Aldhelm's *Aenigmata*, Greek riddles, and the *Hisperica famina*

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ABSTRACT

When Aldhelm came to compose a collection of Latin riddles in the late seventh century, the riddle was already an established literary genre in Greek and Latin. Although Aldhelm's main source was the Latin *Aenigmata* of Symphosius, he introduced a number of innovations that transformed the genre. To account for these innovations, it has been suggested that Aldhelm also knew and was influenced by Greek riddles, which are otherwise unattested in Anglo-Saxon England. This article first reviews the evidence for Aldhelm's knowledge of Greek riddles, especially in his *Aenigma* 32 about a writing tablet. It then argues that the peculiar features of *Aenigma* 32 were not derived from Greek riddles but rather from the *Hisperica famina*, a work that Aldhelm very likely knew. His transformation of the genre therefore can be accounted for by his use of Latin sources available in seventh-century England without appealing to speculative Greek ones.

There is considerable doubt over the extent of Greek learning in early Anglo-Saxon England.[1] Aldhelm (*c.* 639–709/10), for instance, who was one of the most learned English scholars of his generation,[2] was a student at the famous Canterbury school under Theodore of Tarsus and Abbot Hadrian, both native speakers of Greek.[3] It is

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[1] See B. Bischoff, 'Das griechische Element in der abendländischen Bildung des Mittelalters', in his *Mittelalterliche Studien: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1966–1981) II, 246–75, at 256–8, 262–3; K. M. Lynch, 'The Venerable Bede's Knowledge of Greek', *Traditio* 39 (1983), 432–9; M. C. Bodden, 'Evidence for Knowledge of Greek in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 17 (1988), 217–46; and M. Lapidge, 'The Study of Greek at the School of Canterbury in the Seventh Century', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 123–41. For the difficulty of learning Greek in Western Europe at this time, see A. C. Dionisotti, 'Greek Grammars and Dictionaries in Carolingian Europe', *The Sacred Nectar of the Greeks: the Study of Greek in the West in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. M. W. Herren, Kings College London Med. Stud. 2 (London, 1988), 1–56.

[2] On Aldhelm's life and literary career, see W. F. Bolton, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 597–1066*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1967) I, 68–100; M. Lapidge and M. Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 5–19; M. Lapidge and J. L. Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 5–18; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, Cambridge Stud. in AS England 8 (Cambridge, 1994), 1–8; and M. Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', *ASE* 36 (2007), 15–69.

[3] For Theodore of Tarsus, see Bolton, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature* I, 58–62; and M. Lapidge, 'The Career of Archbishop Theodore', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996),

likely that Theodore and Hadrian brought Greek books to Canterbury, including copies of the Septuagint, the Greek New Testament and perhaps other Greek texts as well.[4] A generation later, in 731, Bede could still say that 'usque hodie supersunt de eorum discipulis, qui Latinam Graecamque linguam aeque ut propriam in qua nati sunt norunt'.[5] Curiously, Bede never mentioned Aldhelm as one of the students at Canterbury, and no extant writings can be ascribed to the few students that he did name,[6] although at least one Greek poem was probably translated into Latin at Canterbury, which Aldhelm quoted but did not translate himself.[7]

The main inspiration for Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* was the Latin poet Symphosius, whose *Aenigmata* Aldhelm quoted and whom he mentioned by name.[8] But Aldhelm may also have known other riddles – notably the Latin Bern Riddles – and it is not impossible that he had encountered Greek riddles at Canterbury

pp. 93–121. For Abbot Hadrian, see B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, Cambridge Stud. in AS England 10 (Cambridge, 1994), 82–132. For the Canterbury school in the late seventh century, see M. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 141–68.

[4] See Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, pp. 197–99, 240–2; and M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 31–3.

[5] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (hereafter *HE*) iv. 2, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), p. 334: 'Some of their students survive to this day who know Latin and Greek as well as their own native language' (all translations mine).

[6] The students of the Canterbury school named by Bede are Oftfor, bishop of Worcester (*HE* iv. 23); Albinus, abbot of SS Peter and Paul in Canterbury (*HE* v. 20); and Tobias, bishop of Rochester (*HE* v. 8, 23). Bede also implied that John of Beverley studied under Theodore (*HE* v. 3). See Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, pp. 267–8.

