained with money, water becomes “bone” in R68/9, the audience is silent when presented with a song in R8 (similarly, the “garment” in R7 is silent but its adornments can sometimes sing), the horn in R80 is dark although its “ways” are not, in Riddles 75 and 76 movement is opposed to resting, and there is a significant back-and-forth movement in R91. Riddle 66 is exclusively and effectively built on contrast, to pronounce the all-encompassing character of its solution. The Riddles are also fond of oxymorons²⁸ and the tired slave is useful (R54); the trapping-garments make the wearer soar (R7); the toothy creature “ravages faithfully” (R34); the “ring” speaks with no tongue and talks silently (R48).

Generally speaking, the images used in the Exeter Riddles are vivid, senses-engaging, and often arranged in an effective succession. For example, in R1 the images of destruction escalate from the force’s “arrival” (*þōn ic astige strong*) when it “thunders mightily” (*þrymful þunie*), then sweeps over the land burning and ravaging it, followed by greyly-rising smoke, loud clamour and forest-shaking; all the way to a horrifying image of both bodies and souls somewhat grotesquely portrayed as “having a swim” in the vast amounts of flood-water (*flæsc ond gæstas somod on sunde*). The build-up is carefully conducted as the images evolve gradually. Some further examples can be found in R91, where different parts of the object’s treatment are described one after the other, or in R19, which provides some kind of head-to-toe look at what it describes, while R62 sustains a strong image of down-travel.

Some lexical items are strongly indicative of poetic language, influencing the tone, such as *hæleþ* (instead of e.g. *wer* or *mon*), *holm* (instead of e.g. *flod*), *yp* (instead of e.g. *wæg*), *secg* and *rinc* (instead of e.g. *man*), *fæðm* (instead of e.g. *bosm*), *ides* (instead of e.g. *mægþ*), *wicg* (instead of e.g. *hors*), and *æpeling* (instead of e.g. *cyning*)²⁹. There are also instances of *enjembement* (French *enjamber* “to stride over”):

Example 1: *þragum wræce / fere geond foldan* (R1) [i.e. “sometimes with havoc / I sweep the land”],

²⁷ Although, “sharp” might incline more to the meaning of “finely made” in this case.

²⁸ Meaning the oxymoron as a rhetorical device on a smaller scale, since the Riddles are filled with oppositions which often create a paradox.

²⁹ The last one may not be the best example, seeing as the Riddle in which it is used (R80) actively exploits a large vocabulary covered in by the general meaning of “ruler“, including *cyning*.

Example 2: *wrixle geneahhe / heafodwope* (R8) [i.e. “(I) vary sufficiently / (my) voice”],
eorlum bringe / blisse in burgum (R8) [i.e. “to lords I bring / joy in towns”],

Example 3: *nydep swiþe / superne secg* (R62) [i.e. “forces me strongly / (a)
southern man”].

4 CONCLUSION

In a small sample of 19 Riddles, the Exeter Riddles have been examined once more, from the dual perspective of form and content, in order to see how meaning is construed. The aspect of form focused on the categories of metre, narrative and grammatical structures and meta-structures, while the aspect of content focused on Riddle solutions, themes, manifestations of metaphor and other poetic devices. Analysis of formal categories revealed the following: a strong rule of alliteration and frequent occurrence of anacrusis as fundamental features of half-lines, several metrical patterns (with the A-type pattern as the most frequent one), three different narrative principles expressing different viewpoints (*I-am*, *I-saw* and *There-is*), variations in opening and closing structures (X+VERB(+COMPLEMENT); imperative structure, \emptyset – ending), a flexibility of word order, an extensive vocabulary, some prominent syntactic structures (three different S-V positions, prepositional and infinitive construction, negative particle construction, X-link-Y) and meta-structures. The analysis of content shed some light on the Riddle solutions (the majority of which turn out to be objects), specified themes (such as power, independence, conquest) and motifs (such as nature, or human hands), different manifestations of metaphor (personification, metonymy and the kenning), and other poetic devices (namely vivid imagery, oppositions, and the servant-master paradox). Furthermore, a final observation can be made on the categories of form and content, concerning the mutual influence of the features discovered in individual categories.

Apart from the rule of alliteration, which is a prominent feature of all Old English poetry, the Exeter Riddles do not display formulaic tendencies when regarded separately, on the level of each individual Riddle. There are, however, certain kinds of connection which become evident in the broader sense of category, and could be described as formulaic. On the formal plane, the A-type metrical pattern is closely connected to the X-link-Y structure, which is also determined by specific word class combinations. Specific structures are found in the

opening and closing Riddle-parts, and furthermore, certain narrative principles are likely to be paired with a specific type of closing structure: the *I-am* often ending in an imperative, and *There-is* often utilizing the zero-ending. On the plane of content, everything is noticeably connected to nature and everyday human experience and, moreover, the concepts of control, creation, and craft. The majority of solutions are crafted objects, and there are recognizable themes and topoi recurring throughout the Riddle corpus. The vocabulary is chosen and arranged with regard to thematic aspects; anthropomorphic inclinations resonate with the vast majority of human-related lexis and the constant personification. The same images and lexical forms are syntactically capable of fitting into different metaphorical foci. Finally, there is the constant of opposition which can be found on every level, from the opposing cultural mind-sets of Germanic and Christian origins to a one-time oxymoron, and the ever-presence of the kenning, a small-scale riddle in itself. The formula, therefore, emerges in the context of the Riddle collection.

