The Exeter Book *Riddles*: authorship and transmission

PETER ORTON

ABSTRACT

The Exeter Book *Riddles* are anonymous, and the generally formulaic character of all Old English verse discourages attempts to establish unity or diversity of authorship for them; but correlations between the sequence of *Riddles* in the manuscript and the recurrence from poem to poem of aspects of form, content (including solutions), presentation and style sometimes suggest common authorship for particular runs of texts, or reveal shaping episodes in the collection's transmission. Investigation along these lines throws up clear differences between the two main blocks of *Riddles* (1–59 and 61–95), and evidence emerges that the composition of many (at least) of *Riddles* 61–95 was influenced by a reading of *Riddles* 1–59.

Were the Exeter Book *Riddles* all composed by the same poet? F. Dietrich, writing in 1865, thought that Cynewulf might have been responsible for the whole collection.[1] Later scholars have distrusted the attribution, but the broader question of unity or diversity of authorship remains largely unexplored. There are, of course, good reasons for uncertainty on this point. None of the *Riddles* incorporates or attaches to their texts the name of the poet who composed them. In this they resemble most of the other Old English poems that survive, the best-known exceptions being the four poems by Cynewulf himself, revealed as his by runic spellings of his name ingeniously embedded in their texts.[2] Evidence drawn from the context in which Old English poems are preserved can sometimes suggest a particular individual as author, as in the case of *Cædmon's Hymn*; but there is no evidence of this kind for the *Riddles*. Stylistic criteria might be expected to help us to identify the work of particular anonymous poets; but the homogeneous style of Old English verse means that individual poetic voices do not emerge clearly. It has long been appreciated that all this poetry, of which some thirty thousand lines survive, follows a set of metrical conventions with a high level of consistency; but since the

[1] F. Dietrich, 'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs: Verfasser, Weitere Lösungen', *ZDA* 12 (1865), 232–52. Dietrich's views are criticized at length in *The Riddles of the Exeter Book*, ed. F. Tupper, Jr (Boston, 1910), pp. liii–lxxix.

[2] *The Fates of the Apostles* and *Elene* in the Vercelli Book, and *Christ II* and *Juliana* in the Exeter Book.

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oral-formulaic theory of Parry and Lord was first applied to it in the 1950s, the web of recurrent verbal collocations and themes pervading the entire corpus has also been recognized as a reflection of the adherence by all poets to a common, conservative, originally oral tradition of poetic composition developed among the Germanic peoples of continental Europe from whom the Anglo-Saxons emerged. The strength of this legacy from tradition is such that we have no reliable methods for establishing common authorship for two or more texts, or for distinguishing one anonymous Old English poet's work from another's. The Old English *Riddles* represent a single genre within the larger poetic tradition, so it is not surprising that they are linked together by an especially dense network of repetitions and close similarities in motif, phraseology, vocabulary and general treatment. Tupper, in the introduction to his 1910 edition of the *Riddles*, made a useful survey of these links.[3] Like Dietrich before him, he concluded that they point to a single poet (not, in Tupper's view, Cynewulf) for most but not all of the *Riddles*;[4] but this was long before oral-formulaic theory taught us to see such links and echoes, not as marks of shared authorship, but as manifestations of the habitual use by all Old English poets of a similar body of conventional phrases, themes and structures.

Here the question of common or diverse authorship will be explored by reference to the order in which the *Riddles* are presented in the manuscript. A collection of over ninety riddles seems unlikely to be the work of the same number of individuals; some poets will surely have contributed more than one *Riddle* to the collection. If we discount the possibility that the compiler deliberately shuffled his texts – an unlikely procedure, perhaps, in a medieval context, where editorial manipulations of this sort would be much more difficult than they are today – it would not be surprising if the series contained some sequences of riddles by the same poet. With this hypothesis in mind, I shall draw attention here to correlations between the sequence of texts in the manuscript and the recurrence within them of various features.[5] The identification

[3] *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, pp. lxvi–lxxv. See also Dietrich, 'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', pp. 243–5.

[4] *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, pp. lxxviii–lxxxix. Tupper was disturbed by what he saw as the 'servilely imitative temper' of Aldhelm's translator in *Riddles 35* and *40*, contrasting it with the 'unchecked range of imagination' reflected by the 'Storm' riddles (*1–3*) with which the collection begins, though of course a poet using an existing work as a source will almost inevitably be less inventive than when working without any particular model.

[5] The order in which the *Riddles* appear in the manuscript was, until recently, generally regarded as insignificant, or at least beyond the reach of modern interpretation. See *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*, ed. C. Williamson (Chapel Hill, NC, 1977), which notes the threefold division of the *Riddles* into scribal blocks but suspects 'that the Anglo-Saxon notion of poetic order remains simply too far removed from our modern sensibilities to be comprehended' (p. 5). Williamson refers to K. Sisam's earlier observations on this topic; see the latter's *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953; repr. with corrections 1962), p. 97: 'It

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of sequences of riddles according to shared features (especially in combination) of form, source, solution-type or theme will suggest aspects of the collection's compilation and transmission, and common or distinct authorship for sequences of riddles or individual texts within the collection will sometimes emerge as probabilities. Contrasts between sequences, or their interruption by contextually anomalous texts, are also sometimes revealing. The search for distinctive sequences should not rely on the evidence of shared formulas, for the reasons given above; but the repetition of formulaic introductions and explicit challenges to the reader from riddle to riddle are, I shall argue, sometimes suggestive, when taken with other features, of common authorship.

The corpus of Old English verse-riddles is concentrated, with a single exception, in the Exeter Book.[6] They probably number between ninety-one and ninety-seven distinct poems, the uncertainty reflecting both the condition of the manuscript and editorial disagreements about textual divisions.[7]

seems that the collection was put together by tacking on new groups or items as codices or single pieces came to hand'. See now, however, M. Salvador-Bello, 'Patterns of Compilation in Anglo-Latin *Enigmata* and the Evidence of a Source-Collection in Riddles 1–40 of the *Exeter Book*', *Viator* 43 (2012), 339–74. Salvador-Bello argues (pp. 352–71) that the first of the three blocks of *Riddles* in the manuscript originally consisted only of *Riddles 1–40*.

[6] *The Leiden Riddle*, preserved in Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. lat. Q. 106, a variant text of the 'Mailcoat' riddle represented by *Riddle 35* in the Exeter Book collection. The 'Mailcoat' riddle is closely based on the Latin 'Lorica' *Riddle 33* by Aldhelm (639–709 A.D.), for the text of which see *Collectiones Aenigmatum Merovingicae Aetatis*, ed. Fr. Glorie, CCSL 133 (Turnhout, 1968), 417. The text of *The Leiden Riddle* is in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. E. V. K. Dobbie, ASPR 6 (New York, 1942), 109; see also *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*, ed. Williamson, pp. 243–8. The edition of the Exeter Book *Riddles* referred to in the present article is *The Exeter Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, ASPR 3 (New York, 1936), 180–210, 224–5 and 229–43. I shall also refer to the facsimile edition of the manuscript, *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry, with Introductory Chapters by R. W. Chambers, Max Förster and Robin Flower* (Exeter, 1933). Translations of the *Riddles*, of which many have been made, are often rather loose; relatively close to the originals are the versions in *The Exeter Book* II, ed. W. S. Mackie, EETS os 194 (London 1934), 88–151, 190–91, and 202–39.

[7] All the Exeter Book riddles are in Old English except the Latin *Riddle 90*. In defining and referring to individual riddles we are forced to choose between different editorial arrangements and the different numbering that goes with them. To avoid confusion I follow as a rule Krapp and Dobbie's textual divisions and numbering in their ASPR edition of *The Exeter Book*; but as some of their divisions are no longer generally accepted, it will sometimes be necessary here to draw attention to questions of textual integrity affecting individual riddles. Krapp and Dobbie present ninety-five poems in all, numbered accordingly; but if we count both versions of *Riddle 30*, the total rises to ninety-six. Krapp and Dobbie's *Riddle 70* is now generally recognized as two fragments of different riddles, the division falling between lines 4 and 5 (see further n. 42 below). I refer here to these two texts as *Riddle 70*.1–4 and *Riddle 70*.5–6 respectively. This division makes one more addition, bringing the final total up to ninety-seven texts. Williamson and some other editors distinguish only ninety-one riddles in all because they regard as one some pairs of texts presented in the manuscript as separate (they believe mistakenly) by the scribe. This question is reconsidered below. In giving

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Analogues to many of them have been identified among other collections of riddles, especially the pre-conquest Latin verse riddles of Symphosius, Aldhelm, Tatwine and Eusebius;[8] and a few of these Latin riddles are now generally accepted as the main sources of their Exeter Book counterparts. Solutions to the Latin riddles are sometimes supplied in the manuscripts preserving them,[9] but the Exeter Book scribe does not follow this practice, so that solutions are open to debate, except in the few cases of riddles unmistakably based, directly or indirectly, on extant Latin models. The search for solutions is, of course, routinely affected by local problems of textual interpretation, some arising from the damage or folio losses that the manuscript has suffered since it was written, others from scribal corruptions, or simply from poets' use of unfamiliar words or constructions. Various features of manuscript presentation also raise questions or create uncertainties about solutions, textual unity and so on. These are all problems for the editor; but any attempt to explore the growth of the collection as a whole must take account of them, and they are dealt with here as and when they arise.

The obvious starting-point for discussion is the three scribal blocks into which the *Riddles* are divided in the Exeter Book: *Riddles 1–59* (101r–115r); *Riddle 30b* (a second version of *Riddle 30a* in the first block) and *Riddle 60*, in sequence on 122v–123r; and *Riddles 61–95* (124v–130v), with which the manuscript ends.[10] Several poems of varying length and type intervene in the two gaps between the blocks.[11] Obviously no principle of grouping texts by genre has guided any redactor of the manuscript's entire contents. It is natural to assume that the three blocks of riddles are of different origin,[12] though the separation of the blocks does not prove that they cannot all be the work of the same poet: Cynewulf's four poems are divided equally between the Exeter Book and the Vercelli Book, and in neither manuscript are the two poems by him adjacent. Dietrich identified block 1 (*Riddles 1–59*) as a compositional unit

statistics here, I shall sometimes exclude certain riddles because they do not provide the information I am interested in, in most cases because their texts have been damaged or truncated since the manuscript was written. These exclusions are reported in the notes.

[8] These collections of Latin riddles are all edited by Glorie, CCSL 133 and 133A (see above, n. 6), the first of which contains the collections of Tatwine, Eusebius and Aldhelm (165–208, 209–71 and 359–540 respectively), the second that of Symphosius (611–723).

[9] See A. Orchard, 'Enigma Variations: the Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Tradition', *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* I, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and A. Orchard (Toronto, 2005), 284–304, at 285–6.

[10] References to individual riddles are here italicized, e.g. '*Riddle 32*' (or simply '*32*').

[11] The first block (*Riddles 1–59*) is followed by *The Wife's Lament*, *The Judgement Day I*, *Resignation*, *The Descent into Hell*, *Alms-giving*, *Pharaoh*, *The Lord's Prayer I* and *Homiletic Fragment II*. *Riddles 30b* and *60* follow; then *The Husband's Message* and *The Ruin* precede the final block (*Riddles 61–95*).

[12] See Dietrich,'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', p. 234, and *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, p. lxiii.

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by the same poet (Cynewulf), partly on the grounds that solutions are only rarely repeated within it, whereas the third block contains quite a number of riddles with the same solution as riddles in the first.[13] Dietrich also judged the adaptations (as he regarded them) of Symphosius's and Aldhelm's Latin riddles in block 3 as freer and more competent than those in block 1, and suggested (though without ruling out entirely the possibility of separate authorship) that block 3 could be the work of the same poet at a later stage in his career.[14] Dietrich was, I believe, right in emphasising the difference between the two blocks; but there are, I suggest, other and stronger reasons for identifying the work of at least two different poets in blocks 1 and 3.