[7] For this poem – known now as *Versus Sibyllae de iudicio Dei* – and its connection to Canterbury, see W. Bulst, 'Eine anglo-lateinische Übersetzung aus dem Griechischen um 700', *ZDA* 75 (1938), 105–11, esp. 109–11; B. Bischoff, 'Die lateinische Übersetzungen und Bearbeitungen aus den Oracula Sibyllina', in his *Mittelalterliche Studien: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1966–81) I, 150–71, at 154–5; Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, p. 16; Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, pp. 185–6; P. Lendinara, 'The *Versus Sibyllae de die iudicii* in Anglo-Saxon England', *Apocryphal Texts and Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. K. Powell and D. Scragg, Publ. of the Manchester Centre for AS Stud. 2 (Cambridge, 2003), 85–101, at 95–6; and Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 195–200, who convincingly argued against Aldhelm's authorship. Cf. D. Howlett, 'Insular Acrostics, Celtic Latin Colophons', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 35 (1998), 27–44, who suggested that the work was Hiberno-Latin.

[8] Aldhelm quoted from the *Aenigmata* of Symphosius twelve times in his *De metris* and his *De pedum regulis*, sometimes by name; see, e.g., *De metris*, ed. R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH Auct. antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919), 93, lines 8–9. For the *Aenigmata* of Symphosius, see *Symphosius: the Aenigmata: an Introduction, Text and Commentary*, ed. T. Leary (London, 2014). For Aldhelm's debt to Symphosius, see Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, pp. 62–3; and Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 155–61.

before composing his *Aenigmata*.[9] Presumably such Greek riddles would have been translated by Theodore or Hadrian, since there is no evidence elsewhere in Aldhelm's writings that he had a solid grasp of Greek.[10] But if Aldhelm did know Greek riddles in some form, this would not only transform the study of his works but also be important evidence for Greek learning and the availability of Greek texts in seventh-century England.

And there are reasons to suspect that Aldhelm did in fact draw on Greek riddles. In an article in *Anglo-Saxon England*, Čecila Milovanović-Barham suggested certain features of Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* could be better explained as derived from Greek riddles than from the *Aenigmata* of Symphosius.[11] She noted three general similarities between Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* and the Greek riddles of the *Anthologia Palatina*:[12] both collections share an emphasis on origins and birth; they occasionally use logographs that play with words such as *corbus/orbus*; and they include a few verses that challenge their readers to solve the riddles, such as 'sciscitor inflatos, fungar quo nomine, sophos'.[13] But most of her article is concerned with a single riddle by Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 32 on a writing tablet, which she claimed relied on a particular Greek riddle on the same topic and so reveals the influence of the Greek tradition on Aldhelm.[14] In what follows I should like to examine the evidence for Aldhelm's use of Greek riddles, and then to suggest what I think are more plausible Latin sources for the peculiar features of *Aenigma* 32, notably the *Hisperica famina*. At the end, I shall return to consider the three more general similarities.

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[9] For the Bern Riddles, see *Aenigmata Hexasticha*, ed. K. Strecker, MGH PLAC 4.2 (Berlin, 1923), 732–59. For the view that Aldhelm knew the Bern Riddles, see M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1911–1931) I, 192; D. Bitterli, *Say What I am Called: the Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition*, Toronto AS Ser. 2 (Toronto, 2009), 21–2; P. Sorrell, 'Oaks, Ships, Riddles and the Old English *Rune Poem*', *ASE* 19 (1990), 103–16, at 104; and Thomas Klein, '*Pater Occultus*: The Latin Bern Riddles and Their Place in Early Medieval Riddling', *Neophilologus* 103 (2019), 399–417, at 411–6; but cf. my 'The Poetic Tradition of Anglo-Saxon Riddles' (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Toronto, 2021), pp. 66–105.