The Riddle collection of The Exeter Book strikes as a centuries-old evidence of linguistic complexity and artistic accomplishment, modelled in the context of Anglo-Latin enigmata and oral riddle tradition. As a traditional form of linguistic communication, the riddle invites to uncover what is hidden, to exert one's mind while discovering a new perspective on reality. The Exeter Riddles, however, surpass the simpler frame of the riddle as a folkloric genre. They are works of true artistry, created with deliberate precision and skill, to communicate far more than the expected solution. As literary works – works of art and works of language, these Riddles engage the mind in a quest for a “solution” not just to the riddle per se, but also to the Riddle in its every feature, providing a fresh perspective on both text and context with every element examined. From the most frequent metrical pattern to the most unexpected kenning meaning is construed in the Exeter Riddles, enabling the recipient to embark on a fun, didactic and ritualistic task of uncovering with the mind what is carefully hidden from sight.

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6 APPENDIX A: METRICAL PATTERNS

1	7	8	16	19	23	30	34	45	48
BA AC BA AA AA DA AA AA AA DA AA AA AB AA AA AC	AA CA AB AB* AA CA AC* AB AE	CA AA AA AA DA AD* AA DA AA AD AA	AA AA AA AA DA A*B AC DA AA	B_ ³⁰ _A AA AA AA _E _D A_ _A AA	AA BC AA AD CA AB AB AA AB* BA AC AA AA AA AA	DA AA DA DE AA BA AB [DE] AB DA	BA CA AA DB* AA AB DA AA AA	BA DA CD AA EA AA	DA* AA AA AE BA AA AA AB
50	54	62	66	68	69	70	75	76	80
AA AB AC AE EC AD AA AA AA AA	AC DD DA DA AA CB AA BE AA DB AC	BE EA AC AD BA AE AA AA EA	AD AA AA AA AA BA DA AA	BC DA	AA	AB AB BB AA DA AA	BA -	BA	AA AE* AA AA AB AB AA AA DE AA
91	BA EA AA BA AA AB CA BA AA AB AA								

³⁰ The lines are instead of runic script which appears in the text of the riddle, and which has been treated as a separate form.

7 APPENDIX B: THEMES AND MOTIFS

RIDDLE	THEME(S)	MOTIFS	TOPOI
1	POWER (CONQUERING) STRENGTH JOURNEY *DESTRUCTION *CHRISTIANITY (DIVINE POWER)	[nature] trees, grove, wood [e.g. <i>wudu hrere</i> , <i>bearwas bledhwate</i> , <i>beamas fyll</i>] [warrior /destroyer/traveller] vengeance [e.g. <i>wrecan on wape</i> <i>wide sende</i>] road [e.g. <i>hwa mec on sið</i> <i>wræce</i>]	(Biblical) flood [*e.g. <i>holme gehrefed</i>]
7	JOURNEY POWER (CONQUERING)	[nature] the ground; water; air; cloud [e.g. <i>ic hrusan trede</i> ; <i>wado drefe</i> ; <i>hea lyft</i> ; <i>wolcna strengu</i>] [movement/travel] to tread; to inhabit*; to stir (in passing) [e.g. <i>ic trede</i> ; <i>buge</i> ; <i>drefe</i>] [community] dwellings; folk [e.g. <i>wic</i> ; <i>folc</i>]	swan ³¹ garment/adornment [e.g. <i>hrægl</i>]
8	INDEPENDENCE POWER (CONQUERING) STRENGTH CRAFT	[community] fort (city); dwellings [e.g. <i>blisse in burgum</i> ; <i>wicum</i>] [skill/craft] artifice; singing (voice) [e.g. <i>wrencum singe</i> ; <i>hlude crime</i> ; <i>hlude</i> <i>onhyrge</i>] [performer-audience] sitting still; preaching [e.g. <i>stille on wicum</i> <i>sitēð nigende</i> ; <i>hæleþum</i> <i>bodige</i> <i>wilcumena fela</i>]	bird as (evening-)poet ³² [e.g. <i>eald æfensceop</i>]
16	BATTLE STRENGTH POWER (CONQUERING) *JOURNEY	[nature] waves; the wind [e.g. <i>wiþ wæge winnan</i> ; <i>wiþ winde feohtan</i>] [defender/guardian] strife; to protect [e.g. <i>beom strong þæs</i> <i>gewinnes</i> ; <i>þæt ic friþian</i>	

³¹ As suggested by Williamson (2011).³² As suggested by Williamson (2011).

RIDDLE	THEME(S)	MOTIFS	TOPOI
		<i>sceal</i> strange land [e.g. <i>epel fremde</i>]	
19	STRENGTH POWER INDEPENDENCE JOURNEY	[nature] (creature) horse; hawk [e.g. <i>hors</i> ; <i>haofoc</i>] plain/field [e.g. <i>swiþne ofer sælwong</i>] [hero (*warrior)] war-strength [e.g. <i>hildeþrype</i>] [movement/travel] to run; pathway; voyage [e.g. <i>swiþe þrægan</i> ; <i>rynestrong on rade</i> ; <i>swylcra siþfæt</i>]	kenning: sea-horse=ship ³³
23	BATTLE STRENGTH POWER (CONQUERING)	weapon; arrow [e.g. <i>wiht on gewin sceapen</i> ; <i>ætren onga</i>] poison [e.g. <i>ætren onga</i> ; <i>attor</i> ; <i>mandrinc</i>] [community] trade (to bargain) [e.g. <i>mægne geceapap</i>] [master-servant] the willing [e.g. <i>waldend</i>]	(battle-)bow as death-bringer ³⁴
30	BATTLE JOURNEY MOBILITY, TRANSFORMATION *CHRISTIANITY (DIVINE POWER)	[nature] flame; wind; the weather; fire; grove; coal [e.g. <i>legbysig</i> ; <i>winde</i> ; <i>wedre</i> ; <i>fyre gebysgad</i> ; <i>bearu blowende</i> ; <i>byrnende gled</i>] [master-servant] to worship [e.g. <i>hi onhnigað to me</i>] [community] hands; men, women [e.g. <i>oft mec gesiþas sendað æfter hondum</i> ; <i>þā mec weras ond wif wlonce cyssað</i>]	human hand
34	POWER INDEPENDENCE STRENGTH JOURNEY	[nature] (creature) teeth; snout [e.g. <i>hafað fela toþa nebb biþ hyre æt nytte</i>] roots; plain [e.g. <i>wyrte seceð</i> ; <i>on stapolwonge</i>]	