Investigation is here divided into two parts, representing different perspectives on the general problem. The first part compares and contrasts from several points of view the entire contents of the manuscript's blocks 1 and 3;[15] the second part looks at the sequence of texts within each block for evidence suggesting common authorship either of the entire block or of more limited sequences of riddles within it. The second part also draws attention to signs of the interpolation of individual riddles within existing sequences during the collection's transmission.

BLOCKS 1 AND 3 COMPARED

Narrative form

Dietrich, though aware of distinctions between the riddles in narrative form, did not build them into his analysis; but investigation reveals that the order in which the texts are placed in the manuscript reflects some awareness of them. Each of the Old English riddles belongs to one of two basic narrative types: either the solution is made to speak for itself in the first person (here called 'first-person riddles'), or is described by an external narrator ('third-person').[16]

[13] '. . . ein guter dichter giebt von einem und demselben dinge nicht zwei bearbeitungen, sondern die welche er für die beste hält' (Dietrich, 'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', p. 235). Dietrich (pp. 234–5) identifies a number of repeated solutions between blocks 1 and 2: *Riddles 30* and *84* are both 'Water' according to Dietrich, though the former is solved by Williamson as 'Wood' and by most other editors as some wooden object; see *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 230–31. *Riddles 40* and *66* are both solved as 'Creation'. Dietrich revises here an earlier idea that *Riddle 81* is to be solved as 'Ship', preferring 'Helmet', though now all editors opt for 'Weathercock'. These revisions destroy the supposed match with *Riddle 32*, which all editors now take as 'Ship.' Of the riddles within block 1, Dietrich rejects the idea that *Riddles 48* and *59* are both to be solved as 'Chalice' (see further below, n. 38). Because there are so many differences between Dietrich's solutions and those generally accepted today, the whole question of repeated solutions in the collection will be reconsidered below.

[14] Dietrich, 'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', p. 241; cf. *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, pp. lxiii–lxiv.

[15] Block 2, with only two riddles, is too short to be used in this kind of comparison.

[16] These terms are not, of course, ideal because in 'third-person' riddles the narrator often refers to himself or herself as 'I' (as in 'I saw a creature' and similar opening formulas, on which see

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Table 3: Narrative form in the Old English *Riddles*

Block 1, Series 1: *Riddles 1–27*, mostly first-person, with only three clear third-person exceptions in *Riddles 13*, *19* and *22*. *Riddle 19* confuses the two forms, beginning as a third-person riddle (Ia: 'Ic seah',[17] 'I saw . . .') but terminating with a first-person challenge (9: 'Saga hwæt ic hatte', 'Say what I am called').

Block 1, Series 2: *Riddles 28–59*, mostly third-person, with three first-person exceptions in *Riddles 30a*, *35* and *40*. The second of these, *Riddle 35*, ends with a challenge more appropriate to a third-person than a first-person riddle. *Riddle 33* is a unique hybrid, beginning as a third-person riddle but ending, in lines 9–13, with an embedded first-person utterance by the solution itself, introduced by the narrator.

Block 2: *Riddles 30b* and *60*, both first-person riddles.

Block 3: *61–95*, formally mixed, with first-person riddles in the majority (twenty-two instances: *61*, *62*, *63*, *65*, *66*, *70*.5–6, *71*, *72*, *73*, *74*, *77*, *78*, *79*, *80*, *81*, *83*, *85*, *88*, *91*, *92*, *93*, *95*, beside thirteen third-person: *64*, *67*, *68*, *69*, *70*.1–4, *75*, *76*, *82*, *84*, *86*, *87*, *89* and *90*).[18] Like block 1's *Riddle 19*, *Riddle 86* is third-person (opening with 'Wiht cwom gongan', 'A creature came walking') but terminates with the standard first-person challenge (7: 'Saga hwæt ic hatte').

The distinction is usually clear, even in the case of riddles occurring late in the manuscript, where the texts are increasingly damaged by the fire to which the end of the Exeter Book has been exposed since it was written. The collection divides into four series according to this formal distinction, as shown in Table 3.

The most striking feature here is block 1's fairly tidy division (though the Exeter Book scribe does not mark it in any way) into two consecutive series, the first containing mostly first-person, the second mostly third-person riddles, with only three exceptions in each series. Block 3, by contrast, mixes the two forms, apparently haphazardly. The distinction of form within block 1 is made consistently enough to indicate that at some stage (not necessarily the latest) in its transmission, either a medieval redactor has attempted to organize the texts of his source(s) according to this formal criterion, or two collections already distinct in this regard were placed end to end. In either case, it appears that at least one Anglo-Saxon regarded the formal difference between the

further below). C. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures: Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Songs* (London, 1983), pp. 23–5, prefers the more abstract terms 'projective' and 'non-projective' for first- and third-person riddles respectively; and see also P. Orton, *Writing in a Speaking World: the Pragmatics of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon Inscriptions and Old English Poetry*, Med. and Renaissance Texts and Stud. 445 (Tempe, AZ, 2014), ch. 5, where I borrow from narratological theory the terms 'homodiegetic' and 'heterodiegetic' for first- and third-person forms respectively.

[17] This is the manuscript reading; Krapp and Dobbie (*The Exeter Book*, p. 189) reconstruct the verse as *Ic on sipe seah* for the sake of the metre.

[18] *Riddle 94* is excluded here because damage to the text makes its form uncertain. In *Riddle 70*.5–6, first-person form is indicated by the form of 5 *stonde*.

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two types as an appropriate basis for grouping the texts. The Anglo-Saxon in question could have been a poet or a redactor; but the fact that his influence did not extend to block 3 suggests separate transmission for the two blocks at some stage in the growth of the collection. There is obviously nothing here to support a theory of common authorship of both blocks. Discussion of the six riddles that form exceptions to this orderly division of riddles within block 1, and of the three riddles (*Riddles 19*, *35* and *86*) in which the form of the challenge to the reader does not match the rest of the text, is reserved for the second part.[19]

We can only speculate about how awareness of this formal difference arose. It might have been fostered by reading collections of Latin riddles like Aldhelm's, which are in regular first-person form. If so, vernacular poets or compilers might have come to regard this as the basic form for the genre, and to feel that riddles in third-person form should be kept separate.

Opening formulas

Some riddles, whether first-person or third-person, launch straight into an account of the solution, without any preamble;[20] but others begin with a preliminary statement or claim, often including an indication of the broad nature of the solution (typically described, often misleadingly, as a *wiht*, 'creature'), or (in the case of third-person riddles), a first-person pronoun *Ic* used in reference to an anonymous narrator and forming the subject of a verb denoting the narrator's experience (sometimes indirect) of the solution-object, e.g. *Ic seah*, 'I saw', or *Ic gefrægn*, 'I have heard (of)'.[21] The repetition of opening formulas,

[19] See below, pp. 151–5 and n. 66.

[20] Examples are *Riddle 7*, 'Swan' (first-person), 1: 'Hrægl min swigað, þonne ic hrusan trede', 'My garment is silent, when I tread upon the earth', and *Riddle 44*, 'Key' (third-person), 1–2a: 'Wrætlic hongað bi weres þeo, frean under sceate', 'Something wonderful hangs by a man's thigh, beneath the lord's garment'.

[21] See Dietrich, 'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', pp. 241–2 and *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, pp. lxiv–lxvi. Examples are *Riddle 18*, probably 'Bellows', 1a: 'Ic eom wunderlicu wiht', 'I am a remarkable creature', and *Riddle 34*, 'Rake', 1: 'Ic wiht geseah in wera burgum', 'I saw a creature in the fortresses of men'. As the definition of an opening formula is partly a matter of personal judgement, it seems best to insist on the presence of certain well-defined linguistic sequences to qualify instances for inclusion in the list: here, riddles classified as first-person contain the sequence: 'Ic eom wunderlicu [or 'wrætlic'] wiht','I am a remarkable *or* wondrous creature', and third-person riddles include a reference to the narrator by the pronoun *ic*, 'I', along with a verb (*seah*, *geseah*, *wat*, *gefrægn*) denoting the narrator's experience (sometimes indirect) of the solution. The choice of these particular criteria is not, of course, arbitrary: they are selected partly because they are all often repeated, and partly because they make possible the identification of groupings and sequences within the corpus in a clear way. Of the ninety-five texts that preserve enough of their opening lines to enable a judgement to be made (I exclude *Riddles 41* and *70*.5–6 because their openings are missing or damaged), thirty-four by my count (thirty-six per cent) have these opening formulas: they are *Riddles 13*, *18*, *19*, *20*, *23* (in line 2),

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often in identical form, from riddle to riddle will be discussed later in the second part; here I am only concerned with similarities and differences between the two blocks.

The first point to note is one of similarity: the distribution of opening formulas correlates closely with narrative form in both. Of block 1's total of twenty-seven first-person riddles, only five (nineteen per cent), all of them towards the end of series 1, contain such formulas (*Riddles 18*, *20*, *23*, *24* and *25*), whereas of the thirty-one third-person riddles with preserved openings in block 1,[22] twenty-two (seventy-one per cent) include them.[23] The general pattern in block 1 is thus that most first-person riddles lack opening formulas and most third-person riddles include them. Block 3 displays the same pattern, though here none of the twenty-one first-person riddles with more or less undamaged openings are introduced in this way,[24] whereas seven (sixty-four per cent) of the eleven third-person riddles sufficiently intact to provide the necessary information are so introduced.[25] Block 3 is thus the more consistent in this respect in its first-person riddles, not quite so consistent in its third-person ones; but the five instances of first-person riddles with opening formulas in block 1 represent the most noteworthy difference between the two blocks in their use of opening formulas. In the light of this, common authorship of both blocks seems questionable.

Overall, a large proportion of third-person riddles with opening formulas begin with, or include, the witness-claim: *Ic seah* (or *geseah*), 'I saw'. The chief variants that occur are *Ic wat*, 'I know (of)', which appears only in *Riddles 43*, *49* and *58*, and *Ic gefrægn*, 'I have heard (of)', in *Riddles 45*, *47*, *48* and *67*.[26] The last instance is the only example of either variant among the twelve third-person riddles of block 3, though the relative rarity of third-person riddles in block 3 limits the value of the comparison with block 1. What is most striking here, however, is the concentration (five out of seven) of these rarer challenges in

24, *25*, *29*, *31*, *32*, *34*, *36*, *37*, *38*, *42*, *43*, *45*, *47* (in line 2), *48*, *49*, *51*, *52*, *53*, *55*, *56*, *58*, *59*, *64*, *67*, *68*, *75*, *76*, *87* and *90* (1: 'Mirum uidetur mihi', 'It seems to me a wonder').

[22] The total figure is thirty-one rather than thirty-two because *Riddle 41*, as noted earlier, has lost its opening.

[23] *Riddles 13*, *19*, *29*, *31*, *32*, *34*, *36*, *37*, *38*, *42*, *43*, *45*, *47*, *48*, *49*, *51*, *52*, *53*, *55*, *56*, *58* and *59*. The nine exceptions are *Riddles 22*, *28*, *33*, *39*, *44*, *46*, *50*, *54* and *57*.

[24] *Riddle 70*.5–6, the opening of which is missing, is excluded from the count.

[25] *Riddles 64*, *67*, *68*, *75*, *76*, *87* and *90* (1: 'Mirum uidetur mihi'). The two remaining third-person riddles in block 3, *Riddles 82* and *89*, have damaged openings; both mention a *wiht* in line 1, and I assume they are in third-person form, but there is not enough text in either to allow any judgement to be made as to whether or not they contained an opening formula in their undamaged state. They are therefore not included in my statistics.

[26] These *Riddles* with *ic wat* or *ic gefrægn* are placed in a special sub-category of the third-person form ('hearsay', as opposed to 'eyewitness' riddles) by A. H. Stewart, 'Old English Riddle 47 as Stylistic Parody', *Papers on Lang. and Lit.* 11 (1975), 227–41, at 231 (n. 7).