[10] On the insufficient evidence for Aldhelm's knowledge of Greek, see Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, pp. 8–9, 183, n. 21; and V. Law, 'The Study of Latin Grammar in Eighth-century Southumbria', *ASE* 12 (1983), 43–71, at 50–2, 64. For Aldhelm's *Aenigmata*, see *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, pp. 97–149.

[11] Č. Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata* and Byzantine Riddles', *ASE* 22 (1993), 51–64, at 53; and see A. Orchard, *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 69, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 2021) I, xii.

[12] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 55–6. For the riddles in the *Anthologia Palatina* (hereafter *AP*), see *Anthologia Graeca*, ed. H. Beckby, 4 vols. (Munich, 1967–1968) IV, 170–249.

[13] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 100 *Creatura*, line 83 (ed. Ehwald, p. 149): 'I ask of the puffed-up wise men by what name I am called'.

[14] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 55–60.

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Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32 describes the manufacture and use of a pair of writing tablets – *pugillares*, to give its Latin solution. Following the example of Symphosius, Aldhelm composed this enigmatic poem from the point of view of the writing tablet itself, a rhetorical technique known as prosopopoeia:[15]

> Melligeris apibus mea prima processit origo,
> sed pars exterior crescebat cetera silvis;
> calciamenta mihi tradebant tergora dura.
> Nunc ferri stimulus faciem proscindit amoenam
> 5   flexibus et sulcos obliquat adinstar aratri,
> sed semen segiti de caelo ducitur almum,
> quod largos generat millena fruge maniplos.
> Heu! tam sancta seges diris extinguitur armis.[16]

The Greek source suggested by Milovanović-Barham for this text is a riddle on the same topic – δέλτος ('writing tablet'), which appears anonymously in the *Anthologia Palatina* and later in a collection ascribed to the Byzantine scholar Michael Psellos (*c.* 1017–1078):[17]

> Ὕλη μέν με τέκεν, καινούργησεν δὲ σίδηρος·
> εἰμὶ δὲ Μουσάων μυστικὸν ἐκδόχιον·
> κλειομένη σιγῶ· λαλέω δ΄, ὅταν ἐκπετάσῃς με,
> κοινωνὸν τὸν Ἄρη μοῦνον ἔχουσα λόγων.[18]

Both riddles take the form of a two-part progression from the past to the present, told from the perspective of the solution itself. In Aldhelm's first three verses, the writing tablet recounts its origin and construction from various materials: wax,

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wood, and leather (if that is what line 3 means – see below).[19] The five remaining verses then describe how the finished product is used for writing, here portrayed in an agricultural metaphor: the words are seeds, the page is a field, and the pen is a plough. Since the written word for Aldhelm is Holy Scripture, the metaphor can be extended to include the harvest, for these words produce spiritual fruits. Here Aldhelm was drawing on a widespread topos used by pagan and patristic authors alike, as P. D. Scott and Milovanović-Barham both noted.[20] But Milovanović-Barham concentrated her study on the riddle's first three verses, which form the first half of the riddle's two-part structure and represent Aldhelm's interest in origins – an interest that for her was evidence of Aldhelm's knowledge of the Greek tradition.

The same two-part structure characterizes the Greek riddle on a writing tablet. Its first two verses refer to the object's origin in nature and its subsequent transformation. The final two verses then portray its use as a writing tablet that speaks to Ares only while open. Ares, the god of war, is an enigmatic reference to the iron stylus. Both riddles thus share a martial image for the stylus, as Milovanović-Barham noted, for Aldhelm referred to the stylus ambiguously as *ferrum* ('iron stylus', 'weapon made of iron') and then suggested how it also erases with the phrase *diris … armis* ('by cruel weapons').[21] She then pointed out that Aldhelm's use of *melliger* ('honey-bearing') in line 1 recalled a similar compound adjective in a different Greek riddle, γλυκυγόνον ('sweet-bearing'), where it also refers to the production of wax by bees (here for a candle).[22] But Milovanović-Barham's main contention was that *Aenigma* 32 exemplified Aldhelm's interest in origins, which she identified with the Greek tradition.[23] For *Aenigma* 32 does not merely describe the function of a writing tablet but also its creation, and thus shares the same two-part structure as the Greek riddle on the same topic. But are

