

# Corene Cneoris

A Late-Period Anglo-Saxon Riddle in Alliterative Verse from England  
written in Old and Modern English



*Bird-shaped shield mount from the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, early 7<sup>th</sup> Century,  
British Museum 1939,1010.94.C.1*

Lady Elenor de La Rochelle alias Ela  
The Shire of Roxbury Mill  
Poeta Atlantiae  
Ruby Joust, Barony of Caer Mear  
A.S. LIV

*Calligraphed display by Lady Kaaren Valravv*

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## Corene Cneoris

	Hierað! Ic sprece spell ond geddung    spyraþ ræselan		Listen! I speak a story and riddle.    Search for the answer.
	Fugol flicoraþ    fleogenda eaðelic Feorhseoc wiþ-utan fæderen-cyn    fæsten agon Heortwærc behydeþ    innan Heofes Dreorseles		A fledgling flutters.    A trifling flyer, life-sick without family,    finds a fortress: Heart-Pain hides    in the Hall of Sorrow.
5	Hleopriende hearmleop    se heofonfugol angenga Græteþ ond agriseþ    innan þæm grammodre scrine Modseocne maðum    se morðorcofa egehieleþ	5	Singing sorrow-song,    the sky-soul, isolated, Cries and quivers    in the cruel cage. This dungeon detains    a despairing treasure.
	Ac þæt sorh-leop ofsendaþ    wiþ þæs sundorgengan mægenfolc Se fugol in þæm fæstene    onfindeþ his cneoris		But the song of suffering    summons a mighty company to the fowl in the fastness,    who finds its family.
10	Se lyftfleogend gelæceþ    leodwynne ferienð	10	The high-flyer harmonizes    with the heralds of kindred-joy.
	Innan gildenan gifheale    se gilla nestlian Æðelnes ond Ambihtnes    asteoraþ þær mid Lare Ond þæt rice ond þa reccend    risaþ ure niwfarum		In a golden gift-hall,    the gladdened bird nests Where Study and Service    preside with Courtesy And the realm and the rulers    rise with our newcomers.
	Ic spræc þis spell    3e spyredon ræselan		I spoke this story.    You sought the answer.
15	Nu saga mid snyttrucræfte    hwa se sel cneoris hatte	15	Now say with sagacity    what that celebrated family is called.
	Corene ond coste    se cneoris hat		That company is called    cherished and chosen.

## Introduction

For this poem, I had two goals. First, I wanted to compose Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse simultaneously in Old English and Modern English. Second, I wanted to use the forms of Anglo-Saxon riddles and laments to proclaim the greatest strength of our Society: its people. This required understanding the use of alliterative verse in both Old and Modern English, riddle and narrative traditions, and the languages themselves.

### The Form of Anglo-Saxon Alliterative Verse

While the Anglo-Saxon period of England extends from the 400s to nearly 1100, most of the literature is from later in the period, following the literary revival of Alfred the Great (b. 847? – d. 899) (Marsden xv and 2). Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse does not limit itself in either length or subject matter: it may be of any length and on any topic, whether it is religious devotion, secular lamentation, or snippets of wisdom. It may be a seven-line riddle (as with Riddle 47, “Bookworm,” from the Exeter Book) or a several-thousand-line epic narrative (as with *Beowulf*). The verse form allows flexibility concerning length and topic, but the structure of each line of poetry is somewhat fixed.

In Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, each line contains four highly-stressed syllables and at least four less-stressed syllables (Marsden xxii; O’Donnell). Between the second and third stress there is a strong caesura (break), which divides the line into two half-lines. The first and third stress of the full line must alliterate. The second stress may also alliterate, but the fourth stress does not. For example, lines 4 and 5 from Riddle 47, “Bookworm,” are:

þæt se **wyrm** for**swealg** **wera** **gied** sumes,  
**þeof** in **þy**stro, **þrym**fæstne **cwide**<sup>1</sup>

In these lines, I have bolded the four most highly-stressed syllables and underlined the alliterating syllables; the half-line is indicated by multiple spaces, as is traditional in

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<sup>1</sup> “Then the worm devoured the words of certain men / thief in the dark, majestic thoughts,” my translation, with help from glosses in Marsden 316. The transcription is also from Marsden 316. Note that my translations for the purpose of documentation are as close to the literal meaning as possible; they are not poetic translations.

transcriptions of Old English verse (O'Donnell). In the first quoted line, only the first and third stressed syllables alliterate, while in the second quoted line, the first three stressed syllables alliterate.

Stress seems initially straightforward, but there are multiple variances based on word choice and sentence structure. Stresses usually fall on the first syllable of a word, unless the word begins with a prefix (O'Donnell). Verbs beginning with *ge-* are stressed on the following syllable, while verbs and adverbs beginning with other prefixes (such as *wiþ-* and *æt-*) are rarely stressed; prefixes on nouns are stressed more variably. Further, the number of less-stressed syllables is unimportant (Marsden xxiii). Although there are usually between two and four less-stressed syllables, Anglo-Saxon verse also used “anacrusis,” which fully ignores less-stressed syllables at the beginning of lines when considering meter (Marsden xxiii-xxiv). Furthermore, additional stresses, such as three in the first half-line, along with additional less-stressed syllables, create “hypermetric” lines that are used for poetic effect (Marsden xxiii).

There is also the question of what alliterates (O'Donnell). Overall, consonants alliterate with the same consonant. However, words beginning with *s-*, *sp-*, *sk-*, *st-*, or *sc-* do not alliterate with one another; one cannot alliterate *sing* with *spring* or *sting*. That said, one can alliterate words beginning with the sounds /k/ and /tʃ/ (for example, *cleric* and *church*), as both were spelled with *c-* in Old English and alliterate regardless of pronunciation.<sup>2</sup> The same follows for Old English words beginning with *g-*, whether they are pronounced as /g/ or /y/. Finally, all vowels alliterate with each other, with no exceptions.

While rhyme was not a feature of Anglo-Saxon verse, word choice was still particularly important in the creation of compounds, as with kennings. Kennings are compounds that use indirect, metaphorical words to create a poetic image of a concrete thing. The most well-known of these is *hron-rad*, “whale-road,” for “ocean,” but there are many others, such as *lyft-fleogende*, “air-flyer,” for “bird.”

In addition to the alliteration and stresses in verse, as a language, Old English used several letters that are not extant in Modern English: *þ* (**thorn**), *ð* (**eth**), *æ* (**ash**), and *ȝ* (**yogh**).

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<sup>2</sup> Linguistically speaking, it is likely that words that begin with the sounds /k/ or /tʃ/ once both started with /k/; Old English preserves this relationship even after the sound shifts. A similar shift happened with *g-*.

Luckily, each of these letters' names contain their sound (bolded), excepting yogh, as its lovely gargling sound has disappeared in Modern English. Though the sound of yogh is quite difficult for Modern English speakers, it can be approximated as /y/ or by voicing the *-ch* in *loch* and *Bach*. Yogh was rarely used in later Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, with *g-* often being used in yogh's place. Similarly, thorn and eth were used interchangeably in manuscripts without any consistency.

Despite the many changes of and influences on English in the last thousand years, Modern English is still quite accommodating to Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. However, alliterative verse in Modern English now allows even more flexibility in alliteration: all stresses may alliterate, or only one in each half-line, without a requirement as to which stress.

## Exemplars and Inspiration

“Corene Cneoris” was inspired by the Exeter Book, an anthology manuscript from the tenth century, and two of the verse forms within the Exeter Book: riddles and laments.