³³ As suggested by Williamson (2011).

³⁴ As suggested by Williamson (2011).

RIDDLE	THEME(S)	MOTIFS	TOPOI
		[servant/guardian] to feed; to let be* [e.g. <i>þæt feoh fedeð; læteð hio</i>] [community] fort (city), home, wall(s) [e.g. <i>wera burgum; to ham tyhð; geond weallas</i>] [motion] to go, to search [e.g. <i>niperweard gongeð; wæpeð geond weallas</i>]	
45	POWER (CONQUERING) STRENGTH INDEPENDENCE	[master-servant] prince; to grasp; proud-minded [e.g. <i>þeodnes dohtor; bryd grapode; hygewlonc</i>]	human hand (woman's) garment/cloth [e.g. <i>hrægl</i>]
48	INDEPENDENCE STRENGTH *CHRISTIANITY (DIVINE POWER)	[community] hero, ring* [e.g. <i>fer hælepum hringende an</i>] treasure; hero [e.g. <i>sinc for secgum</i>] runes, incantation; to proclaim [e.g. <i>ryne; guman galdorcwide; swa se hring gecwæð</i>]	
50	BATTLE STRENGTH POWER (CONQUERING)	[destroyer/protector] warrior, enemy [e.g. <i>wiga is on eorþan; feond his feonde</i>] [master-servant] use; to bind; to press [e.g. <i>dryhtum to nytte; wif hine wrið; þeowap him gebwære</i>]	*implied (woman's) hand in handling the entity [e.g. <i>wif hine wrið</i>] i.e. "a woman binds him"
54	STRENGTH INDEPENDENCE POWER (CONQUERING) CREATION; CRAFT	[warrior/youth] (fierce) young man [e.g. <i>hyse cwom gangan; hror hægstaldmon</i>] [master-servant] servant, slave, work [e.g. <i>þegn onnette; tillic esne; werig þæs weorces</i>] upward movement: to lift; to grow [e.g. <i>hof his agen hrægl hondum up; hyre weaxan ongon</i>]	human hand (man's) garment/cloth [e.g. <i>hrægl</i>]
62	INDEPENDENCE STRENGTH POWER (CONQUERING)	[master-servant] ruler, man(hero), to drive [e.g. <i>freat unforcuð; se mec on þyð</i>]	garment/cloth [e.g. <i>hrægl</i>]

RIDDLE	THEME(S)	MOTIFS	TOPOI
	JOURNEY	<i>æftanweardne hæleð; nydeþ swiþe superne secg</i> warrior / hero [e.g. <i>rinc bið on ofeste</i>] [motion (travel from-to, down)] under, southern man [e.g. <i>wade under wambe; superne secg</i>]	
66	INDEPENDENCE POWER (CONQUERING; DIVINE) JOURNEY	[nature] the moon, the sun, plain, sea-stream [e.g. <i>mona; sunne; grene wongas; merestreamas</i>] [encompassing motion] to reach, to fill, to surpass [e.g. <i>wide ræce; eorþan gefylle; heofonas oferstige; helle underhinge</i>] [*embrace] lap, bosom [e.g. <i>on fæðmum; þas foldan bearm</i>]	*creation (Biblical)= the events of Genesis
68/69	JOURNEY INDEPENDENCE TRANSFORMATION	[movement/travel] path; to fare [e.g. <i>on weg feran</i>] [nature] water [e.g. <i>wæter wearð to bane</i>]	
70	STRENGTH JOURNEY POWER (CONQUERING)	[master-servant] use [e.g. <i>hæleþum to nytte</i>] path: destiny (road); way (road) [e.g. <i>his gesceapo; be wege stonde</i>]	
75/76	JOURNEY INDEPENDENCE	[movement/travel] path; to fare [e.g. <i>on swaþe feran</i>] fixedness: to sit [e.g. <i>ane idese sittan</i>]	urination ³⁵
80	JOURNEY POWER BATTLE STRENGTH	[master-servant/companion] shoulder-companion, warrior, comrade [e.g. <i>eaxlgestealla; fyrdrinces gefara; geselda</i>] [community] lord, queen, earl, daughter, king, prophet (orator) [e.g. <i>freat minum; cwen;</i>	human hand (man's)

³⁵ As suggested by Williamson (2011).