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the seven-riddle sequence *43–9* in block 1. Discussion of the significance of this concentration belongs to the second part of this investigation; but the contrast between the two blocks in the extent to which these rarer opening formulas appear is another small point against the view that the two blocks are the work of the same poet.

Challenges

Over a third of the Exeter Book *Riddles* (thirty-seven per cent) contain a more or less explicit challenge to the reader to solve the puzzle.[27] The proportions of first-person and third-person riddles including them do not differ greatly (forty per cent and thirty-four per cent respectively by my calculation),[28] though comparison of blocks 1 and 3 without regard to narrative form reveals a more marked difference: challenges are much rarer generally in block 3, with only nine out of thirty-five texts (twenty-six per cent) containing them,[29] than in block 1, where the corresponding figures are twenty-six out of fifty-seven (forty-six per cent).[30] This relative neglect of the formal challenge in block 3 adds a little more to the case against common authorship of the two blocks.

In first-person riddles, the most frequent form of challenge is 'Saga hwæt ic hatte', 'Say what I am called', which occurs with equal frequency (six times each) in block 1 (all in series 1: *Riddles 3*, *8*, *10*, *12*, *19*, *23*) and block 3 (*Riddles 62*, *66*, *73*, *80*, *83*, *86*).[31] In most cases this formula, always a b-verse, ends the

[27] On the use of challenges in Anglo-Latin riddles, see Orchard, 'Enigma Variations', pp. 286–7.

[28] Of a total of fifty first-person riddles (*Riddles 20* and *40*, both of which have lost their endings, are excluded from this total), twenty contain challenges (*Riddles 1*, *2*, *3*, *4*, *8*, *10*, *12*, *14*, *16*, *23*, *24*, *26*, *27*, *35*, *61*, *62*, *66*, *73*, *80*, *83*); and of forty-four third-person riddles (excluding *Riddle 70*.1–4, which has lost its ending), fifteen contain challenges (*Riddles 19*, *28*, *31*, *32*, *36*, *39*, *41*, *42*, *43*, *55*, *57*, *59*, *67*, *84*, *86*).

[29] *Riddles 61*, *62*, *66*, *67*, *73*, *80*, *83*, *84* and *86*. My total of thirty-five texts in block 3 excludes *Riddle 70*.1–4, which has lost its ending; but despite the damage suffered by many other texts in block 3, enough remains of the endings of most of them to enable us to make a judgement about whether or not a challenge was originally part of the text.

[30] My total of fifty-seven block 1 riddles here excludes *Riddles 20* and *40*, both of which have lost their endings. The twenty-six riddles with challenges are *Riddles 1*, *2*, *3*, *8*, *10*, *12*, *14*, *16*, *19*, *23*, *24*, *26*, *27*, *28*, *31*, *32*, *35*, *36*, *39*, *41*, *42*, *43*, *55*, *57*, *58* and *59*. I include in this list the runic *Riddles 24*, *42* and *58*, all three of which end by drawing the reader's attention to runic information in the text bearing on the solution. My list also admits *Riddle 57*, which ends with the grammatically ambiguous 'Nemnað hy sylfe', which may mean 'Name them yourselves' (a challenge) or 'They name themselves'; see Williamson's summary of the problem in his edition, pp. 310–11. I rule out, however, *Riddle 4*, in which the first-person narrator concludes with a reference to the narration of his own story (12: *spel gesecgan*), and also *Riddle 49*, in which the narrator explicitly refuses to provide a clue to the solution.

[31] See Orchard, 'Enigma Variations', p. 301, n. 20, who also mentions the variant: 'saga . . . hu ic hatte' in *Riddle 1*.14–15.

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text; but in three of block 1's instances, *3*, *8* and *12*, the challenge is elaborated in two or three subsequent lines, either by a request for information about the speaker in addition to his identity, or by a relative clause containing a summary of information about the speaker.[32] Of variations on 'Saga hwæt ic hatte',[33] the commonest is 'Frige hwæt ic hatte', 'Discover what I am called', which occurs in four riddles (*14*, *16*, *26* and *27*), all in block 1. The complete absence of this variant challenge from block 3's twenty-three first-person riddles may be another pointer in the direction of separate authorship of the two blocks. In the first two instances (*14*, *16*), the challenge forms the final verse of the poem;[34] but in *26* and *27* it is elaborated in a further two lines, very much in the same way as 'Saga hwæt ic hatte' is elaborated in *Riddles 3*, *8* and *12* – in *26* by a summary, and in *27* by a relative clause providing additional information about the speaker.[35] These elaborated challenges with either *Saga* or *Frige* are thus a distinctive feature of block 1 *Riddles* which contrasts them with those of block 3. Again, another difference, minor in itself, may be added to the accumulating evidence for separate authorship of the two blocks.

Repeated solutions

Within blocks 1 and 3 we occasionally find two or (in one case) three riddles that attract the same or similar solutions. In neither block is there any obvious pattern to these repetitions. Multiple authorship may of course account for them, though it is probably unsafe to assume that a poet would never compose two different riddles on the same subject. Perhaps only a negative conclusion

[32] The first type is represented by *Riddle 3*.72b–4: 'Saga hwæt ic hatte, oþþe hwa mec ræreþonne ic restan ne mot, oþþe hwa mec stæðþe, þonne ic stille beom,' 'Say what I am called, or who raises me up when I may not rest, or who stays me when I am still.' The type with relative clause is represented by *Riddle 8*.8b–11: 'Saga hwæt ic hatte, þe [MS þa] swa scirenige sceawendwisan hlude onhyrge, hæleþum bodige, wilcumena fela woþe minre', 'Say what I am called, who, like a woman jester, loudly mimic the habits of a buffoon, and announce with my voice many welcome things to men', and also by *Riddle 12*.13b–15: 'Saga hwæt ic hatte, þe ic lifgende lond reafige ond æfter deaþe dryhtum þeowige,' 'Say what I am called, who when living despoil the land and after death serve men.'

[33] Here may be mentioned *Riddle 61*'s unique closing challenge: 'Ræd hwæt ic mæne,' 'Explain what I mean.'

[34] *Riddles 14*.19b and *16*.10b.

[35] *Riddle 26*.26b–28: 'Frige hwæt ic hatte, niþum to nytte. Nama min is mære, hæleþum gifre ond halig sylf', 'Discover what I am called, in my service to men. My name is famous, and I myself beneficial to men and holy'; and *Riddle 27*.15b–17: 'Frige hwæt ic hatte, ðe on eorþan swa esnas binde, dole æfter dyntum be dæges leohte,' 'Discover what I am called who thus bind men upon earth till they are dazed by my blows in the light of day.' Williamson notes (*The Old English Riddles*, p. 13) that in *Riddle 27* the scribe puts a premature end-point after 15b: 'frige hwæt ic hatte', two lines before the end of the riddle. The most obvious explanation for his mistake is that he assumed that the formula closed the riddle, as it does in *Riddles 14* and *16*, and noticed the continuation only after he had end-pointed his text.

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can be drawn from these repetitions within the two blocks: no policy of 'one riddle per solution' has been imposed by any compiler or poet on either block (or, as we shall see shortly, on both blocks as a unit). These repetitions within each block, some of which are uncertain, are described briefly here.

In block 1, *Riddles 12* and *38* (first- and third-person respectively) both resolve to 'Ox', mentioning both the living animal and the uses to which its leather may be put.[36] According to most modern editors' understanding of them, *Riddles 19*, *32* and *36*, all third-person riddles, have the same solution, 'Ship'. The runic *Riddle 19* has more in common with the non-runic *Riddle 36* than either has with *Riddle 32*: both project images of a man, a horse and a bird (a hawk in the case of *19*) – the man, perhaps, standing for a sailor or steersman, and the horse and bird metaphorical disguises of the ship's hull and sail.[37] Finally in block 1, *Riddles 48* and *59* (both third-person) have both been solved by recent editors as 'Chalice', though 'Paten' is preferred by some, especially for Riddle 48.[38] Both refer to a 'ring' (*48*.1, 8, *59*.1, 6, 17 *hring*(-), *59*.5 *wriþan*,

[36] *Riddle 12*, solved by all modern editors as 'Ox', or (using various terms for the material) 'Leather' derived from the animal's corpse, begins with a reference to the ox as a draught-animal but it is otherwise devoted to the uses to which its skin may be put. *Riddle 38*, which Williamson (*The Old English Riddles*, p. 255) solves as 'Bull Calf (Young Ox')', concentrates on the young animal as it feeds from its mother's udder (3: *ferðfriþende*, 'the life-saving one'), disguised as *feower wellan* (3: 'four fountains'). The riddle concludes with a summary contrast between its living role when attached to the plough and one of the uses (binding) to which its leather can be put.

[37] *Riddle 36* has evidently suffered in transmission, containing in line 5 what is probably an interpolation, presumably meant to be helpful but actually confusing matters considerably; see Williamson's discussion (*The Old English Riddles*, pp. 248–52). The main link with *Riddle 19* is its mention of the forms (10: *gelicnes*) of a man, a horse and a bird, in addition to a dog and 'the countenance of a woman' (12: *wifes wlite*). The dog and the woman are taken by Williamson as representing carved figureheads at either end of the vessel. On *Riddle 36*, see the more recent discussion in J. D. Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems and the Play of the Texts*, Stud. in the Early Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout, 2006), 85–9. Niles sees the solution as a developing scenario: a man, woman, child, dog and hawk all ride on land on horseback, and then all six board a ship. *Riddle 32*, which intervenes between the other two 'ship' riddles in block 1, is a fairly straightforward personification of the vessel, with its single foot (the keel), its ribs (the beams of the hull) and its mouth (perhaps a hatchway or other access to the hold).

[38] Mackie (*The Exeter Book* II, p. 241) and Williamson (*The Old English Riddles*, pp. 287 and 313) both solve *Riddle 48* as 'Paten or Chalice' and *Riddle 59* as 'Chalice'. Pinsker and Ziegler prefer 'Inscription Ring on a Chalice' for both; see *Die altenglischen Rätsel des Exeterbuchs*, ed. H. Pinsker and W. Ziegler (Heidelberg, 1985), pp. 263 and 281. Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, p. 143, solves 48 as 'Paten' and 59 as 'Chalice'. The chief doubter is Moritz Trautmann, who in his edition *Die altenglischen Rätsel (Die Rätsel des Exeterbuchs)* (Heidelberg, 1915), rejected 'Chalice' for either riddle. In *Riddle 48*, the word *hring* in lines 1 and 8 rules out 'Chalice' in his view ('Dies kann aber, wegen *hring* 1, weder ein Kelch noch eine Kapsel sein', p. 108; the possible solution: 'Kapsel', i.e. the container for the wafers used in the Christian mass, was Dietrich's earlier suggestion; see Dietrich, 'Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', p. 235 and n. 2). Trautmann concludes: 'Mir scheint ein Ring mit einer Inschrift gemeint'. For *Riddle 59*,

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11 *beages*) made of gold (*48*.6 *readan goldes*, *59*.1 *gyldenne*, 10 *goldes*) bearing an inscription of spiritual value to readers.

Block 3 also incorporates some double treatments of the same problem, though the identification of instances is much hampered by damage suffered by the texts in question. *Riddle 66* is clearly to be solved as 'Creation'; what remains of *Riddle 94* suggests no more than the possibility of the same solution. *Riddle 77* is now solved by most as 'Oyster'; its successor, *Riddle 78*, might be solved in the same way, but the text is too badly damaged for any solution to inspire confidence, and various alternatives to 'Oyster' have been suggested, with 'Crab' recently championed.[39] We are on firmer ground with the two highly imaginative 'Inkhorn' *Riddles 88* and *93*: both texts are damaged, but in what remains the horn-speakers describe their previous existence as antlers on the head of a stag in very similar terms.[40] Finally, another possible doublet is represented by *Riddles 92* and *95*, the former interpreted by Williamson as a conundrum on the twin senses of Old English *bēc* as 'beech' and 'book', though there is certainly more tree than book in the poem, and the text is mutilated, making this attractive double solution far from certain. *Riddle 95* is solved by Williamson as 'Book' and by Pinsker and Ziegler as 'Riddle-book',[41] but again the case for this solution is by no means overwhelming. The two riddles have little else in common.