The Exeter Book contains all extant Old English riddles, of which there are approximately ninety-five, depending on how the text is divided (Marsden 310). Because Old English, and specifically the Exeter Book, was written without line breaks and with only a *punctus* (dot) to show where lines ended, dividing the text is notoriously difficult; the numbering of the riddles in transcriptions reflects this. The riddles in the Exeter Book seem to be inspired by Anglo-Latin riddles (*aenigmata*) (Marsden 310). Some Old English riddles are religious; others are secular or even double entendres. Their answers may be mundane (“onion”) or ridiculous (“one-eyed garlic seller”). Many of the poems request that the audience give an answer to the riddle. While Anglo-Latin *aenigmata* sometimes included their answer as their title, the riddles in the Exeter Book do not, and the answers to some riddles are still in question (Marsden 310).

In contrast to riddles, the Exeter Book also contains multiple poems that centralize the often melancholic nature of Old English poetry, including *The Wife’s Lament*, *The Wanderer*, *The Ruin*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer*. Although all these poems have some elusive qualities to them, *Wulf and Eadwacer* is especially “full of undeveloped allusions and unexplained ambiguities” (Marsden 335). Indeed, because a section of riddles follows *Wulf and Eadwacer* in the Exeter Book, some have interpreted it as being intentionally cryptic (Marsden 335).

### Exemplar 1: Riddle 8 (or 6) from the Exeter Book<sup>3</sup>

Ic þurh muþ sprece	mongum reordum,	Through a mouth I speak with many voices,
wrencum singe,	wrixle geneahhe	Sing with melodious deceit, change frequently
heafodwoþe,	hlude cirme,	My loud voice crying out.
healde mine wisan,	hleopre ne miþe,	I watch over my affairs, not hiding my voice.
5 eald æfensceop,	eorlum bringe	An old evening bard, I bring to nobles
blisse in burgum,	þonne ic bugendre	In their towns happiness, when in the city I

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<sup>3</sup> This transcription is from Cavell and follows the numbering she uses; the translation is my own.

	stefne styrme; stille on wicum	Rage with noise, as quietly in dwellings
	sittað nigende. Saga hwæt ic hatte,	They sit. Say what I am called,
	þe swa scirenige sceawendwisan	that lady-jester who, with a jesting song,
10	hlude onhyrge, hælepum bodige	Loudly imitates, in the warriors' presence,
	wilcumena fela woþe minre.	Many welcome guests with my voice.

Riddle 8 (or 6), whose answer is most likely “a noisy bird of some sort,” is a clear example of the difficulties in translating even a fairly straightforward riddle. The writing lacks prepositions and conjunctions that clarify syntax, relying instead on cases (particularly the dative case) to suggest relationships. Word order is flexible, and sentences cover multiple lines in an order unexpected by a Modern English reader. For example, the syntax of lines 5b and 6a is “I bring to nobles / in their towns happiness.” This is awkward in Modern English, which requires stricter word order. A clearer phrasing would be “I bring happiness to nobles in their towns.” Indeed, because of the poetic nature, even a literal translation like mine above requires some guesses based on grammar to determine meaning. To see this more clearly, compare these two additional translations of this riddle:

	I speak through my mouth with many sounds,	Through the mouth speaking many voices,
	I sing with modulation, frequently vary	I sing in modulations. I frequently exchange
	my voice, call loudly,	kindred voices — I cry out aloud —
	stick to my ways, I do not stifle my speech,	I keep my counsel. I do not conceal my voice.
5	an old evening-singer, I bring delight	I bring back the minstrel of bygone evenings
		to earls —
	to dwellers in the cities, when I bellow	and bliss to cities when I cry aloud
	with bending voice; still in their homes,	in the voice of its citizens. Unmoving they sit
	they sit silently. Say what I am called,	listening in their homes.
	who, like an actress, loudly imitates	Say what I am called, who
		so clearly imitates a feasting song—
10	the entertainer's song, proclaims to people	who loudly proclaims to men
	many greetings with my speaking.	many welcome things by my voice.
	(trans. Megan Cavell)	(trans. Aaron K. Hostetter)



Line 5 is distinctly interesting in these translations. While Cavell and I both translated “eald æfensceop” as an epithet for the bird, Hostetter makes it part of what the bird brings to the nobility. However, all of us use multiple enjambments in our translations. We also limit our usage of complex tenses, as the original verse is written nearly entirely in simple present. Finally, we all translate “saga hwæt ic hatte” (8) as “say what I am called”; this is both a semi-set phrase in riddles and a straightforward line to translate.