RIDDLE	THEME(S)	MOTIFS	TOPOI
		<p><i>eorles dohtor; cyninges geselda; woþbora</i> steed; army [e.g. <i>wicge ride herges on ende</i>] reward [e.g. <i>oft ic wordleana agyfe</i>]</p>	
91	<p>CREATION STRENGTH POWER (CONQUERING)</p>	<p>[craft/tool-weapon] hammer, javelin, file [e.g. <i>homere geburen; searopila wund; sworfen feole</i>] [<i>master-servant</i>] ruler, lord [e.g. <i>mīnes frean; min hlaford</i>] guardian/treasure [e.g. <i>hyrde þæs hordes</i>] [warrior] deadly power [e.g. <i>he of life het wælcraef awrecan</i>]</p>	<p>*implied use of a (man's) hand: the process of forging + [e.g. <i>þōn min hlaford wile lafe picgan</i>] i.e. "when my master wants to hold what is left"</p>

8 APPENDIX C: RIDDLE TEXTS

Riddle 1

Hwylc is hæleþa þæs horsc ond þæs
hygecræftig
þæt þæt mæge asecgan, hwa mec on sið
wræce,
þonne ic astige strong, stundum reþe,
þrymful þunie, þragum wræce
fere geond foldan, folcsalo bærne,
ræced reafige? Recas stigað,
haswe ofer hrofum. Hlin bið on eorþan,
wælcwealm wera, þonne ic wudu hrere,
bearwas bledhwate, beamas fülle,
holme gehrefed, **heahum** meahtum
wrecen on waþe, wide sended;
hæbbe me on hrycge þæt ær hadas wreah
foldbuendra, flæsc ond gæstas,
somod on sunde. Saga hwa mec þecce,
opþe hu ic hatte, þe þa hlæst bere.

Riddle 7

Hrægl min swigað, þonne ic hrusan trede,
opþe þa wic buge, opþe wado drefe.
Hwilum mec ahebbað ofer hæleþa byht
hyrste mine, ond þeos hea lyft,
ond mec þonne wide wolcna strengu
ofer folc byreð. Frætwe mine
swogað hlude ond swinsiað,
torhte singað, þonne ic getenge ne beom
flode ond foldan, ferende gæst.

Riddle 8

Ic þurh muþ sprece mongum reordum,
wrencum singe, wrixle geneahhe

heafodwoþe, hlude cirme,
healde mine wisan, hleoþre ne miþe,
eald æfensceop, eorlum bringe
blisse in burgum, þonne ic bugendre
stefne styrme; stille on wicum
sittað nigende. Saga hwæt ic hatte,
þe swa scirenige sceawendwisan
hlude onhyrge, hæleþum bodige
wilcumena fela woþe minre.

Riddle 16

Oft ic sceal wiþ wæge winnan ond wiþ
winde feohtan,
somod wið þam sæcce, þonne ic secan
gewite
eorþan yþum þeaht; me biþ se eþel fremde.
Ic beom strong þæs gewinnes, gif ic stille
weorþe;

gif me þæs tosæleð, hi beoð swiþran þonne
ic,
ond mec slitende sona flymað,
willað opfergan þæt ic friþian sceal.
Ic him þæt forstonde, gif min steort þolað
ond mec stiþne wiþ stanas moton
fæste gehabban. Frige hwæt ic hatte.

Riddle 19

Ic **on siþe** seah 𐌺 𐌹 𐌺
H̅ hygewloncne, heafodbeorhtne,
swiftne ofer sælwong swiþe þrægan.
Hæfde him on hrycge hildeþryþe

† F M nægledne rad

F † M P. Widlast ferede

rynestrong on rade rofne l F

∫ F F H. For wæs þy beorhtre,

swylcra sipfæt. Saga hwæt ic hatte.

Riddle 23

Agof is min noma eft onhwyrfed;

ic eom wrætlic wiht on gewin sceapen.

þonne ic onbuge, ond me of bosme fareð

ætren onga, ic beom eallgearo

þæt ic me þæt feorhbealo feor aswape.

Sipþan me se waldend, se me þæt wite

gescop,

leoþo forlæteð, ic beo lengre þonne ær,

oppæt ic spæte, spilde geblonden,

ealfelo attor þæt ic ær gearp.

Ne togongeð þæs gumena hwylcum,

ænigum eape þæt ic þær ymb sprice,

gif hine hrineð þæt me of hrife fleogeð,

þæt þone mandrinc mægne geceapaþ,

fullwered fæste feore sine.

Nelle ic unbunden ænigum hyran

nymþe searosæled. Saga hwæt ic hatte.

Riddle 30

Ic eom legbysig, lace mid winde,

bewunden mid wuldre, wedre gesomnad,

fus forðweges, fyre gebysgad,

bearu blowende, byrnende gled.

Ful oft mec gesiþas sendað æfter hondum,

þæt mec weras ond wif wlonce cyssað.

þonne ic mec onhæbbe, ond hi **onhnigap** to

me

monige mid miltse, þær ic monnum sceal
ycan upcyme eadignesse.

Riddle 34

Ic wiht geseah in wera burgum,

seo þæt feoh fedeð. Hafað fela toþa;

nebb biþ hyre æt nytte, niþerweard gongeð,

hiþeð holdlice ond to ham tyhð,

wæþeð geond weallas, wyrte seceð;

aa heo þa findeð, þa þe fæst ne biþ;

læteð hio þa wlitigan, wyrtum fæste,

stille stondan on stapolwonge,

beorhte blican, blowan ond growan.

Riddle 45

Ic on wincle gefrægn **weaxan** nathwæt,

þindan ond þunian, þecene hebban;

on þæt banlease bryd grapode,

hygewlonc hondum, hrægle þeahthe

þrindende þing þeodnes dohtor.

Riddle 48

Ic gefrægn **for** hælepum hring endean,

torhtne butan tungan, tila þeah he hlude

stefne ne cirmde, strongum wordum.