Solution-repetitions between, rather than within, the two blocks are both more numerous and more revealing. The total number of them depends, again, on decisions about how particular riddles are to be solved, but I count a possible dozen instances, of which ten seem fairly secure. Below is a list of them by solution and number, the order following that of the block 3 members of each pair to show the interesting distribution of repeat-solution riddles within that block. The more questionable correspondences are marked by an asterisk.

The sheer number of these double treatments is in itself remarkable; but when their number is considered in conjunction with the distribution of the

Trautmann repeats the same objections to 'Chalice' ('Ein Kelch kann m. E. nicht *hring*, *wriþa* und *beag* genannt werden', p. 118). Pinsker and Ziegler's composite solutions meet Trautmann's objections half-way, though Anglo-Saxon chalices inlaid with inscribed gold rims or bands are, so far as I know, unknown to archaeology.

[39] See M. Salvador, 'The Oyster and the Crab: a Riddle Duo (nos. 77 and 78) in the *Exeter Book*', *MP* 101 (2004), 400–419. Williamson (*The Old English Riddles*, pp. 357–9) suggests 'Lamprey', but Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, p. 143, agrees with Salvador's 'Crab'.

[40] The speaker in *Riddle 88* recalls its 'brother' (its antler-twin on the stag's head) and how the two of them were eventually replaced by 'younger brothers' (17 *gingran broþor*), the latter motif appearing also in *Riddle 93* (15 *gingra broþor*). In both riddles the carving of the inkhorn is treated as a physical assault (*88*.29–30, *93*.17–24).

[41] *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, p. 397–9; *Die altenglischen Rätsel*, ed. Pinsker and Ziegler, pp. 336–7.

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Table 4: Solutions repeated between blocks 1 and 3

Solution	Block 1	Block 3
*Beaker (of wine)	11	63
Ship	19, 32, 36	64
Onion	25	65
Creation	40	66
Bible	26	67
*Ice(berg)	33	69
Sword	20	71
(young) Ox	12, 38	72
Horn	14	80
Water	41	84
Bellows	37	87
Key	44	91

matching riddles within each block, evidence emerges suggesting not only different poets for each block, but also the direct influence of particular block 1 riddles on the poet – probably one individual rather than several – who produced the corresponding riddles in block 3. In block 1, pair-members are scattered in the core (*Riddles 11–44*) of the fifty-nine riddle series; but in block 3 they are heavily concentrated (eight out of twelve) in the first third of the thirty-four riddle series: in fact, most of the riddles in the ten-text sequence constituted by *Riddles 63–72* are repeat-solution riddles, the only clear exception being *Riddle 70*, actually two fragments, almost certainly of two different riddles which have no counterparts, as far as one can judge, in block 1.[42] This concentration seems very unlikely to have arisen by chance; and the only explanation of it that I can offer is that a single poet somewhat lacking in artistic independence composed *Riddles 63–9* and *Riddles 71–2*, selecting his subjects piecemeal from a version of block 1 as he went along.

That the block 3 riddles have been influenced by their block 1 equivalents rather than vice-versa is suggested by several kinds of evidence, though not all of it carries the same weight. Perhaps the most persuasive is the difference of

[42] The riddle printed as *Riddle 70* by Krapp and Dobbie is divided by Williamson into two separate riddles which he solves as 'Lyre' and (possibly) 'Lighthouse' respectively. The case for this division was made by J. C. Pope, 'An Unsuspected Lacuna in the Exeter Book: Divorce Proceedings for an Ill-matched Couple in the Old English Riddles', *Speculum* 49 (1974), 615–22: a folio has been lost from the manuscript between the end of the fourth line of Krapp and Dobbie's *Riddle 70* and the beginning of the fifth (between fols. 125 and 126 in the manuscript), so that we have two fragments here, presumably of different riddles, and both very uncertain as to their solutions. The two-line *Riddle 68* is not represented in my list, though see below on its probable source in block 1.

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distribution itself: it is relatively easy to envisage a poet (the poet of block 3's repeat-solution riddles) dipping repeatedly into the block 1 sequence for inspiration and producing a consecutive run of riddles with derivative solutions; it is more difficult to imagine a poet (the poet of block 1's repeat-solution riddles) using the block 3 series to inspire his own matching riddles, but deliberately – perhaps deviously – scattering them among riddles of independent origin. The four repeat-solution riddles in block 3 that occur later than the *63–72* series, *Riddles 80*, *84*, *87* and *91*, probably show the same poet reverting to his earlier practice, though now only when his own initiative (or perhaps a new source) failed him.

The kind of influence of one poem on another suggested here has no exact parallel elsewhere in the Old English poetic corpus, so it is difficult to know if we should expect to find evidence of textual or verbal borrowing from the block 1 pair-member in its block 3 equivalent. Even a derivative poet might try to make his treatments of the solutions as different as possible from those of his sources. Investigation of this question does, in fact, reveal evidence of direct textual influence in some cases, but also of a (perhaps deliberately) distinctive treatment in others.

I begin with such textual evidence as I can find in support of the view that some of block 1's repeat-solution riddles influenced the poet of their counterparts in block 3, not the other way round. At this point it is appropriate to bring into the discussion block 3's *Riddle 68*, not represented in Table 4 above because it has no clear solution. The text consists, in Krapp and Dobbie's edition, of just two lines; but they are almost identical with the opening of *Riddle 36*, one of block 1's three 'Ship' riddles:

Riddle 36		*Riddle 68*	
Ic wiht geseah	on wege feran,	Ic þa wiht geseah	on weg feran;
seo wæs wrætlice	wundrum gegierwed.	heo wæs wrætlice	wundrum gegierwed.[43]

Direct textual influence seems very likely here; but in which direction? The two-line *Riddle 68* terminates in the manuscript with the same ornamental point that the scribe usually employs elsewhere to mark the ends of individual riddles; but as it stands, it scarcely constitutes a solvable puzzle. Its end-pointing weakens the case for Williamson's merging of it with Krapp and Dobbie's *Riddle 69*, the single-line text (similarly end-punctuated) that immediately follows in the manuscript and reads 'Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to bane', 'A miracle occurred along the way: water turned to bone'. Williamson solves his three-line text as 'Iceberg',[44] though the composite poem seems to me to contain too much

[43] 'I saw the creature going on its way, which [*68* . . . way. It] was strangely and wonderfully adorned.'

[44] See Williamson's discussion, *The Old English Riddles*, pp. 335–6.

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in the way of generalities, and there are perhaps also grounds for suspicion of the phrase *wundrum gegierwed* as a reference to anything as homogeneous in its material substance as an iceberg. A far likelier explanation, it seems to me, is that *Riddle 68* is a false start, based on the opening of *Riddle 36*, and that the reason why the poet did not continue with it is that he realized (or at least believed) that his chosen source, the difficult *Riddle 36* in block 1, was another 'Ship' riddle, and he had already produced one of those: *Riddle 64*, a runic puzzle for which block 1's *Riddle 19*, also runic and in third-person form, forms the obvious model, both poems making runic reference to a horse (*19*.1, *64*.1), a man (*19*.5, *64*.2) and a hawk (*19*.8, *64*.3 and 5).[45] I suggest that the poet of block 3 accordingly made the best of a bad job and punctuated the end of the two verse-lines he had already written by the time he made his decision not to develop them. *Riddle 69*, if taken as complete, could have been inspired by *Riddle 33*, 'Iceberg', though this thirteen-line poem, a memorable vision of the solution's immense destructive power, cannot really be compared with *Riddle 69*, either on its own or if regarded as a continuation of *Riddle 68*. I shall return below to questions raised by these two (and other) short riddles in block 3.

A second pair of which the block 1 riddle looks more like the source of the corresponding block 3 riddle than a derivative of it is *Riddles 40* and *66*. Both are in first-person form, and are solved as 'Creation' or 'Universe' by all editors. In spite of a great difference in length – 108 and 10 lines respectively – they have plenty in common: each speaker encompasses or embraces the cosmos (cf. *40*.15, *66*.3–5), surmounts heaven itself (*40*.38, *66*.6) and subsumes the earth (*40*.50, *66*.6), and in both, 'green plains' are mentioned (*40*.51 'þes wong grena', *66*.5 'grene wongas'). The most striking correspondence of all is that both speakers say that they are weaker (or smaller, in the case of *Riddle 66*) than a *hondwyrm* (*40*.96, *66*.2), a 'hand-worm', presumably some parasitic tick or mite,[46] at a point where the ultimate source of both riddles, Aldhelm's 'Creatura' *Riddle* 100, chooses a corpse-maggot (according to the usual interpretation of the Latin) as the basis of comparison ('minor exiguo, sulcat qui corpora, verme', 'smaller than the thin worm which bores through corpses').[47]

[45] Both poems begin with *Ic seah*, 'I saw', an opening of limited distribution; see further below, p. 157.

[46] The *OED*, *s.v.* Handworm, has the definition: 'An acarid, the itch-insect (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) which burrows in the hands'.

[47] *Collectiones Aenigmatum*, ed. Glorie, p. 536; translation from M. Lapidge and J. L. Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 94. The translations in J. H. Pitman, *The Riddles of Aldhelm* (New Haven, 1925), pp. 64–5, and M. J. B. Allen and D. G. Calder, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: the Major Latin Texts in Translation* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 169, also take Aldhelm's *verme* as a reference to a corpse-feeding maggot; but *corpora* might denote living bodies as well as corpses, and *sulcare*, with its derivation from *sulcus*, 'trench' or 'furrow', might suggest burrowing activity close to the bodies' surface more readily than the thoroughgoing

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If *Riddle 66* were the basis for *Riddle 40*, which is a much closer rendering of Aldhelm's riddle, we would have to assume that the poet of *40* was inspired by *66*, identified its Latin source, went back to it and began afresh, making his own fuller translation. As *handwyrme* and *hondweorm* occur as glosses to *verme* in two extant manuscripts of Aldhelm's '*Creatura*' Riddle,[48] it is not inconceivable that the poet of *40* should, under these circumstances, have independently chosen the same Old English word for Aldhelm's *verme* as did the poet of *66*; but it is much easier to believe that *Riddle 40* alone was the source of *66*, for the latter is nothing more, textually speaking, than an abbreviation of the former, and shows no clear indication of independent recourse to Aldhelm's Latin.[49]

penetration effected by maggots. At any rate, the Old English poet (unless he deliberately departed from the sense of the Latin as he understood it) clearly took *verme* as some kind of parasite on living human bodies, because the following line (97) refers to its excision by the sufferer (*Riddle 40*.95–7: 'swylce ic eom on mægene minum læsse þonne se hondwyrm, se þe hæleþa bearn, secgas searoþoncle, seaxe delfað', 'just as I am less in my strength than the hand-worm which the sons of heroes, sagacious men, dig out with a knife'). It may be, therefore, that the Old English translation is closer to its source than has been supposed. On *hondwyrm* as an interlinear gloss to *verme* in manuscripts of Aldhelm's riddles, see the following note.