### Exemplar 2: Wulf and Eadwacer<sup>4</sup>

	Lēodum is mīnum swylce him mon lāc gif;	I present to my people a foe as a gift/sport:
	willað h̄y hine āþecgan gif hē on þrēat cymeð.	They wish to receive/destroy him if he comes with a host/troop.
	Ungelīc is ūs.	Different are we all.
	Wulf is on īege, ic on oþerre.	Wulf is on an island, I on another.
5	Fæst is þæt ēglond, fenne biworpen.	Secure is the island thrown amongst a fen.
	Sindon wælrēowe weras þær on īge;	Men are cruel there on an island
	willað h̄y hine āþecgan gif hē on þrēat cymeð.	They wish to receive/destroy him if he comes with a host/troop.
	Ungelīce is ūs.	Different are we all.
	Wulfes ic mīnes wīdlāstum wēnum hogode,	I thought of Wulf’s and my hope/expectation
10	þonne hit wæs rēnig weder ond ic rēotugu sæt,	when it was rainy weather and I sat mournful
	þonne mec se beaducāfa bōgum bilegde,	when the battle-bold surrounded me with flames on branches/archers’ bows
	wæs mē wyn tō þon, wæs mē hwæpre ēac lāð.	A delight to me to that extent, yet it was with pain to me
	Wulf, mīn Wulf! wēna mē þīne	Wulf, my Wulf! Your hopes for me
	sēoce gedydon, þīne seldcymas,	make me weak/corrupt, your rare visits
15	murnende mōd, nales metelīste.	Sorrowing my mind, by no means a starvation.

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<sup>4</sup> Transcription from “Wulf and Eadwacer” in *The Old English Aerobics Anthology*. Literal translation is mine. Please contact me to find out more information about this translation.

Geh̄yrest þū, Ēadwacer? bireð wulf tō wuda. Þæt mon ēaþe tōslīteð uncer giedd geador.	Uncerne eargne hwelp þætte nāfre gesomnad wæs, uncer giedd geador.	Do you hear, Eadwacer? Our two's timid whelp Is carried by a wolf to the woods. Thence a foe easily tears in two/tears apart that which was never connected/united, Our two's song/riddle together.
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In my translation of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, I have indicated specific alternate translations with slashes. Reading the first word in each unit gives a somewhat different meaning from reading the second word in each, yet both are legitimate translations. While a beautiful lament, *Wulf and Eadwacer* is a conundrum. Even though its female voice is confirmed by the gendered words referring to the speaker, no one can quite agree on the interpretation of these words (Marsden 335). Is Wulf the banished husband of Eadwacer? A fleeing lover? Her child? Is Eadwacer even the speaker, or is that the name of another person the speaker addresses? Is this, in fact, all a farcical drama about an actual wolf who had an affair with Eadwacer (“yard-watcher”), and the Anglo-Saxons who heard this poem were laughing at the image of a pet dog howling over her lost wolf-lover?<sup>5</sup> All of these interpretations are supported by the text. It is this inscrutability that makes it a masterpiece but also, potentially, a riddle.

On a practical note, regarding structure, *Wulf and Eadwacer* is notable for the many half-lines lacking a second half-line. This refrain-like quality, particularly in the repetition of “ungelīce is ūs,” demonstrates the surprising flexibility of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. Poets played with the structure, and it could be a useful tool for emphasis; here the abandoned half-lines may suggest the speaker’s loneliness and solitude. This poem also indicates that the placement of alliteration and stress could be flexible:

Lēodum is mīnum    swylce him mon lāc gife (1)

Wulf is on iege,    ic on oþerre (4)

þonne mec se beaducāfa    bōgum bilegde (11)

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<sup>5</sup> I cannot take credit for this fantastic interpretation; I was made aware of it by Jim Hala, Professor of English Literature at Drew University.