Sinc for secgum swigende cwæð:

"Gehæle mec, helpend gæsta."

Ryne ongietan readan goldes

guman galdorcwide, gleawe **bepencan**

hyra hælo to gode, swa se hring gecwæð.

Riddle 50

Wiga is on eorþan wundrum acenned

dryhtum to nytte, of dumbum twam

torht atyhted, þone on teon wigeð
feond his feonde. **Forstrangne** oft
wif hine wrið; he him wel hereð,
þeowaþ him geþwære, gif him þegnað
mægeð ond mæg gas mid gemete ryhte,
fedað hine fægre; he him fremum stepeð
life on lissum. Leanað grimme
þam þe hine wloncne weorþan læteð.

Riddle 54

Hyse cwom gangan, þær he hie wisse
standan in winsele, stop feorran to,
hror hægstealdmon, hof his agen
hrægl hondum up, **hrand** under gyrdels
hyre stondendre stiþes nathwæt,
worhte his willan; wagedan buta.
þegn onnette, wæs þragum nyt
tillic esne, teorode hwæpre
æt stunda gehwam strong ær þon **hio**,
werig þæs weorces. Hyre weaxan ongon
under gyrdelse þæt oft gode men
ferðpum freogað ond mid feo bicgað.

Riddle 62

Ic eom heard ond scarp, **hingonges** strong,
forðsiþes from, frean unforcuð,
wade under wambe ond me weg sylfa
ryhtne geryme. Rinc bið on ofeste,
se mec on þyð æftanweardne,
hæleð mid hrægle; hwilum ut tyhð
of hole hatne, hwilum eft fareð
on nearo nathwær, nydeþ swiþe
suþerne secg. Saga hwæt ic hatte.

Riddle 66

Ic eom mare þonne þes **middangeard**,
læsse þonne hondwurm, leohre þonne
mona,
swiftre þonne sunne. Sæs me sind ealle
flodas on fæðmum ond **þes** foldan bearm,
grene wongas. Grundum ic hrine,
helle underhnige, heofonas oferstige,
wuldres eþel, wide ræce
ofer engla eard, eorþan gefylle,
ealne middangeard ond merestreamas
side mid **me** sylfum. Saga hwæt ic hatte.

Riddle 68

Ic þa wiht geseah on weg feran;
heo wæs wrætlice wundrum gegierwed.

Riddle 69

Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to
bane.

Riddle 70

Wiht is wrætlic þam þe **hyre** wisan ne conn.
Singeð þurh sidan. Is se sweora woh,
orþoncum geworht; hafaþ eaxle tua
scarp on gescyldrum. His gesceapo
dreogeð

þe swa wrætlice be wege stonde
heah ond hleortorht hælepum to nytte.

Riddle 75

Ic swiftne geseah on swaþe feran
M † † H.

Riddle 76

Ic ane geseah idese sittan.

Riddle 80

Ic eom æþelinges eaxlgestealla,
 fyrdrinces gefara, frean minum leof,
 cyninges geselda. Cwen mec hwilum
 hwitlocedu hond on legeð,

eorles dohtor, þeah hio æþelu sy.

Hæbbe me on bosme þæt on bearwe
 geweox.

Hwilum ic on wloncum wicge ride
 herges on ende; heard is min tunge.

Oft ic woðboran wordleana sum

agyfe æfter giedde. Good is min wise
 ond ic sylfa salo. Saga hwæt ic hatte.

Riddle 91

Min heafod is homere geþuren,
 searopila wund, sworfen feole.
 Oft ic begine þæt me ongean sticað,
 þonne ic hnitan sceal, hringum gyrded,

hearde wið heardum, hindan þyrel,

forð ascufan þæt mines frean

mod ƿ freoþað middelnihum.

Hwilum ic under bæc bregde nebbe,

hyrde þæs hordes, þonne min hlaford wile

lafe þicgan þara þe he of life het

wælcraefte awrecan willum sinum.