[48] See *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, p. 274, citing *Old English Glosses*, ed. A. S. Napier (Oxford, 1900), pp. 192–3. The manuscripts are Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 5. 35, in which the sixty Old English glosses are dated by Ker as contemporary with the eleventh-century text of Aldhelm's riddles (N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 16, pp. 21–2) and London, British Library, Royal 15. A. xvi, in which the *hondweorm* gloss on fol. 73 (the only Old English in the manuscript) is dated by Ker as 's. x/xi (?)', though the Latin text of Aldhelm's Riddles was copied in the ninth century (Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 267, p. 334). The Cambridge manuscript was written at St. Augustine's in Canterbury; the Royal manuscript also belonged to St. Augustine's and two supply-leaves added to it were probably written there; but the Latin texts it already contained before these additions were made are continental copies; see K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'The Text of Aldhelm's *Enigma* no. c in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C. 697 and Exeter Riddle 40', *ASE* 14 (1985), 61–73, at 66–7. The Canterbury link suggests that the *handwyrme/hondweorm* glosses to Aldhelm's *verme*, contained in only these two manuscripts, are connected and that the gloss may well have originated in Canterbury. Neither manuscript, however, can be the one used by the poet of *Riddle 40*, and O'Keeffe assembles a convincing body of evidence that Rawlinson, C. 697 (Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 427), a ninth-century continental copy of Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, with glosses (though not of *verme*) and other material added in England in the tenth century, is the actual copy of Aldhelm that the Old English translator used. The Rawlinson manuscript contains palaeographical evidence leading O'Keeffe to suggest (p. 67) that it 'came into contact with the exemplar of' the Cambridge manuscript and another manuscript, London, British Museum, Royal 12. C. xxiii (Ker, *Catalogue*, pp. 331–2), also probably written at Canterbury.

[49] The only respect in which *Riddle 66* is closer to Aldhelm's Latin than *Riddle 40* is in line 2a of the former, where the speaker describes himself as 'smaller than the hand-worm' ('læsse þonne hondwyrm'), just as the speaker in Aldhelm is 'minor exiguo . . . verme'. In *Riddle 40*, on the other hand, the speaker says that it is his strength, not his size, that is less than the hand-worm's (*40*.95–6: 'ic eom on mægene minum læsse þonne se hondwyrm'). This observation is the second element of a paradox in the Old English poem: the speaker is both larger

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Riddle 14 in block 1 and *Riddle 80* in block 3,[50] both with the solution 'Horn' and both in first-person form, have their share of correspondences, but nothing very distinctive links them. In *Riddle 14*, the horn begins with an enigmatic reference to its animal origins (1 *Ic wæs wæpenwiga*, 'I was an armed warrior')[51] and to its subsequent decoration with gold and silver, but the poem is otherwise wholly concerned with the object's adventures as a sound-maker or vessel for drink. The briefer *Riddle 80* does not refer to either the horn's origins or its adornment, but adds the function of inkwell (6: 'Hæbbe me on bosme þæt on bearwe geweox', 'I have in my bosom what grew in the grove') to the other two. In spite of the similarities, *Riddle 80* is a much more allusive poem than *14*, and might suggest a studied compression of it, comparable in this respect with *Riddle 66*'s abbreviation (as I have argued) of *Riddle 40*.

I have already commented briefly on the relationship between block 1's two 'Ox' riddles, *Riddles 12* and *38*. Block 3's *Riddle 72*, also 'Ox' and (like *12* but unlike *38*) in first person form, is a badly damaged text the latter and more legible part of which describes the adult beast as an agricultural slave; but there is an early reference to the four teats it drinks from as a young animal, here personified, rather grotesquely, as 'four beloved brothers' (6–7: 'feower – swæse broþor'), corresponding to *Riddle 38*'s more restrained and conventional metaphor of 'four fountains' (3: 'feower wellan'): the metaphors are different but focus on the same idea; and the more outlandish metaphor in *Riddle 72* seems more likely to be derived from the conventional one in *Riddle 38* than vice-versa.

There are other textual correspondences between the two blocks' solution-matched riddles which provide no obvious indication of the direction of influence, though of course all of them are explicable as manifestations of the dependence of a block 3 poem on its block 1 relative. The most detailed match is between the opening three lines of *Riddles 37* and *87*, both with the solution

(*40*.92: *Mara*) and stronger (92: *strengra*, 94: *swiþre*) than 'the great whale' (92: *se micla hwæl*), a remark clearly deriving from the immediately preceding comparison in Aldhelm's poem ('Grandior ballena atra', 'Larger than the dark whale'), whereas the preceding comparison in *Riddle 66* is with the world (1: 'Ic eom mare þonne þes middangeard [MS mindan geard]', 'I am greater than this world'). The poet of *Riddle 66* thus concentrates on a contrast in size at the expense of the contrast in strength that *Riddle 40* includes. The simplification might reflect the direct influence of Aldhelm's Latin on the poet of *66*, but this seems doubtful: the Old English poet wanted to compose a shorter text than his model, and his emphasis on size alone could easily have been provoked either by the mention of the whale's size in *Riddle 40*.92, or simply by awareness of the natural contrast in size between the two creatures.

[50] Williamson joins Krapp and Dobbie's one-line *Riddle 79* ('Ic eom æþelinges æht ond willa') to *Riddle 80*, the first line of which is 'Ic eom æþelinges eaxlgestealla', an arrangement that gives a suspiciously repetitive beginning to the result. See further below, n. 60.

[51] Williamson's emendation to *wæpen wigan*, 'the weapon of a warrior', seems unjustified, though see his discussion, *The Old English Riddles*, p. 171.

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'Bellows'. Both riddles are in third-person form, and the parallel between their beginnings is close enough to indicate textual influence:

Riddle 37.1–3		*Riddle 87*.1–3	
Ic þa wihte geseah;	womb wæs on hindan	Ic seah wundorlice wiht;	wombe hæfde micle,
þriþum aþrunten.	Þegn folgade,	þryþum geþrungne.	Þegn folgade
mægenrofa man,	ond micel hæfde	mægenstrong ond mundrof;	micel me þuhte[52]

Both versions of these lines make sense and employ normal metrical forms.[53]

In another pair there is similarity in the employment of a distinctive metaphor. *Riddles 41* and *84*, both 'Water', both in third-person form, both damaged and (partly, at least, as a result of the damage) disparate in length, share a common motif: water is described as the mother of many species or creatures (*41*.2: 'moddor monigra cynna', *84*.4: 'Modor is monigra mærra wihta'). The idea of water as a source of life is found in two of Aldhelm's riddles, but the maternal metaphor seems to be peculiar to the Old English versions.[54] Again, there is no clear indication here of the direction in which influence might have flowed.

There remain five riddle-pairs, which show few similarities apart from motifs that are more or less predetermined by the natural or functional peculiarities of their solutions; but sometimes their differences form suggestive patterns. *Riddle 11*, 'Beaker of Wine', shares little with *Riddle 63*, 'Beaker', except first-person form, the ornamentation both objects bear, and the inevitable references to drinking. *Riddle 11* is much taken up with the unfortunate effects of alcohol; the second part of *Riddle 63* is badly damaged, but there are a few signs in what remains of the text of the same concern. *Riddle 26* (first-person form) and *Riddle 67* (third-person) both describe books, probably a bible; but whereas the first offers an elaborate biography of the book from its origins as the skin of a living animal to the spiritual benefits to be derived from reading it, *Riddle 67*, which is badly damaged, seems to be more taken up with the idea of writing as 'silent speech', though it mentions the book's adornment

[52] 'I saw the creature; its belly was behind it, hugely distended. It was served by a thane, a very strong man, who had much . . . [*87*: '. . .a thane, powerful, strong of hand; he seemed to me great]'.

[53] *Riddle 87*.1a, 'Ic seah wundorlice wiht', is Bliss's type 3B2b (x x / x x | /) with suppression of the parasite vowel *o* in *wundorlice*, rather than an E-type verse with disyllabic anacrusis, which would violate the rules governing anacrusis as they operate in *Beowulf*; see A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1967), pp. 43 and 126.

[54] In Aldhelm's *Riddle 29*, '*Aqua*' (*Collectiones Aenigmatum*, ed. Glorie, p. 411), all birds and fishes have their origin in the speaker ('Olim sumpserunt ex me primordia vitae'), and in Aldhelm's *Riddle 73*, '*Fons*' (*Collectiones Aenigmatum*, ed. Glorie, p. 483), the offspring of the speaker are countless (4–5: 'Quis numerus capiat vel quis laterculus aequet, Vita viventum generem quot milia partu?') Cf. *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 276 and 369.

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with gold, silver and other treasures (reminiscent of part of *Riddle 26*) in the last few lines.[55] Differences between the members of each of these pairs need not, of course, be taken as indications that they are completely unconnected: the derivative riddler of block 3 would not have wanted to produce work too closely reminiscent of his block 1 models, though probably enough evidence has been assembled already to show that he sometimes fell under the influence of their treatments as well as their solutions.

Pursuing contrasts rather than similarities, we find that the three remaining pairs have a particular kind of difference in common: in each, the block 1 member is marked by a level of sexual innuendo unmatched in its block 3 counterpart. The two 'Sword' riddles, *Riddles 20* and *71*, share both first-person form and references to the decoration of the weapon with rings and wire, but *20* is much longer and contains an imaginative exploration of the weapon's phallic symbolism, whereas *Riddle 71* contains no hint of sexual *double entendre*.[56] *Riddle 25* and *Riddle 65*, both 'Onion' and both in first-person form, share an interest in the impact of the sharp flavour of the vegetable on anyone who bites or cuts it; but *25* contains ingenious sexual imagery of a kind much toned down in *65*. The latter riddle bears close similarities (in lines 6–7) to Symphosius's *Riddle* 44, 'Cepa', which may have been used as a source. Finally there are the two 'Key' *Riddles*, *44* (third-person) and *91* (first-person), distinguished by the lubricity of the first and the almost complete lack of it in the second.[57] A general avoidance of the sexual imagery in his sources by the block 3 poet might, of course, be explained as arising either from moral repugnance or simply from a desire to make his versions of these puzzles distinct from those of the block 1 riddles he was drawing upon.

Incomplete texts

It was mentioned earlier that many of block 3's riddles have been damaged by fire; block 1's riddles come nearer the middle of the manuscript and were therefore better protected. The only fragmentary riddles in block 1 result from the loss of a whole sheet that originally constituted the first and last folios (between the present fols. 105 and 106 and fols. 111 and 112 respectively) of the fourteenth quaternio in the manuscript: the endings of *Riddles 20* and *40*,

[55] Cf. the headnote to Williamson's commentary on *Riddle 67*, *ibid.* p. 334, which claims that the poem 'shares a number of common themes' with *Riddle 26*.

[56] See Williamson's detailed discussion, *ibid.* pp. 194–5. For a fuller account of erotic and bawdy imagery in the Exeter Book *Riddles* and the Anglo-Latin enigmata cited earlier (n. 8), see M. Salvador-Bello, 'The Sexual Riddle Type in Aldhelm's Enigmata, the Exeter Book, and Early Medieval Latin', *PQ* 90 (2011), 357–85.

[57] It should be noted here that *Riddle 63*, 'Beaker', contains some sexual imagery but nothing as explicit as we find in *Riddles 20*, *25* and *44*; see *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, p. 204.

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and the beginning of *Riddle 41*, are missing as a result.[58] In addition, *Riddles 2*, *18* and *40* each contain an apparent lacuna (*2*.4, *18*.3 and *40*.25) which could be explained as a scribal error in this or an earlier manuscript.[59] But there is nothing in block 1 resembling the 'false start' which *Riddle 68* in block 3 seems (as I argued earlier) to represent; and block 3 contains no fewer than four more possible false starts. The following *Riddle 69*, also mentioned earlier, is a single-line text, 'Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to bane,' 'A miracle occurred along the way: water turned to bone.' *Riddle 75* consists only of a single line, 'Ic swiftne geseah on swaþe feran', 'I saw something swift travelling along the way', followed by an extrametrical runic anagram which looks as though it might have been meant to resolve to *hund*, 'Dog'. The following *Riddle 76*, another one-line text, reads: 'Ic ane geseah idese sittan', 'I saw a woman sitting alone', which can scarcely be regarded as a complete riddle; nor can *Riddle 79*, also one line long, 'Ic eom æþelinges æht ond willa', 'I am the nobleman's property and pleasure'. All five of these short texts are end-punctuated by the scribe in his usual way, and are likewise preceded by end-punctuation closing the previous text, so we should probably conclude that the Exeter Book scribe (or some predecessor whose work he was following) regarded all of them as distinct, if not necessarily complete, texts.[60] And it may be that they are not all to be explained in the same way: *Riddle 79*, and possibly *76* too, may be grouped with *Riddle 68* as false starts; *Riddles 69* and *75*, on the other hand, look more like the kernels of riddles awaiting a fuller textual development which they never received, or perhaps brief reminders of existing poems known to their authors.[61] As a group, however, the main impression these texts create is of

[58] See Förster's account of the manuscript in the facsimile edition, *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, p. 59; *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp. xii, 332–3 and 345 (note to *Riddle 41*); and *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 198–9.