While I have underlined the alliteration in these lines, I have not bolded the stresses, as in multiple lines, it is quite hard to place. Indeed, in lines 1 and 4, the alliteration seems to be controlling the stress placement and not the other way around.

## Exemplars' Effect on Composition

Based on Riddle 8 (or 6), *Wulf and Eadwacer*, and the wider Anglo-Saxon verse corpus, my composition may contain the following features:

- A rough adherence to Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, which may be flexed as needed for poetic emphasis
- Enjambment, which is allowed and even encouraged multiple times within the same sentence
- Kennings, though they should not overtake the poem
- Minimal passive voice and progressive verbs (the former barely existed in Old English, and the latter is not commonly used in verse)
- Subject matter that contains both a direct message and an underlying meaning
- A “say what I am called” phrase

I wish to imitate the combination of lamentation, narrative, and potential riddle found in *Wulf and Eadwacer*. However, based on these exemplars, I have decided that I want my Old English version to be more grammatically exact so that it can be easily read by new learners of Old English. Therefore, I will need to include prepositions and conjunctions where they are normally omitted in verse forms. This will necessarily increase my line-length and number of lesser-stressed syllables. To compensate, I will adhere more strictly to alliteration and stress to retain structure.

## Analysis of the Poem

“Corene Cneoris” was composed simultaneously in Old English and Modern English. I knew from previous small translations that the interaction of the two Englishes can cause the form of the story to develop in exciting and unexpected ways, so I started with a loose purpose—to proclaim and elevate our members, the strength of our Society—and the image of a bird being freed from a cage.

### Composition Process

My composition process was complex. First, I roughly sketched out a line in Modern English, focusing on grammatical simplicity and meaning. I then used *Old English Translator* to find translations of keywords, cross-referencing them with the *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and/or *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by Hall to determine accuracy of meaning. I wrote down my preferred translations and paired them with synonyms in Modern English, seeking to establishing alliterations for the line in both Old and Modern English. At this point, new permutations and meanings of lines were often discovered through translation into and out of Old and Modern English. Because of this process, the same line often ended up with different alliterations in the different Englishes.

While compiling keywords, I was constantly aware of sentence structure in both forms, necessary declensions and conjugations in Old English, and other grammatical needs. I started to place the keywords into syntactically and grammatically complete units, adjusting Old and Modern English lines as needed to fit meaning, alliteration, grammar, and structure. I also referred constantly to Hasenfratz and Jambeck’s *Reading Old English*, *Bosworth-Toller*, and the charts and lists in “Old English” on *Wikibooks* to ascertain grammatical accuracy. A good example of this process is with line 8:

Old English:           Fugol flicoraþ   fleogenda eaðelic

Modern English:       A fledgling flutters.   A trifling flyer,

When composing this line, I was inclined to use the word “fledgling” in Modern English, as I wanted a sense of inexperience, fragility, and newness. However, despite both “fledge” and “-ling” being of Old English origin, the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the word did not enter English usage until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is a common discovery in the simultaneous

translation/composition process, and one of the greater challenges. While I could have made a neologism out of related period elements, I instead chose to use “fugol” (bird) with “flicorian” (to flutter) and “eaðelic” (trifling, insignificant) to indicate the bird’s inexperience as well as its solitude. I found appropriate synonyms for both “flicorian” and “eaðelic” in Modern English but had to play with the alliteration. Therefore, the alliteration is on the first, second, and fourth stress in Modern English, while it is on the first, second, and third in Old English. Though the Modern English version had to play with form, it more strongly conveys the sense of inexperience than the Old English version, which remains truer to form. This process also occurred with Old English vocabulary choices controlling a line’s composition; I have included glosses in the following “Language and Date” section to explain some of these.