9 APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY

(ge)hælan, v. *to heal, to cure; to save*

(to)gongan, v. *to go*

acenned, adj. *born*

æfensceop, n. *evening-singer*

ænig, pron. *anyone*

æpeling, n. *king, Christ, god; nobleman*

ætren, adj. *poisonous; poisoned*

agen, adj. *own*

agyfian, v. *to bestow, to grant*

ahebban, v. *to lift up; to support, to uphold*

an, num. *one*

ascufan, v. *to drive away/out; to banish*

asecgan, v. *to speak out, to declare*

astigan, v. *to rise, to ascend*

aswapan, v. *to sweep off; to clean, to remove*

attor, n. *poison, venom*

atyhted, adj. *produced; enticed*

awrecan, v. *to thrust out; to drive away*

bærnan, v. *to cause to burn*

ban, n. *bone*

banleas, adj. *boneless*

beam, n. *tree*

bearm, n. *lap; bosom*

bearu, n. *grove*

beon, v. *to be*

beorht, adj. *bright, brilliant, clear*

beran, v. *to bear, to carry*

bepencan, v. *to consider; to remember*

bewunden, adj. *entwined, surrounded*

bicgan, v. *to buy, to procure*

blican, v. *to sparkle*

bliss, n. *bliss, joy*

blowan, v. *to bloom*

blowende, adj. *blooming*

bodian, v. *to announce; to preach, to foretell*

boga, n. *bow (weapon)*

bosum, n. *bosom; womb; surface*

bregdan, v. *to move quickly; to swing; to pull*

bringan, v. *to bring*

bugan, v. *to inhabit*

bugendre, adj. *bowing*

burg, n. *fort; city*

byht , n. <i>dwelling</i>	ende , n. <i>end</i>
byran , v. <i>see beran</i>	engel , n. <i>angel</i>
byrd , n. <i>birth</i>	eorl , n. <i>earl; nobleman</i>
byrnende , adj. <i>burning</i>	eorþe , n. <i>earth; ground, soil</i>
criman , v. <i>to cry out, to shriek</i>	esne , n. <i>slave</i>
cunnan , v. <i>to know</i>	epel , n. <i>realm, land</i>
cwæðan , v. <i>to say; to order</i>	fæðm , n. <i>embrace</i>
cwen , n. <i>woman; wife, consort, queen</i>	fægre , adv. <i>fairly, elegantly</i>
cyning , n. <i>king</i>	fæst(e) , adj. <i>fast, firm; secure</i>
cyssan , v. <i>to kiss</i>	fedan , v. <i>to feed, to nourish</i>
dohtor , n. <i>daughter</i>	fela , n. <i>many (things)</i>
drefan , v. <i>to stir up; to agitate</i>	feoh , n. <i>wealth; cattle</i>
dreogan , v. <i>to work; to perform an action</i>	feohtan , v. <i>to fight, to combat</i>
dryht , n. <i>multitude; army, people</i>	feol , n. <i>file</i>
dumb , adj. <i>mute</i>	feond , n. <i>adversary, foe, enemy</i>
eadigness , n. <i>happiness, prosperity</i>	feor(r) , adj. <i>far</i>
ealfel , adj. <i>very baleful</i>	feorh , n. <i>life; soul, spirit</i>
eall , adv. <i>all</i>	feorhbealo , n. <i>life-woe</i>
eallgearo , adj. <i>all-ready</i>	fer(i)an , v. <i>to carry to convey; to go/come, to depart</i>
eard , n. <i>native soil, land</i>	ferðþ , n. <i>soul, spirit; the mind</i>
eap , adv. <i>easily</i>	ferende , adj. <i>mobile</i>
eaxel , n. <i>shoulder</i>	findan , v. <i>to find</i>
eaxlgestella , n. <i>shoulder-companion, bosom friend</i>	flæsc , n. <i>flesh</i>
	fleogan , v. <i>to fly; to flee, to take flight</i>