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[19] The traditional interpretation is that either *calceamenta* ('foot covering', 'shoe') or *tergora* ('back', 'hide') in line 3 refers to a leather cover, perhaps used to connect the two halves of a double-leaved diptych, hence the plural solution: see, e.g., E. von Erhardt-Siebold, *Die lateinischen Rätsel der Angelsachsen* (Heidelberg, 1925), p. 66; but cf. Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 59–60, who translated the verse as 'my tough backs are made of wood', arguing that Aldhelm understood the word *calceamenta* to mean 'wood' from an Isidorean etymology of the word from *cala* ('a piece of wood').

[20] P. D. Scott, 'Rhetorical and Symbolic Ambiguity: the Riddles of Symphosius and Aldhelm', in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, ed. M. H. King and W. M. Stevens, 2 vols. (Collegeville, MN, 1979) I, 117–44, at 120–3; and Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 58.

[21] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 59.

[22] See *Byzantina aenigmata*, no. 129, line 1 (ed. Milovanović, p. 87); and Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 59.

[23] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 55–6, 60; and see Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, pp. 64–5.

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these similarities evidence of Aldhelm's dependence on the Greek riddle, or can they be explained through his knowledge of Latin sources?

TRANSFORMATION RIDDLES AND EPIGRAMS

Both riddles are examples of the transformation riddle, a type of riddle that portrays the transformation of its subject (which is also its solution) from one thing into another.[24] Such riddles typically consist of two parts, the first describing the subject's prior existence and the second its current existence, usually progressing from the past to the present tense. Almost all transformation riddles were composed in the voice of their subjects (that is, using prosopopoeia), so that they form a lyrical autobiography of the solution from its past to its present situation.[25]

Such riddles were ultimately modelled on Greek epigrams, many of which share these same features. The same progressive, autobiographical form can be found in many literary epigrams of the Hellenistic era (*c.* 323–30 BC), as in the following epigram on the κάλαμος ('reed pen'), which was probably composed sometime during this period:[26]

> Ἤμην ἀχρεῖον κάλαμος φυτόν· ἐκ γὰρ ἐμεῖο
> οὐ σῦκ᾽, οὐ μῆλον φύεται, οὐ σταφυλή·
> ἀλλά μ᾽ ἀνὴρ ἐμύησ᾽ Ἑλικωνίδα λεπτὰ τορήσας
> χείλεα, καὶ στεινὸν ῥοῦν ὀχετευσάμενος.
> ἐκ δὲ τοῦ εὖτε πίοιμι μέλαν ποτόν, ἔνθεος οἷα
> πᾶν ἔπος ἀφθέγκτῳ τῷδε λαλῶ στόματι.[27]

Like the Greek riddle on a writing tablet, this epigram consists of elegiac couplets and uses object-personification to recount the history of a reed from its origin as a raw material to its current use as a stylus. Its basic shape is a temporal progression from the past to the present state of the object. Besides writing implements, Greek

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[24] For transformation riddles in Old English, see F. Tupper, Jr., *The Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Boston, 1910), p. 186; Sorrell, 'Oaks, Ships, Riddles', p. 109; A. Rügamer, *Die Poetizität der altenglischen Rätsel des Exeter Book*, Schriften zur Mediävistik 14 (Hamburg, 2008), 232–9; and P. J. Murphy, *Unriddling the Exeter Riddles* (University Park, PA, 2011), pp. 24, 140, 224. For other examples, see A. Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition* (Berkeley, 1951), pp. 240–53 (nos. 674–80).

[25] See Taylor, *English Riddles*, pp. 245–6.

[26] See A. Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 80–1; Livingstone and Nisbet, *Epigram*, pp. 48–98; and J. Kwapisz, 'Were There Hellenistic Riddle Books?', *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry*, ed. J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain and M. Szymański (Berlin, 2013), pp. 148–67.

[27] *AP* ix. 162 (ed. Beckby, III, 102): 'I was a reed, a useless plant, for I produced neither figs, nor apples, nor grapes. But a man dedicated me to Helicon (i.e., to the Muses), shaping my thin lips and carving out a narrow channel. And from that time, when I drink dark fluid, like one divinely inspired, I speak every sort of word with a speechless mouth'.