Each line went through a finalizing process where I double-checked grammar, alliteration, stresses, and meaning. These were checked in the line itself, in its translation, and in the preceding and following lines, as any alteration might require a corresponding change elsewhere.

### Poetic Structure, Orthography, and Format

“Corene Cneoris” uses three-stress alliteration almost entirely throughout the Old English version. The Modern English version plays with alliterating on the first syllable (as common in Modern English alliteration) or the first stress (as in Anglo-Saxon alliteration). Compare, for example, lines 7 and 12:

This dun<sup>g</sup>eeon deatains a despa<sup>r</sup>ing treasure (7)

Where Study and Service preside with Courtesy (12)

I have underlined the alliteration in each line and bolded the stresses. In line 7, the alliteration is on the first syllable, not on the stress, while in line 12 the alliteration falls on the first three stresses. This mimics how the placement of alliteration and stress varies in Old English due to prefixes. This variance is also imitated in the Old English version of the poem; for example, see lines 6 and 12:

Græteþ ond agriseþ innan þæm grammodre scrine (6)

Æðelnes ond Ambihtnes asteoraþ þær mid Lare (12)

In line 6, the prefix *a-* in “*agriseþ*” is not stressed, while in line 12, the prefix *a-* in “*asteoraþ*” is stressed. There are additional exceptions to the strict alliterative form, as Anglo-Saxon poets themselves made exceptions. One line of note is line 8, “*Ac þæt sorh-leoþ ofsendaþ wiþ þæs sundorgengan mægenfolc.*” This hypermetric line is intentionally used to highlight the turn in the bird’s fortunes as it is discovered by its kindred.

Regarding orthography, I have maintained the use of thorn (*þ*), eth (*ð*), and ash (*æ*), as these are necessary parts of Old English. As in period, I have used thorn and eth interchangeably. I have used *g* in most places where yogh (*ȝ*) could have been used, as was done in later Old English manuscripts; the one exception is in line 14, “*Ic spræc þis spell ȝe spyredon ræselan,*” where I have used the yogh to set off “*ȝe,*” the second-person plural pronoun that addresses the audience. Though modern transcriptions set long vowels off with a macron (e.g., *ē* versus *e*), I have not included this, as it is a modern conceit and unnecessary with proper understanding of Old English pronunciation.

Concerning formatting, I have put the Old English version into the modern format used for transcriptions of Old English verse with the Modern English version in parallel, so that the relationship between the two forms is more apparent to all readers regardless of linguistic ability. I also included a larger space at the caesura, as is common in Old English transcription (O’Donnell). However, I did not include punctuation in the Old English version, in keeping with the lack of punctuation in Old English; while a *punctus* (dot) was used in manuscripts to indicate the ends of lines, this is unnecessary when the lines are formatted in this manner (Marsden xxii). Stanzas were divided based on the Modern English version to aid in reading; Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse did not use stanzas.

## Language and Date

I have given the poem a late Anglo-Saxon date (800-1066) because I did not control for the changes in Old English over time during my composition process (such as the influence of Old Norse). By choosing the latter end of the Anglo-Saxon period, any old-fashioned words are intentional archaisms. As much extant Old English vocabulary is both late period and highly poetic, this is not unexpected.

In order to comment on particularly interesting or pertinent word choices in Old English, I have copied the Old English version below with explanatory glosses.