[59] See *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp. 180, 189 and 201, and their notes to these passages, pp. 322, 331 and 344; *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 67, 78 and 92, and notes on pp. 136, 185 and 269–70.

[60] In all cases Williamson tries to remove the difficulty by joining these short texts to adjacent ones (The Old English Riddles, pp. 110–11, 352–5, 359–60). He regards *Riddle 76* as a continuation of what the scribe evidently regarded as its predecessor, the single-line, runically augmented *Riddle 75*. Williamson similarly joins *Riddle 79* to the following *Riddle 80* as its first line; but this leads to an unacceptable level of repetition in the first two lines of the composite text, for *Riddle 80* (as printed by Krapp and Dobbie) begins very similarly with 'Ic eom æþelinges eaxlgestealla', 'I am the nobleman's shoulder-companion'. In all these cases, Williamson's editorial strategy seems ill-advised.

[61] The latter explanation is similar to the one suggested by J. A. Burrow for three very brief Middle English lyrics in the Rawlinson manuscript: see J. A. Burrow, 'Poems without contexts: the Rawlinson Lyrics', in his *Essays on Medieval Literature* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 1–26 (reprinted from *Essays in Criticism* 29 (1979), 6–32). Burrow describes the one-line lyric: *Ichave a mantel ymaket of cloth* as possibly 'the beginning of a song jotted down as a reminder or cue by whoever compiled the collection' (p. 3).

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a provisionality that might be connected with the failure of poetic initiative suggested by block 3's repeat-solution riddles.

CONSISTENCIES WITHIN EACH BLOCK

The main purpose of this section is to identify any runs of texts within either block in which common patterns of form, style or solution might suggest common authorship. By far the most striking aspect of these sequences generally is that they are confined to block 1; block 3 shows no comparable sequences.

Block 1: narrative form

I deal first under this heading with the six individual riddles in block 1 identified earlier as disrupting rather than forming sequences. As we saw then, block 1 is broadly divisible into two series according to narrative form, but each series contains three exceptions to the general pattern: *Riddles 1–27* are all in first-person form except for *Riddles 13*, *19* and *22*, and *Riddles 28–59* are all in third-person form except for *Riddles 30a*, *35* and *40*. Can any general explanation for these exceptions be found?

The three exceptions in series 1 are linked by a common factor that also marks them off from the other riddles in the same series: all three have multiple or composite solutions. There is no serious rival to 'Ten Chickens' as the solution of *Riddle 13* – a multiple solution.[62] In the other two, an image of a composite solution is built up from the poet's accounts of its distinct elements. The partly runic *Riddle 19* has in the past been solved as 'A man on horseback with a hawk on his wrist', though recent editors prefer 'Ship', with the horse as a metaphor for the ship itself, the hawk for a sail, and the (non-metaphorical) man as a steersman or sailor.[63] The obscure *Riddle 22*, with its sixty riders (1: *LX monna*) and eleven horses (3: *XI*, 4: *fridhengestas*), is also taken as metaphorical, solved by Williamson as 'Wagon of Stars' (that is, the 'Plough' in the Ursa Major constellation), an astronomical solution, though other editors have preferred 'The Month of December', with the sixty riders representing the number of half-days in the month.[64]

[62] This solution was first suggested by Trautmann, *Die altenglischen Rätsel*, p. 76, and is accepted by Mackie (*The Exeter Book* II, p. 240), Krapp and Dobbie (*The Exeter Book*, p. 328), Williamson (*The Old English Riddles*, pp. 168–9) and by Pinsker and Ziegler (*Die altenglischen Rätsel*, pp. 168–9), though the latter edition questions 'Ten', preferring 'Twelve'.

[63] Tupper (*Riddles*, pp. 108–10) was the first to suggest the former solution in this composite form, and Mackie (*The Exeter Book* II, p. 240) and Krapp and Dobbie (*The Exeter Book*, p. 331) both favour it. For the 'Ship' solution that is now generally preferred, see especially *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 186–92.

[64] *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 201–5. 'The Month of December' was Dietrich's solution ('Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', pp. 448–90, at 466), accepted also by Tupper *(Riddles*,

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The choice of third-person form for riddles with multiple or composite solutions is understandable from one point of view: the adoption of first-person form would entail a choice of one individual or element as speaker, giving it prominence at the expense of the other members or elements of the solution-group. It might have been possible in theory for a poet to present multiple or composite solutions as speaking in chorus, as pairs or groups, but this never occurs in any of the Exeter Book *Riddles*: all, whether first-person or third-person, contain grammatically singular speakers or narrators; there are no dialogues, no joint utterances by two or more speakers, and only two embedded quotations.[65] It would appear, then, that the option of making multiple or composite solutions speak for themselves as dual or plural subjects was not available to the Old English riddle poets; third-person form was dictated by convention. If this is accepted, we might go one step further and suggest that all twenty-seven of the riddles in series 1 were composed according to the principle: first-person form

pp. 117–19), Mackie ('Month of December', *The Exeter Book II*, p. 240), and (reluctantly) by Krapp and Dobbie (*The Exeter Book*, p. 333). Pinsker and Ziegler (*Die altenglischen Rätsel*, pp. 192–6) prefer 'Ice Bridge', following Trautmann's solution: 'die Brücke'. See the detailed discussion of *Riddle 22* in D. Bitterli, *Say What I Am Called: the Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 60–8.

[65] In *Riddle 33*, 'Iceberg', the narrator quotes (9–13) a first-person speech by the solution itself which closes the poem, and in *Riddle 38*, 'Young Ox', the narrator quotes another person's remark about the solution in the final lines (see *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 257–8). In the first-person riddles, speaker-solutions do occasionally refer to themselves together with another individual in their immediate physical environment by the use of the first-person dual pronoun (*wit*, *unc*, *uncer*, *uncre*). The most extensive example of this is *Riddle 88*, 'Horn', where 11, 26, 28 *wit*, 12, 14, 15 *unc*, 15 *uncre*, and 27 *uncer* all refer to the horn along with its antler-twin; but the speaker is always one of the horns, and always the same one; on no occasion does the other horn speak, or both horns speak in unison. The other instances are *Riddle 60*, 'Reed-pen', in which 15 *unc* and 17 *uncre* refer to the pen and the reader of its text; *Riddle 63*, 'Beaker', in which 5 *wit* and 15 *unc* refer to the beaker and someone who drinks from it; *Riddle 72*, 'Ox', where 4 *unc* refers (in a badly damaged passage) to the ox and (apparently) its sister (5 *sweostor min*); and *Riddle 85*, 'Fish and River', in which 2 *unc*, 7 *wit* and *unc* refer to the fish and the river it lives in. It is noteworthy that none of these first-person riddles employing the first-person dual pronoun or possessive occur in block 1, even though the first series of block 1 represents the greatest concentration of first-person riddles in the entire collection; the usage is confined to blocks 2 and 3. By contrast, in third-person riddles, the narrator will occasionally refer to himself together with the rest of his speech-community by the first-person plural (*we*, *us*, *user*). Instances occur in four riddles: *we* in *Riddles 36*.13 and *41*.6 and 7, and *us* in *42*.16 and *55*.5. Again, it is notable that all of these four third-person riddles employing the first-person plural pronoun occur in the second series of block 1, though this need cause little surprise because series 2 is the greatest concentration of third-person riddles in the collection. *Riddle 40*, 'Creation', in the second series, is slightly anomalous: it is a first-person riddle, but the speaker (who is the whole of the created world) uses *we* in 73 and *user* in 89 to associate itself with the entire human race. This is not a feature of the Latin source. At these points in the poem, the speaker-solution seems to adopt momentarily the perspective of an external observer of its own nature.

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for riddles with single or simple solutions, third-person for riddles with multiple or composite solutions, in which case *Riddles 13*, *19* and *22* need not be regarded as late intruders in a pre-existing first-person series.[66]

The same rule does not, however, extend to the largely third-person series 2 (*Riddles 28–59*), for third-person form is normal here in riddles with single, simple solutions (which are in the majority), as well as for those with multiple or composite solutions, of which there are several (*Riddles 29* 'Sun and Moon', *42* 'Cock and Hen', *43* 'Soul and Body', *51* 'Pen and Fingers', *56* 'Web and Loom', and *57* 'Swallows'). The three first-person exceptions in series 2 are *Riddles 30a*, *35* and *40*. All have singular, non-composite solutions, in common with all the first-person riddles of series 1; but two of them share a common factor against all the other riddles in series 2: *Riddles 35* 'Mailcoat' and *40* 'Creation', are translations of Latin riddles by Aldhelm.[67] Thus these two riddles are linked both by form and source. I suggested above that the three third-person exceptions in series 1 do not need to be regarded as insertions into an existing series; but here in series 2, *Riddles 35* and *40* look more like interlopers than original members of the series. Perhaps their presence represents a stage in the transmission of the Exeter Book collection when new texts were incorporated into the series as and when they became available for inclusion – the mode of compilation that Sisam suggested for the Exeter Book poems as a whole –[68] without regard

[66] There is only one suggestion of poor integration in these three exceptional riddles in Series 1 and that is in the runic *Riddle 19*, a third-person riddle that concludes incongruously (as was pointed out earlier) with the first-person challenge: 'Saga hwæt ic hatte,' 'Say what I am called.' The challenge is well integrated metrically, and it is not impossible that the error was authorial rather than scribal: that the poet lost track of his own narrative form, perhaps in his concern to get the runes right; and as he was working on a series of mostly first-person riddles, he might easily have slipped unthinkingly into closing this riddle with the standard first-person challenge. Cf. Williamson, who thinks the error was scribal (*The Old English Riddles*, p. 192) and emends the final verse (p. 78) to 'Saga hwæt hit hatte.' On the same grounds, Williamson modifies *Riddle 86*.7 *ic* to *hio* (p. 115) giving 'Saga hwæt hio hatte'; but in this case too, the error may be authorial: the previous riddle (*Riddle 85*, 'Fish and River') has first-person form, which might have contributed to the mistake; and concentration on the long list of body-parts (one eye, two ears, two feet, twelve hundred heads, spine and belly, two hands, two arms, two shoulders, one neck, two flanks) could easily have made the poet lose track of his own grammar. Emendation seems ill-advised in either case.

[67] Tupper notices the coincidence: 'It is perhaps significant that of the last thirty problems of the first group (*Rid.* 1–60) the only two that employ the first-person subject (*Rid.* 36, 41) are direct translations from Aldhelm' (*Riddles*, p. lxxxix, note). Dietrich ('Die Räthsel des Exeterbuchs', p. 241) concludes from the special relationship between these two riddles and Aldhelm's poems, and the generally closer reliance on Latin models in block 1 ('die stärkere abhängigkeit von lat. vorbildern ist ein durchgehender zug der ersten schicht'), that *Riddles 1–59* were composed as a whole by a single poet. On Aldhelm as the source of these two riddles, see also *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, p. lxxviii; Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, p. 8; and Orchard, 'Enigma Variations', p. 284.

[68] See above, n. 5.

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to the disturbance of the formal regularities that already characterized the first block of riddles. It looks as though a core of riddles was assembled, and then texts of these two translations of Aldhelm's riddles became available and were inserted by a copyist.[69] The fact that they are not adjacent suggests that they may have come separately to the redactor. A point of chronology emerges here: if, as suggested earlier, *Riddle 40* was the sole source of block 3's *Riddle 66*, the unenterprising poet of block 3 had access to block 1 at a stage in its development when it already incorporated a version of *Riddle 40*.