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epigrams portray many different types of objects in this same way, including ships made from trees and weapons taken as spoils.[28] The narrative structure of contrasting the past and present states of something is thus found widely in the epigram genre. Some of these epigrams even include a series of temporal adverbs, such as πρίν ('once') and νῦν ('now'), which make the contrast of their two states more explicit.[29] The autobiographical structure of these 'once … now' epigrams was clearly the model for our Greek riddle on the writing tablet.

All of the riddles in the *Anthologia Palatina* were composed as epigrams. The Greek riddle on a writing tablet is no exception, taking its metre (the elegiac couplet) and certain rhetorical techniques from this genre.[30] In addition to sharing the basic temporal form of the aforementioned epigrams, the writing-tablet riddle even begins with a formula characteristic of epigrams, 'Ὕλη μέν με τέκεν, καινούργησεν δὲ σίδηρος', where the speaker identifies 'woodland' (ὕλη) as the progenitor who με τέκεν ('bore me').[31] The riddle thus imitates certain biographical epigrams composed in the form of epitaphs, which state the subject's father or homeland in a similar 'X begot [or bore] me' construction.[32] Meager of Gadara (*c*. 135–50 BC), for example, composed an epigram about his own life that began

> Νᾶσος ἐμὰ θρέπτειρα Τύρος· πάτρα δέ με τεκνοῖ
> ᾿Ατθὶς᾿ ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις ναιομένα Γάδαρ[α].[33]

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[28] For declamatory epigrams about ships that were once trees, see *AP* ix. 32–3; *AP* ix. 36; and *AP* ix. 131. For dedicatory and declamatory epigrams on weapons taken as spoils and retired from use, see *AP* vi. 124–5; *AP* vi. 127; and *AP* ix. 40.

[29] See, e.g., the sepulchral epigram on a magpie, *AP* vii. 191; and see the following declamatory epigrams on various topics: *AP* ix. 19; *AP* ix. 20; *AP* ix. 138; and *AP* ix. 178.

[30] On the riddles in the *Greek Anthology*, see F. Buffière, *Anthologie Grecque première partie: Anthologie Palatine Tome XII (Livres XII–XV)* (Paris, 1970), pp. 43–50; C. Luz, 'Who Has it Got in its Pocketses? Or, What Makes a Riddle a Riddle', *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry*, ed. J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain and M. Szymański (Berlin, 2013), pp. 83–99, esp. 84–5; and S. Beta, 'The Riddles of the Fourteenth Book of the *Palatine Anthology*: Hellenistic, Later Imperial, Early Byzantine, or Something More?', *Greek Epigram from the Hellenistic to the Early Byzantine Era*, ed. M. Kannellou, I. Petrovic and C. Carey (Oxford, 2019), pp. 119–34. On the ancient Greek riddle tradition in general, see K. Ohlert, *Rätsel und Rätselspiele der alten Griechen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1912).

[31] *AP* xiv. 60, lines 1–2 (ed. Beckby, IV, 98): 'Woodland gave birth to me, but iron remade me'.

[32] For sepulchral epigrams of this sort, see *AP* vii. 54; *AP* vii. 164; and *AP* vii. 417. For a declamatory epigram composed in this manner, see *AP* ix. 510.

[33] *AP* vii. 417, lines 1–2 (ed. Beckby, II, 246): 'The Island Tyre was my nurse, but an Attic fatherland among Assyrians – Gadara – bore me'. For the sources and the emendation of this epigram, see A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1965) II, 606–7.