flod, n. *water flow; wave, stream*

flyman, v. *to cause to flee*

FOGA, n. see **boga**

folc, n. *folk, people*

folcsæl, n. *house*

foldbuend, n. *earth-dweller; inhabitant*

folde, n. *the ground, soil; dry land*

forðsíp, n. *departure (forth-going)*

forlætan, v. *to let go, to relinquish; to surrender*

forstandan, v. *to stand before*

forstrang, adj. *very strong*

frætwe, n. *adornments; armour*

frea, n. *ruler, lord, master; king*

fremde, adj. *foreign, alien; unfriendly*

fremu, n. *advantage; gain, benefit*

freogan, v. *to liberate; to love, to embrace*

freoþan, v. *to draw forth*

frignan, v. *to ask, to inquire*

friþian, v. *to make/keep peace; to protect*

from, adj. *firm, strong; bold*

fullwer, n. *full atonement*

fus, adj. *ready, prepared; eager, willing*

fyllan, v. *to cause to fall*

fyrdriuc, n. *man of arms; warrior, soldier*

fyre, n. *fire*

gæst, n. *soul, spirit; guest*

gangan, v. see **gongan**

gebysgad, adj. *afflicted, occupied*

gebysgian, v. *to occupy; to afflict, to trouble, to vex*

geceapian, v. *to bargain; to trade, to purchase*

gefara, n. *travelling companion; comrade*

gefillan, v. *to fill; to make complete*

gegirwed, adj. *prepared; adorned*

gehabban, v. *to hold; to keep in possession*

gemet, adj. *fit, proper; right*

geneahe, adv. *enough, sufficiently*

geopan, v. *to take in gaping*

gesceapo, n. *shape; fate*

gescyldru, n. *the shoulders, back*

geselda, n. *one of the same dwelling; companion, comrade*

gesíp, n. *a companion, follower*

gesomnad, adj. *assembled*

getenge, adj. *near to*

geþuren, adj. *forged*

geþwære, adj. *accordant, compliant; peaceful*

geþweran, v. *to stir, to beat; to forge*

gewin, n. *battle*

gewitan, v. *to learn; to understand*

geworht, adj. *made*

gewyrca, v. *to work; to make/build/form*

giedd, n. *song, poem; proverb, riddle, tale*

gladorcwide, n. *incantation*

gleaw(e), adv. *well; wisely, prominently*

gled, n. *ember, glowing coal; flame*

GLOSSARY

god, n. *goodness, god*

gold, n. *gold*

good, adj. *good*

grapian, v. *to feel for (with one's hand); to lay hold of, to seize*

grene, adj. *green*

grimme, adj. *fierce, savage*

growan, v. *to grow*

grund, n. *ground*

guma, n. *human being; lord, hero*

gyrdan, v. *to gird; to bind round*

gyrded, adj. *girded*

gyrdel, n. *girdle*

habban, v. *to have*

had, n. *condition, state*

hægstealdmon, n. *young bachelor*

HÆLEND, n. *healer, saviour*

hæleþ, n. *man; warrior, hero*

ham, n. *home*

HAOFOC, n. *hawk*

haswe, adv. *greyly*

hat, adj. *hot, flaming*

hatan, v. *to be called; to command, to summon*

hea(h), adj. *high, aloft*

heafod, n. *head*

heafodbeorht, adj. *with a splendid shining head*

heafodwop, n. *voice*

healdan, v. *to hold, to keep grasp of; to restrain, to contain*

heard, adj. *hard*

hebban, v. *see a-hebban*

hell, n. *hell; underworld*

- helpend**, n. *helper*
- heofon**, n. *heaven; the sky*
- here**, n. *army*
- hildeþyrþ**, n. *war(rior)-strength*
- hingang**, n. *departure (hence-going)*
- hlæst**, n. *burden, load*
- hlaford**, n. *lord, master; husband*
- hleoðor**, n. *noise, sound*
- hleortorht**, adj. *beautiful*
- hlud(e)**, adj. *loud*
- hlyn**, n. *clamor; noise*
- hnitan**, v. *to strike; to come against with a shock*
- hol**, n. *hole*
- holdlic(e)**, adj. *graciously, with kindness or devotion; friendly*
- holm**, n. *mound, hill; a rising ground*
- homer**, n. *hammer*
- hond**, n. *hand*
- hondwurm**, n. *hand-worm*
- hord**, n. *treasure*
- HORS**, n. *horse*
- horsc**, adj. *quick; sharp, witty*
- hrægl**, n. *garment; cloth; armour*
- hreran**, v. *to move by shaking; to agitate*
- hrif**, n. *womb, belly*
- hrinan**, v. *to touch, to lay hold of*
- hrindan**, v. *to thrust; to push*
- hring**, n. *ring; a circle, link of charm*
- hrof**, n. *roof(top)*
- hror**, adj. *agile, nimble; vigorous, strong*
- hruse**, n. *earth; soil, ground*
- hrycg**, n. *back, spine*
- hwitlocced**, adj. *fair-haired*
- hwylca**, n. *pustule, boil*
- hyðan**, v. *to plunder; to lay waste*
- hygecræftig**, adj. *wise, prudent; sagacious*
- hygewlanc**, adj. *haughty, proud; of an elated mind*
- hyra**, n. *interest*
- hyran**, v. *to obey*
- hyrd**, n. *keeper, guard*
- hyrst**, n. *ornament; armour, equipment*
- hyse**, n. *son, youth; warrior*
- ican** [ycan], v. *to augment*
- ides**, n. *virgin; woman, wife; lady, queen*

lacan, v. *to move up and down; to leap; to play*

læss, adv. *less*

lætan, v. *to allow*

lætan, v. *to let, to allow*

laf, n. *what is left, remains*

leanian, v. *to reward, to recompense*

lecgan, v. *to lay; to place*

legbysig, adj. *fire-busy*

leng, adj. *long*

leof, adj. *dear, valued; beloved, agreeable*

leoht, adj. *light, bright; shiny, clear*

leoþ, n. *song, poem*

lif, n. *life*

liss, n. *grace, love; kindness, peace*

lyft, n. *air, breeze; the sky*

ma, adv. *more*

mæcg, n. *man; disciple, son*

mægð, n. *young girl, maiden; woman*

mægen, n. *bodily strength; might, vigor*

mandrinc, n. *poison(ous drink)*

meaht, n. *power*

merestream, n. *sea-steram*

middangeard, n. *the Earth; middle-residence*

middelniht, n. *midnight*

milts, n. *mercy, compassion; joy*

mipan, v. *to hide; to conceal oneself*

mogan [magan], v. *to be able to, to have power to; to be allowed to*

MON, n. *man*

mona, n. *the moon*

mong, num. *many*

monn, n. *man, elder-man; minister*

moton [motan], v. *to be permitted to*

muþ, n. *mouth*

nægledne, adj. *not nailed*

nathwær, n. *somewhere*

nathwæt, n. *something*

nearo, adj. *narrow, confined*

nebb, n. *beak-shaped thing; nose*

nigende, adj.