Riddle 35 also contains some textual evidence suggesting its insertion into series 2: the form of its ending seems to reflect the influence of the endings of other riddles nearby in the series. In my original fourfold division of all the riddles according to narrative form, *Riddle 35* was singled out as a first-person riddle with a third-person challenge. It begins:

> Mec se wæta wong, wundrum freorig,
> of his innaþe ærist cende.
> (*Riddle 35*.1–2)[70]

but ends with:

> Saga soðcwidum, searoþoncum gleaw,
> wordum wisfæst, hwæt þis gewæde sy.
> (*Riddle 35*.13–14)[71]

Aldhelm's Latin contains no challenge, and comparison of *Riddle 35* with *The Leiden Riddle* suggests that *Riddle 35*'s challenge in 13–14 is a later imposition on an earlier version of the Old English translation. *The Leiden Riddle* is a genuine variant text of the Old English translation, not an independent translation of Aldhelm's Latin;[72] but it ends with a different couplet: 'ni anoegun ic me aerigfaerae egsan brogum, ðeh ði n[. . .]n siæ niudlicae ob cocrum'.[73] Wyatt, in

[69] See *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie, p. cix. The Old English translations of these two riddles were evidently made at different periods. The original of the *Leiden Riddle* and Exeter Book *Riddle 35* was probably written in the eighth century, a view based not on the date of the former text's manuscript, which is disputed, but on the text's linguistic features; see *Three Northumbrian Poems*, ed. A. H. Smith, corrected ed. (London, 1968), p. 37, and M. B. Parkes, 'The Manuscript of the Leiden Riddle', *ASE* 1 (1972), 207–17, whereas *Riddle 40* seems to have been composed in the late ninth century at the earliest; see O'Keeffe, 'The Text of Aldhelm's Enigma no. c'.

[70] 'The wet field, wondrously cold, conceived me originally from its innards.'

[71] 'Say truly, you who are skilled in clever thinking, wise in words, what this garment is.'

[72] See *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, p. 150; Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. cviii–cx; *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, p. 243; and Smith, *Three Northumbrian Poems*, who regards Exeter Book *Riddle 35* as 'a later recension of a form closely akin to the Leiden version' (p. 17).

[73] Text from *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie, p. 109.

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his edition, reads *nimæn* in the lacuna and arrives at: 'I fear not arrow-flights with shocks of terror, though they take shafts from their quivers with evil intent'.[74] In spite of uncertainties of text and interpretation, there can be no doubt that Leiden's couplet is loosely based upon the final line of the Latin source, 'Spicula non vereor longis exempta faretris', 'I fear not darts drawn from long quivers'.[75] Why this ending should have been rejected during the poem's transmission is uncertain; but the form of the incongruous challenge that displaces it in *Riddle 35* is explicable as the result of the influence on a redactor of the form and vocabulary of challenges in third-person riddles close by in series 2.[76] *Riddle 35*'s final formula, 'hwæt þis gewæde [MS ge wædu] sy', is probably modelled on 'hwæt sio wiht sie', which occurs (with minor spelling variations) in *Riddles 28*, *31*, *32* and *41*; and there are two lexical matches with the challenges in the same group of riddles: *gleaw* (*35*.13) also occurs in *Riddle 32*.13b–14 'Rece, gif þu cunne, wis worda gleaw, hwæt sio wiht sie', and *wisfæst* (*35*.14) occurs as *wisfæstum* in *Riddles 28* and *41*.[77] It therefore seems very likely that this modification of the ending in *Riddle 35* was imposed on the text at the time of its insertion into an pre-existing version of series 2.[78]

The third of the first-person riddles in block 1, series 2 is *Riddle 30a*, the solution to which seems to be either 'Wood' or 'Tree'. Like the other two first-person riddles in this series, its form in the manuscript context is not the only respect in which it is unusual: this is the only repeated riddle in the collection, occurring later in block 2 as *Riddle 30b*,[79] this time next to another first-person riddle, *Riddle 60*, 'Reed-pen' (another 'vegetable' riddle). The circumstances might encourage the suggestion that the original inclusion of this riddle in a mainly third-person sequence was an oversight, though of course its repetition in an environment where its form is unremarkable does not really cancel out the original mistake (if that is what it was).[80] The position of *Riddle 30a* remains puzzling.

[74] *Old English Riddles* ed. A. J. Wyatt (London, 1912), p. 92. Smith, *Three Northumbrian Poems*, p. 47, note, reads *numen*, 'taken', in the last line which he translates: 'though it (the flight of arrows or each of the arrows) be eagerly taken from the quivers'.

[75] *Collectiones Aenigmatum*, ed. Glorie, p. 417. The translation is from *Old English Riddles*, ed. Wyatt, p. 93.

[76] The connection is noted by A. R. Riedinger, 'The Formulaic Style in the Old English Riddles', *SN* 76 (2004), 30–43, at 33, and discussed in more detail by Orchard, 'Enigma Variations', p. 287.

[77] *Riddle 28*.13a: *wisfæstum menn* and *Riddle 41*.9a: *wisfæstum werum*.

[78] The final couplet of the original translation may have been rejected by the redactor of *Riddle 35* because it makes the solution too accessible; see *Riddles*, ed. Tupper, p. 150.

[79] On textual variations between the manuscript's two versions of *Riddle 30*, see R. M. Liuzza, 'The Texts of the Old English Riddle 30', *JEGP* 87 (1988), 1–15.

[80] *Riddle 60* has often been associated with the text that follows it, *The Husband's Message*, and some editors have joined the two as a single poem; for discussion, see Williamson's headnote to *Riddle 60*, *The Old English Riddles*, pp. 315–18.

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Block 1: sequences

In block 1 there are several short sequences of poems defined by only a single shared feature. In these cases it is a matter of judgement whether the feature is rare or individual enough, or the sequence sufficiently tightly defined, to suggest common authorship; but what is very striking here is the large number of these sequences, which might itself suggest a series of temporary continuities of composition in the work of a single poet as he composed riddle after riddle.

Perhaps the most conspicuous of these sequences is the one defined by the use of opening formulas in first-person riddles: as mentioned earlier, there are only five examples of this in the whole collection, all of them concentrated within a sequence of eight riddles in block 1, series 1: *Riddle 18*, the solution to which is uncertain, *Riddle 20*, 'Sword', *Riddle 23*, 'Bow', *Riddle 24*, 'Jay', and *Riddle 25*, 'Onion'. Furthermore, four of these riddles begin with exactly the same verse, 'Ic eom wunderlicu wiht', 'I am a remarkable creature'. The one exception, *Riddle 23*, 'Bow', begins with a spelling puzzle in its first line (1: 'Agof is min noma eft onhwyrfed', '*Agof* is my name reversed', where *boga*, 'bow', is presumably intended), but then continues in its second line with a delayed introduction: 'ic eom wrætlic wiht on gewin sceapen' ('I am a remarkable creature, shaped by combat'), the b-verse of which repeats that of *Riddle 20*.1 'Ic eom wunderlicu wiht, on gewin sceapen'. This level of repetition within so well-defined a sequence is most unlikely to be fortuitous.[81] Imitation by several poets is of course a possibility; but it seems to me very probable that these are all the work of a single poet.

Another similar, if slightly looser, grouping of texts within block 1 is defined by the use of one or other of the two rarer opening formulas *Ic wat*, 'I know (of)', and *Ic gefrægn*, 'I have heard (of)', the former appearing only in *Riddles 43*, *49* and *58*, the latter only in *Riddles 45*, *47*, *48* and *67*. If we discount the last instance from block 3, five out of seven of these rarer challenges are concentrated in the seven-riddle sequence *43–49*. Again, the distribution is unlikely to have arisen by chance; and although imitation might be the explanation, it probably points to a single poet.

Other, mostly shorter sequences in block 1, some of them only pairs, can be identified according to other criteria. As mentioned earlier, *Riddle 26*, 'Bible', and *Riddle 27*, 'Mead', right at the end of series 1, are the only two riddles in the collection that end with an elaborated version of the rare *Frige hwæt ic hatte* challenge.

[81] Of the three riddles within this eight-text sequence that do not share these formulaic openings, *Riddles 19*, *21* and *22*, the first and third are two of the three third-person riddles in this series, and so could not in any case have been introduced with this 'I am' formula.

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In series 2, *Riddles 31*, 'Bagpipe', and *32*, 'Ship', contain an identical opening couplet, *Is þes middangeard missenlicum wisum gewlitegad, wrættum gefrætwad*, 'This world is made fair in various ways, splendidly adorned', and both continue in the next line with an *ic seah* construction involving the unusual word *sellic*, 'strange'.[82] *Riddles 34*, 'Rake', *36*, 'Ship', *37*, 'Bellows' and *38*, 'Ox', form a sequence of four third-person riddles (interrupted only by the first-person Aldhelmian *Riddle 35*, 'Mailcoat' which may, as we saw earlier, be an intruder) that begin with standard opening formulas: *Ic wiht geseah* in *34* and *36*, or *Ic þa wiht(e) geseah* in *37* and *38*. *Riddles 51*, 'Pen and Fingers', *52*, 'Flail', and *53*, 'Battering ram', all begin with *Ic seah* (*Ic seah wrætlice*, *Ic seah ræpingas*, *Ic seah on bearwe* respectively), an opening found in only three other riddles in series 2 (*Riddles 42*, 'Cock and Hen', *55*, 'Sword-rack', and *59*, 'Chalice', the last two probably to be associated with this triple sequence), two riddles in series 1 (*Riddle 13*, 'Ten Chickens', and *Riddle 19*, 'Ship') and two in block 3 (*Riddle 64*, 'Ship', and *Riddle 87*, 'Bellows').

Block 1: conjoined riddles

There are two points in series 2 where the Exeter Book scribe fails to differentiate two distinct riddles by his usual end-punctuation, running the second text on from the first in the same line, and separating them only by a single point and a following small capital. These transitions are between *Riddle 42*, 'Cock and Hen', and *Riddle 43*, 'Soul and Body' on 112r, and between *Riddle 47*, 'Bookworm' and *Riddle 48*, 'Chalice' on 113r.[83] It seems probable that each of these pairs entered the compilation as it stands in a conjoined, or semi-conjoined, condition. This suggests the possibility of common authorship; and there are other factors pointing in the same direction. *Riddles 42* and *43* are two third-person riddles of almost equal length (seventeen and sixteen lines respectively), both with double solutions,[84] and both ending with unusually elaborate challenges two and a half lines long.[85] *Riddle 47*, 'Bookworm',[86] and *Riddle 48*,

[82] *Riddle 31*.3: 'Ic seah sellic þing singan on ræcede', 'I saw a strange thing singing in a hall', and *32*.3: 'Siþum sellic ic seah searo hweorfan', 'I saw a strange vehicle make journeys'.

[83] See the commentary in *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp. 345 and 347, and *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 12, 95, 97 and 276.

[84] The only other riddles with plural solutions in Series 2 are *Riddles 29*, *51*, *56* and *57*.

[85] *Riddle 42*.15b–17: 'Nu is undyrne werum æt wine hu þa wihte mid us, heanmode twa, hatne sindon', 'Now it is revealed to men at their wine how these two mean-spirited creatures are named among us', and *Riddle 43*.14b–16: 'Mon, se þe wille, cyþe cynewordum hu se cuma hatte, eðþa se esne, þe ic her ymb sprice', 'Let that man who wishes to do so declare in noble words what the guest or the servant of whom I speak here is called.' Allegorical and didactic links between *Riddles 42* and *43* are suggested in M. Salvador, 'The Key to the Body: Unlocking Riddles 42–46', *Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. B. C. Withers and J. Wilcox (Morgantown, WV, 2003), 60–96, at 63–76.