The speaker here memorialized the place where he was born, 'an Attic fatherland, Gadara, bore me' (πάτρα με τεκνοῖ / Ἀτθὶς' … Γάδαρ[α]), just as the Greek riddle began 'woodland bore me' (ὕλη … με τέκεν). This epigrammatic progenitor formula ('X begot [or bore] me') is best known, however, from Virgil's Latin epitaph:

> Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc
> Parthenope. Cecini pascua, rura, duces.[34]

Here Virgil's life was memorialized in the initial series of statements that progress from his motherland (*Mantua*) to his final resting place (*Parthenope*). After Virgil's epitaph, the progenitor formula was widely imitated in Latin.[35] The Greek writing-tablet riddle uses the same formula, further revealing its debt to the epigram genre. It is notable, however, that the progenitor formula is not used at the beginning of Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32, which rather lists the various component parts that combine to make the writing tablet (the wax, wood, and leather).

   Such Greek epigrams also influenced the Latin tradition. The same 'once … now' structure can be seen, for instance, in many epigrams by the Latin poet Martial (*c.* 40–103), whose works include two books of short epigrams about inanimate objects.[36] These short epigrams sometimes take the form of a first-person account that progresses from the past to the present tense, contrasting the prior and present situations of the subject. Martial's epigram on Trebulan cheeses, for example, begins with the familiar epigrammatic formula, 'Trebula nos genuit', before progressing to the present tense to describe the qualities of the cheeses themselves.[37] Martial's epigram on an oyster has the same progressive structure, portraying its subject as a poor country girl who acquires a taste for luxury after coming to town:

> Ebria Baiano ueni modo concha Lucrino:
> nobile nunc sitio luxuriosa garum.[38]

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[34] See *Vitae Vergilianae Antiquae*, ed. G. Brugnoli and F. Stok (Rome, 1997), p. 34: 'Mantua gave birth to me, Calabrians stole me away, now Parthenope holds me. I sang of pastures, farmlands, and leaders'.

[35] For other examples of this formula, see A. S. Pease, '*Mantua me genuit*', *Classical Philol.* 35 (1940), 180–2; and Ahuvia Kahane, 'Biography and Virgil's Epitaph', *The Ancient Lives of Virgil: Literary and Historical Studies*, ed. A. Powell and P. Hardie (Swansea, 2017), pp. 51–72.

[36] For these two books of epigrams, see *Martial Book XIII: The Xenia*, ed. T. Leary (London, 2001); and *Martial Book XIV: The Apophoreta*, ed. T. Leary (London, 1996).

[37] Martial, *Xenia*, no. 33 *Casei Trebulani*, line 1 (ed. Leary, p. 26): 'Trebula gave birth to us'.

[38] Martial, *Xenia*, no. 82 *Ostrea* (ed. Leary, p. 31): 'Sated by lake water, I arrived a shellfish a little while ago: now I thirst extravagantly after the best fish sauce'.

Here the contrast of the past and the present state of the oyster is conveyed not only by the tenses of the verbs *ueni* ('I arrived' – past tense) and *sitio* ('I thirst' – present tense), but also by the occurrence of two temporal adverbs, *modo* ('a little while ago') and *nunc* ('now'). These Latin epigrams thus resemble the temporally progressive structure of the 'once … now' epigrams in Greek.

It was in imitation of such Greek and Latin epigrams that Symphosius composed several transformation riddles with the same temporal progression.[39] These riddles rarely use the epigrammatic 'X begot [or bore] me' formula, but they nonetheless conform to the 'once … now' model of the aforementioned epigrams.[40] In total, Symphosius composed five riddles in this way, each with one or more temporal adverbs, such as *quondam* ('once') and *nunc* ('now').[41] *Aenigma* 56 *Caliga* (Soldier's Boot), for example, was composed as a mock epitaph on a leather boot, contrasting the life and death of its speaker:

> Maior eram longe quondam, dum uita manebat;
> at nunc exanimis, lacerata, ligata, reuulsa,
> dedita sum terrae, tumulo sed condita non sum.[42]

The text takes the familiar shape of a progression from the past to the present tense and includes two temporal adverbs, *quondam* and *nunc*, in the first two verses. The speaker first recounts its former state as part of a larger animal when it was alive, and then it describes its death and transformation through a series of participles in line two. The final verse openly plays with the conventions of epitaphs, alluding as it does to the burial of the speaker. Since Symphosius used this same 'once … now' structure for several other riddles, he apparently recognized it as forming a distinct type of riddle, composed in imitation of epigrams and all portraying the transformation of their subjects.