niperweard, adv. *downward*

noma, n. *name*

nydan [nidan], v. *to force, to compell*

nyt, adj. *useful*

nytt, n. *use, utility; advantage*

oferstigan, v. *to climb over; to surmount*

ofest, n. *envy; hatred, spite; rivalry*

onbugan, v. *to bend, to yield; to bow, to submit to*

onga [anga], n. *sting*

ongietan, v. *to grasp; to understand*

onhabban [ahabban], v. *to restrain*

onhingan, v. *to bend down, to bow; to worship*

onhwyrfan, v. *to turn; to invert*

onhwyrfed, adj. *inverted*

onhyran, v. *to imitate*

oþfer(i)an, v. *to take away*

rad, n. *riding; journey*

ræcan, v. *to reach; to extend*

ræced, n. *hall; palace*

reafian, v. *to plunder; to ravage, to waste*

rec, n. *smoke*

reord, n. *voice; language, speech*

repe, adj. *fierce, cruel; severe, savage*

ridan, v. *to ride (on horseback)*

riht, n. *that which is right; straight*

rinc, n. *man; warrior, hero*

rof, adj. *vigorous, strong; brave, noble*

ryht, adj. *right; straight, erect, direct*

ryne, n. *mysterious saying, mystic rite*

rynestrang, adj. *strong on the course*

sæ, n. *the sea*

sæccan, v. *to fight*

sælan, v. *to fasten with a cord, to bind*

sælwang, n. *a fertile plain*

salo, adj. *dark, dusky*

sceapen, adj. *shaped*

scearp, adj. *sharp; pointed, prickly*

sceawendwise, n. *a jesting song*

scippan, v. *to shape, to form*

sculan, v. *shall*

searosæled, adj. *skilfully tied with a cord*

searupil, n. *javelin*

secan, v. *to seek*

secg, n. *man; warrior, hero; sword*

secgan, v. *to say*

sendan, v. *to send*

seon, v. *to see*

side, adv. *widely, extensively*

side, n. *side, flank*

sinc, n. *treasure, riches*

singan, v. *to sing*

sip, n. *journey, expedition*

sip, n. *travel, voyage*

sipfæt, n. *journey, voyage, expedition*

sittan, v. *to sit*

slitende, adj. *torn, slit*

somod, adv. *together*

spætan, v. *to spit*

spild, n. *annihilation, destruction*

sprecan, v. *to speak*

sprican, v. *to speak*

stan, n. *stone*

stapolwang, n. *settling-place; a plain
to establish oneself in*

stefn, n. *voice*

steort, n. *tail*

stepan, v. *to elevate; to enrich, to
adorn*

steppan, v. *to step; to advance*

stician, v. *to stab, to pierce*

stigan, v. *to go; to reach*

still(e), adj. *still, calm; quiet*

stip, adj. *stiff, firm*

stondan, v. *to stand*

stondendre, adj. *standing*

strengu, n. *strength*

strong, adj. *strong*

stund, n. *a short period of time*

styrman, v. *to storm; to make a great
noise ; to cry out loudly*

sund, n. *capacity for swimming*

sunne, n. *the sun*

superne, adj. *southern*

swap, n. *mark of a single or a series of
footsteps*

sweora, n. *neck*

swift, adj. *fleet, quick*

swig(i)an, v. *to be silent; to not make
noise*

swigende, adj. *silent*

swinsian, v. *to sound melodiously*

swip, adj. *strong, mighty, powerful*

swogan, v. *to make a sound; to move
with noise*

teon, n. *hurt, damage; vexation*

teon, v. *to pull, to drag*

teorod, adj. *tired*

þeccan, v. *to conceal, to cover*

þeccan, v. *to cover*

þecen, n. *covering; roof*

þegnian, v. *to serve*

þeoden, n. *prince, king*

þeowan, v. *to press with a weapon; to urge*

þeowian, v. *to serve*

þicgan, v. *to take; to receive*

þindan, v. *to swell*

þing, n. *thing*

þolian, v. *to suffer, to endure punishment*

þrægan, v. *to run*

þrag, n. *a longer period of time*

þrindende, adj. *growing, swelling*

þrymful, adj. *glorious, magnificent*

þunian, v. *to portrude*

þunian, v. *to stand out; to roar, to crash with thunder*

þyrel, adj. *pierced; full of holes*

tillic, adj. *fit, good*

torht(e), adj. *splendid; clear*

tosælan, v. *to fail*

toþ, n. *tooth*

treddan, v. *to tread; to roam*

tung, n. *tongue*

tyhtan, v. *to pull*

unbunden, adj. *unbound*

underhingan, v. *to sink under*

unforcuð, adj. *good, honorable, noble*

unnytt, n. *see nytt*

upcyme, adj. *upcoming*

wadan, v. *to go; to pass*

wæd, n. *ford; water, sea; shallow water (that may be traversed)*

wæg, n. *water, wave; flood, the sea*

wælcraeft, n. *deadly power*

wæter, n. *water*

wæþan, v. *to wander; to hunt*

wagian, v. *to shake; to swing*

waldend, adj. *willing*

wamb, n. *belly, stomach, bowels; heart*

wang, n. *grassy plain*

wap, n. *wandering; journey, pursuit*

weall, n. *wall*

weder, n. *the weather*

WEG, n. *way, path, road; journey*

wegan, v. *to carry; to support, to sustain*

welcwælm, n. *death-pang; a violent death*

weorc, n. *work, labour*

weorþan, v. *to become*

wer, n. *man*

werig, adj. *weary, tired*

wexan, v. *to grow*

wic, n. *habitation; village, house*

wicg, n. *horse, steed*

wide, adj. *wide*

widlast, n. *a wide-stretching road*

wif, n. *woman; lady*

wiga, n. *warrior*

wiht, n. *thing; person, creature*

wilcumena, adj. *welcome*

will, n. *will*

willan, v. *will*

wincel, n. *corner*

wincsæl, n. *corner-dwelling*

wind, n. *wind*

winnan, v. *to labor; to contradict, to struggle*

wise, n. *way, manner; custom*

wissian, v. *to direct, to instruct; to point out*

wite, n. *punishment, torture*

wlitig, adj. *radiant, beautiful*

wlonc, adj. *splendidly adorned with gold*

woh, adj. *bent, crooked; twisted*

wolcen, n. *cloud; the sky*

word, n. *word*

wordlean, n. *reward*

wop, n. *sound, noise; poetry, eloquence*

wopbora, n. *orator, speaker; prophet, seer*

wræcan, v. *to drive, to impel; to push*

wrætlic(e), adj. *wondrous; artistic, ornamental, rare*

wrecen, adj. *vengeful*

wrenc, n. *trick*

wreon, v. *to cover, to envelop; to protect*

wrixlan, v. *to change; to vary, to alter*

wudu, n. *wood, tree; forest*

wuldor, n. *glory, splendor*

wund, adj. *wounded*

wundor, n. *wonder, miracle*

wundrum, adv. *wondrously*

WYNN, n. *joy*

wyrcan, v. *to perform; to make work*

wyrt, n. *herb; plant, root*

yp, n. *a wave of the sea; any flowing water*