[86] There are two reasons for preferring 'book-worm' to 'book-moth' as the solution of *Riddle 47*. One is that the *OED*, *s.v.* **moth**, reveals that all pre-sixteenth-century instances of the

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'Chalice',[87] are similarly weakly differentiated in the manuscript. Both contain the reporting clause: *ic gefrægn*, 'I heard (of)' (*47*.2, *48*.1), a formula which is, as we saw earlier, of very limited distribution in the collection, the only other instances occurring in the nearby *Riddle 45* (1 *Ic on wincle gefrægn*) and in block 3's *Riddle 67* (1 *Ic on þinge gefrægn*). A third resemblance is in the way both riddles seem little concerned to disguise the identity of what most critics take to be the solution: in *Riddle 47* the nature of the devouring grub is not disguised; and in *Riddle 48*, the word *hring* in the first and final lines denotes at least a part of the 'Chalice' that most modern editors accept as the riddle's solution. The preoccupation with the written word – parchment books in the case of *47*, and the inscription on the metal solution-object in *48* – with speech as its disguise, is another shared feature.[88] It is of course possible that we see here the work of two different poets, one inspired by the work of the other, but common authorship seems at least equally likely.

Block 1: ordering by solution-type

In block 1 there are occasional signs that a redactor or poet might have put riddles in sequence according to conceptual similarities between their solutions. The only really compelling instance is series 1's sequence of four bird-riddles (all first-person): *Riddle 7*, 'Swan', *Riddle 8*, probably 'Nightingale' ('Jay' is a possible alternative), *Riddle 9*, unmistakably 'Cuckoo', and *Riddle 10*, 'Barnacle Goose'. The only other riddles in the collection that are commonly solved as bird-species are *Riddles 24* and *57*.[89] The first of these, also in series 1 of block 1, is a runic puzzle: the runes are an anagram of *higoræ*, the Old English word for one of the corvidae family, perhaps either magpie or jay. *Riddle 57*, in series

word denote the larva or caterpillar (with emphasis on its destructive activities), not the harmless flying insect or imago into which it finally metamorphoses and which is alone (except in technical contexts) denoted in modern English by 'moth'. Consequently, in the riddle, 1 *Moðde*, like *wyrm* in line 3, denotes the larva, not the moth itself. This means that, as Nicolas Jacobs has argued (though on different grounds) in 'The Old English "Book-moth" Riddle Reconsidered', *N&Q* ns 35 (1988), 290–2, the distinction between *Moðde* and *wyrm* plays no part in the puzzle. The other reason for preferring 'Bookworm' is that the Latin riddle by Symphosius that is generally held to have inspired *Riddle 47* has as its heading the solution, *Tinea*, 'Bookworm', and speaks only of the way books have sustained the larva, not at all of the moth (1: 'Littera me pavit', 'Writing has nourished me'; 2: 'In libris vixi', 'I have lived in books', and 3: 'Exedi Musas', 'I have consumed the Muses'). For commentary on Symphosius's riddle, see *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, p. 285.

[87] See above, n. 38.

[88] The following riddle, *Riddle 49*, is solved by some as 'Bookcase', a solution that would associate it with *47* and *48* as part of a three-riddle sequence by a poet with interests in literacy and its implications.

[89] I exclude *Riddle 13*, 'Ten Chickens', mentioned earlier, because the species does not seem to me a significant factor.

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2, is a third-person riddle with a collective solution, 'Swallows' (or 'Swifts', or possibly 'Jackdaws'):[90] the collective nature of the solution, and the choice of third-person form that follows logically from this (as we saw earlier) would help to explain (if any explanation were needed) its separation from the first four bird riddles in series 1.

Does this sequence represent the ornithological interests of a particular poet, or an anthologizer's sense of order by solution? All four are short poems, between nine and twelve lines in length; and there are similarities of phrase and diction between some members of the group, for example between *Riddles 7* and *10*, both of which refer metaphorically to feathers with the nouns *hrægl*, 'dress', 'garment', and *hyrst*, 'ornament'. These overlaps in vocabulary are easily accounted for as reflections of the same choice of traditional metaphors for similar purposes by different poets rather than as the indications of common authorship that Tupper took them to be.[91] There can be little doubt, however, that the sequence illustrates a principle of ordering by like solutions.

There is a second possible example of the same principle at work right at the beginning of series 1: *Riddles 1*, *2* and *3* (in Krapp and Dobbie's textual divisions) are each solved as various aspects of 'Storm'; but editors disagree over whether they are all separate poems. All three were printed as one long 'Storm' riddle by Trautmann in his edition, and both Williamson and Pinsker and Ziegler follow his example.[92] The arguments for and against this arrangement as opposed to the division (as by Krapp and Dobbie) into three separate riddles are complex, and none are really conclusive. The division between *Riddles 1* and *2* is marked in the manuscript by a small capital preceded by closing punctuation; but it has to be admitted that (as Williamson observes) there is no clear indication of a break between *Riddles 2* and *3*: only a single point, right at the end of a page (101r), separates the two texts, and *Riddle 3*, which begins at the top of the next page (101v), does not begin with a capital.[93] On the other hand, weight should be placed on the fact that each of the three riddles as distinguished by Krapp and Dobbie terminates with an

[90] See Williamson's commentary (*The Old English Riddles*, pp. 307–11) for other, more far-fetched solutions that have been suggested ('Gnats', 'Hailstones', 'Raindrops', etc).

[91] Tupper (*Riddles*, pp. lxvi–lxvii), identifies the six bird-riddles I list here as a group, describes various links between them in vocabulary and motif, and asks; 'After such comparison of these six riddles, can it be doubted that they all belong to a Bird group, and that they are all from one hand?' (p. lxvii).

[92] *Die altenglischen Rätsel*, ed. Trautmann, pp. 1–4 and 65; *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, pp. 67–70 and 127–41; and *Die altenglischen Rätsel*, ed. Pinsker and Ziegler, pp. 18–24.

[93] See *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, p. 321, and *The Old English Riddles*, ed. Williamson, p. 127, for details of the manuscript presentation.

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apparently final challenge to the solver.[94] One possible interpretation of text and presentation is that this is a medley of poems on closely related themes by the same poet, rather than three (or two) texts of quite separate origin placed together.

The very limited evidence of ordering by solution-type (confined, we should note, to block 1, series 1) indicates that no-one has systematically subjected the whole collection, or indeed any of its four series, to this kind of organization. There are, of course, as we have seen, several cases of two or more riddles with the same solution, but these are normally (and understandably) widely separated in the collection. There are also several riddles about different objects of the same generic type, but these are not grouped together as the four 'bird' riddles are.[95] Obviously there can be no certainty on this point, but it is tempting to suggest that each of the two sequences that can be identified according to this criterion is the work of a single poet.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A number of differences between blocks 1 and 3, none of them conclusive individually, suggests that they were not composed by the same poet. The fairly orderly division of the block 1 *Riddles* according to narrative form contrasts with the apparently haphazard distribution of first-person and third-person riddles in block 3. In both blocks, narrative form generally correlates with the presence or absence of opening formulas, though variants on the basic *Ic (ge)seah* opening for third-person riddles (*Ic wat*, *Ic gefrægn*) are almost entirely confined to block 1 (six instances, all in series 2), block 3's *Riddle 67*.1 'Ic on þinge gefrægn' being the sole exception. Challenges to the reader are much commoner in block 1 riddles (twenty-six out of fifty-seven texts) than in block 3 (nine out of thirty-four texts); and elaborations of the basic challenge ('Saga hwæt ic hatte' or 'Frige hwæt ic hatte') occur only in block 1 (five instances, all in series 1), never in block 3, in spite of its six instances of the former formula on its own.

[94] *Riddle 1* ends with 'Saga hwa mec þecce, oþþe hu ic hatte, þe þa hlæst bere' (14b–15: 'Say who covers me, or how I that bear these burdens am called'), *Riddle 2* with 'Saga, þoncol mon, hwa mec bregde of brimes fæþmum', etc. (12b–13: 'Say, thoughtful man, who draws me from the embraces of the sea') and *Riddle 3* with 'Saga hwæt ic hatte, oþþe hwa mec ræreþonne ic restan ne mot, oþþe hwa mec stæðþe, þonne ic stille beom' (72b–74: 'Say what I am called, or who raises me when I may not rest, or who contains me when I am still').

[95] E.g., the eight riddles solvable as types of weapon or items of armour (*5* 'Shield', *17* 'Ballista', *20* 'Sword', *23* 'Bow', *35* 'Mailcoat', *53* 'Battering Ram', *61* 'Helmet', *73* 'Spear' (or 'Lance')) are widely scattered; but perhaps a distinction is to be drawn between the bird riddles, in which the real problem is the identification of the species (the solutions' general nature as birds being scarcely disguised), and the weapon and armour riddles, in which the generic nature of the solutions is something the solver has to work out before identifying the particular object in question.

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There are reasons for thinking that many if not all of the block 1 riddles were composed before those of block 3. Solutions repeated within each block occur, but many instances are uncertain and they are not common. Solutions repeated between the two blocks, however, are numerous (as many as a dozen), and the way they are distributed within each block suggests that most if not all of the examples in block 3 were probably inspired by riddles available to the poet in some existing version of the block 1 series. There is also textual evidence in a few cases that the influence flowed in this and not the opposite direction, along with other evidence, varied in quality, of influence flowing in one or other direction which is most easily explained as a manifestation of the same procedure on the part of the block 3 poet. A feature of block 3, wholly absent from block 1, is a number of very short texts (one or, in one case, two lines), one of which (*Riddle 68*, the two-line text) shows signs of deriving from the opening of a block 1 text (*Riddle 34*). *Riddle 68* is probably a poet's false start, as are *Riddles 76* ('Ic ane geseah idese sittan') and *79* ('Ic eom æþelinges æht ond willa'), whereas *Riddles 69* ('Wundor wearð on wege; wæter wearð to bane') and *75* ('Ic swiftne geseah on swaþe feran', with its following runic anagram) resemble kernels, or summaries, of riddles that their poets planned but failed to develop. Although the validity of this distinction between these two types of short riddle is uncertain, all five instances contribute to an air of provisionality about block 3, for which the uninventive poet of the repeat-solution riddles in the same block might well have been responsible.

A search for patterns of continuity within each block individually was fruitful only for block 1; block 3 contains no similar internal sequences or patterns according to the criteria applied here, which again suggests the separate origin of the two main blocks and confirms the sense of general disorganization in block 3 created by its mixture of narrative forms and by its apparently unfinished short texts. In the first part of block 1 (*Riddles 1–27*), third-person riddles, of which there are only three (*Riddles 13*, *19* and *22*), have composite or multiple solutions, unlike the other twenty-four riddles in the series, which may reflect a principle of composition: simple solutions were given first-person form, composite or multiple solutions third-person form. The same distinction does not obtain in series 2 (*Riddles 28–59*), where third-person riddles with simple solutions are very much in the majority. Of the three first-person riddles in this second part of block 1, two (*Riddles 35* and *40*) are translations of Latin riddles by Aldhelm, the former showing what is probably a mark of its incorporation into an existing version of series 2 in the form of its challenge to the reader. It seems probable that the other Aldhelm-based riddle, *Riddle 40*, was also added to an earlier version of series 2, though this is supported only by the evidence of its first-person narrative form. It seems very likely that *Riddle 40* was the source of block 3's *Riddle 66*, in which case it

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was present in the block 1 sequence by the time the poet of block 3's repeat-solution riddles drew upon it.

Perhaps the most difficult problem thrown up by this investigation is the relationship between the two series into which block 1 divides: *Riddles 1–27* and *28–59*. The formal difference that defines them is itself a barrier to the kind of comparison that might shed light on the question of whether the same or different poets composed them. It is not out of the question that the formal difference resulted from a conscious organization of received material by a redactor; but although this kind of editorial manipulation would be simple enough to manage today (especially with electronic assistance), its achievement in a medieval manuscript culture, where it would involve planning and the prior accumulation of exemplars, seems much less likely. No definite conclusion emerges easily here; but the presence throughout block 1 of short sequences of texts identifiable by stylistic or thematic repetitions, weak textual divisions and so on constitutes a kind of serial cohesion that might well indicate the working habits of a single poet.

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