Aldhelm wrote several transformation riddles after the model of Symphosius, expanding the short form of his predecessor's riddles into longer compositions.

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[39] For Symphosius's knowledge of epigrams, especially those of Martial, see the *apparatus fontium* in *Variae Collectiones Aenigmatum Merovingicae Aetatis*, ed. Fr. Glorie, CCSL 133A (Turnhout, 1968), 647, 663, 675, 681, 684, 688–9, 710, 717; Manuela Bergamin, *Aenigmata Symposii: La fondazione dell'enigmistica come genere poetico*, Per Verba: Testi mediolatini con traduzione 22 (Florence, 2005), xxxiv–xxxvi, xlv–xlvii, 225–6; and Leary, *Symphosius*, pp. 6–9.

[40] For the only example of the progenitor formula, see Symphosius, *Aenigma* 7 *Fumus*, line 3 (ed. Leary, p. 40): 'qui **me genuit** sine me non nascitur ipse' (emphasis mine; 'he who begot me is not born himself without me').

[41] See Symphosius, *Aenigma* 10 *Glacies*; *Aenigma* 50 *Fenum*; *Aenigma* 56 *Caliga*; *Aenigma* 91 *Pecunia*; and *Aenigma* 93 *Miles podagricus*.

[42] Symphosius, *Aenigma* 56 *Glacies* (ed. Leary, p. 46): 'Once I was greater in size, while life lasted; but now I am lifeless, cut, bound, pulled back; I am committed to earth, but I am not buried in a grave'.

Aldhelm used the 'X begot [or bore] me' formula several times,[43] perhaps imitating the famous Latin riddle about ice, which he certainly knew: 'Mater me genuit, eadem mox gignitur ex me.[44] But Aldhelm also composed transformation riddles that recalled the 'once…now' riddles of Symphosius. These riddles all progress from the past to the present state of their subjects and include temporal adverbs. Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 99 *Camellus* (Camel), for example, begins *eram quondam* ('once I was') and continues *nunc… nunc* ('now… now') in the following statements about the speaker's present existence.[45] A total of eleven riddles by Aldhelm can be classified as transformation riddles insofar as they portray the transformation of their subjects.[46] Almost all of these riddles progress from the past to the present tense, and include one or more temporal adverbs, such as *quondam* and *nunc*.[47] They thus resemble the 'once … now' transformations by Symphosius, which were composed in imitation of epigrams. Since the Greek riddle on the writing tablet was influenced by the same sort of epigrams, it naturally resembles these Latin transformation riddles, especially Aldhelm's riddle on the same topic. The resemblances then are not evidence of Aldhelm's direct knowledge of the Greek tradition; they are rather the result of the mutual influence of epigrams on Greek riddles and Symphosius, who in turn influenced Aldhelm.

AENIGMA 32 AND THE *HISPERICA FAMINA*

Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares* (Writing Tablets) stands out among his transformation riddles for its unusual opening. Although it shares the same two-part structure as its peers, beginning in the past tense and progressing to the present tense, it does not start with a progenitor formula, 'X begot [or bore] me', nor does it state what it once (*quondam*) was. In fact, *Aenigma* 32 does not describe its past existence as a single object at all, as the transformations of Symphosius do. Instead

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[43] See Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 33 *Lorica*, line 1; *Aenigma* 59 *Penna*, line 1; and *Aenigma* 97 *Nox*, line 1.

[44] For the ice riddle, which was widely known from Latin grammarians, see Donatus, *Ars Major*, iii. 6 (ed. L. Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l'enseignement grammatical: étude sur l'Ars Donati et sa diffusion (IVe-IXe siècle) et édition critique* (Paris, 1981), pp. 671–2): 'My mother gave birth to me, and soon that same one is born from me'. For Aldhelm's knowledge of this riddle, see his quotation of it in his *Epistola ad Acircium*, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 77, line 12.

[45] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 99 *Camellus*, lines 1, 3, 5 (ed. Ehwald, p. 145).