Hierað! Ic sprece spell ond geddung spyraþ ræselan<sup>1</sup>

Fugol flicoraþ fleogenda eaðelic  
Feorhseoc wiþ-utan fæderen-cyn fæsten agon  
Heortwærc behydeþ innan Heofes Dreorseles<sup>2</sup>

5 Hleopriende hearmleop se heofonfugol angenga  
Græteþ ond agriseþ innan þæm grammodre scribe  
Modseocne maðum<sup>3</sup> se morðorcofa egehiéleþ

Ac þæt sorh-leop ofsendaþ wiþ þæs sundorgengan mægenfolc<sup>4</sup>  
Se fugol in þæm fæstene onfindeþ his cneoris

10 Se lyftfleogend gelæceþ leodwynne ferend

Innan gildenan gifheale se gilla<sup>5</sup> nestlian  
Æðelnes ond Ambihtnes asteoraþ þær mid Lare<sup>6</sup>  
Ond þæt rice ond þa reccend risaþ ure niwfarum

Ic spræc þis spell 3e spyredon ræselan

15 Nu saga mid snyttrucraefte hwa se sel cneoris hatte

Corene ond coste se cneoris hat

- 1 The poem begins with a similar demand for attention as *Beowulf* and declares its purpose: “geddung” means both “riddle” and “parable,” while “ræsele” is a riddle’s solution. The content of the poem plays with both the story and riddle aspects of “geddung.”
- 2 The preposition “innan” can be used with both the dative and genitive cases. I used the genitive (possessive) to suggest that the sorrowful hall is somehow possessing or trapping the bird.
- 3 “Modseocne maðum,” corresponding with “despairing treasure” in the Modern English version, is more closely translated as “heartsick treasure.” This echoes “Heortwærc” / “Heart-Pain” in line 4.
- 4 In this hypermetric line and the following line, the grammatical structure differs between the Old and Modern English in order to accommodate the alliteration. In Old English, the company is summoned to “þæs sundorgengan”, the solitary creature. It was possible to omit this reference to retain alliteration without significantly changing the meaning in the Modern English version, which instead links “to the fowl” in the following line.
- 5 “Gilla” means “a bird whose cry is heard.” In the Modern English version this is “gladdened bird,” placing the focus on how the company’s response to the bird’s cry affects the bird’s emotions.
- 6 The order of items is different in the Old and Modern English versions in order to accommodate alliteration. “Æðelnes” (nobility) is glossed as “courtesy” in Modern English and placed last, while “lar” (teaching/knowledge) is glossed as “study” and joins “ambihtnes” (service) in the first half-line.

## Content and Devices

The content of the poem originated with a simple image: a bird in a cage being freed. As with much of Anglo-Saxon verse, this can be read both literally and metaphorically. The cage may be one of the bird's own making, with kennings such as "Heortwærc" / "Heart-Pain" used for the bird and "Heofes Dreorseles" / "Hall of Sorrow" suggesting an emotional state that traps the bird (4). However, it was the word "leodwynn" in line 10 that crystallized the poem's direction: "leodwynn" is a compound of "leode" (in the plural meaning "people of a country") and "wynn" (meaning "joy"). It is most accurately translated as "home-joy" or "the joy of being amongst one's people." Because this word choice refined and advanced my initial image, I chose to use third person throughout the poem. Although much of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse is spoken by the subject of the poem, particularly in laments and riddles, an omniscient perspective allowed the poem to focus equally on the protagonist of the story (the bird) as well as the answer to the riddle (chosen family). Finally, I chose to use the answer to the riddle as the title, as was done in Anglo-Latin *aenigmata*. Because I expect that most of my audience will not understand Old English, placing the answer in the title in Old English increases the riddle-like nature of the poem. For my audience's benefit, I also included a line at the end that answers the riddle so that the answer can be given during performances.



## Conclusion

I am beyond pleased with this composition. Though I have translated into and out of Old English before, this is my first time composing a full poem in both Old and Modern English simultaneously. It was quite a personal feat, and developing the content while maintaining the poetic form in both Old and Modern English was immensely challenging.

In my next similar composition, I would like to place it in first person, increase the overall length, and carry sentences over many lines, as is common in longer poems. I would also like to reduce my use of prepositions and articles in Old English and rely more on declensions and conjugations for the meaning. Finally, a larger (and probably life-long) goal is to develop greater familiarity with dialects and time periods of Old English vocabulary in order to arrive even more closely to period composition.

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