[46] See Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 19 *Salis*; *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares*; *Aenigma* 45 *Fusum*; *Aenigma* 52 *Candela*; *Aenigma* 59 *Penna*; *Aenigma* 61 *Pugio*, lines 1–3; *Aenigma* 78 *Cupa vinaria*, lines 8–10; *Aenigma* 81 *Lucifer*, lines 6–9; *Aenigma* 83 *Iuvencus*; *Aenigma* 95 *Scylla*; and *Aenigma* 99 *Camellus*.

[47] Of the eleven riddles cited above, only one does not progress from the past to the present tense: *Aenigma* 78 *Cupa vinaria*, lines 8–10, which rather describes its origin entirely in the present tense. For riddles containing a word meaning 'once' (*quondam*, *dudum* or *olim*), see Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 19 *Salis*, line 1; *Aenigma* 59 *Penna*, line 1; *Aenigma* 81 *Lucifer*, line 6; and *Aenigma* 99 *Camellus*, line 1. For riddles containing *nunc* ('now'), see Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares*, line 4; *Aenigma* 52 *Candela*, line 4; *Aenigma* 95 *Scylla*, line 7; and *Aenigma* 99 *Camellus*, line 3.

it catalogues the various materials from which it was composed: the wax, wood, and leather:

> Melligeris apibus mea prima processit origo,
> sed pars exterior crescebat cetera siluis;
> calciamenta mihi tradebant tergora dura.[48]

This specific approach does not have precedent in the aforementioned epigrams or riddles. But it is noteworthy that Aldhelm began another two riddles in this same way: *Aenigma* 52 *Candela* and *Aenigma* 61 *Pugio* (Dagger). In *Aenigma* 52, the opening lines refer to the wax and wick that combine to make the candle:

> Materia duplici palmis plasmabar apertis;
> interiora mihi candescunt: uiscera lino
> seu certe gracili iunco spoliata nitescunt.[49]

And the beginning of *Aenigma* 61 *Pugio* describes the metal and leather that compose the dagger:

> De terrae gremiis formabar primitus arte;
> materia trucibus processit cetera tauris
> aut potius putidis constat fabricata capellis.[50]

So Aldhelm began three of his transformation riddles in a similar, formulaic way by cataloguing the various raw materials that combine to form their subjects. This approach does not have any precedent in Greek or Latin epigrams nor in the *Aenigmata* of Symphosius, but it does bear a striking resemblance to certain passages in a Latin work that Aldhelm likely knew in some form – the *Hisperica famina.*

The eccentric Latin texts known collectively as the *Hisperica famina* were composed, according to Michael Herren, during the mid-seventh century in Ireland before circulating in England.[51] Aldhelm's firsthand experience with Irish

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[48] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares*, lines 1–3 (ed. Ehwald, p. 111): 'From honey-bearing bees my first origin proceeded, but my other, exterior part grew in the woods; hard hide gave me a covering'.

[49] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 52 *Candela*, lines 1–3 (ed. Ehwald, p. 120): 'From a double material I was formed with open palms; my interior parts grow white: my guts, plundered from flax or indeed from a slender reed, grow bright'.

[50] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 61 *Pugio*, lines 1–3 (ed. Ehwald, p. 125): 'From the earth's bosom I was formed at first with skill; my other material proceeded from fierce bulls or it was constructed instead from decaying goats'.

[51] See M. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I: the A-Text: a New Critical Edition with English Translation and Philological Commentary*, ed. M. Herren, Stud. and Texts 31 (Toronto, 1974), 32–44. For the other versions of the text, see *The Hisperica Famina*, ed. F. J. Jenkinson (Cambridge, 1908).

education is revealed by several early sources, including a letter to him from an unknown Irishman (*Scottus ignori nominis*) that said that Aldhelm 'was nourished by a certain holy man of our race'.[52] It is therefore likely that Aldhelm encountered the *Hisperica famina* in some form, although its influence on him has sometimes been overstated in the past.[53] As Andy Orchard has shown, there are many structural, topical and stylistic similarities between the *Hisperica famina* and Aldhelm's *Aenigmata*.[54] In its two most complete versions, the *Hisperica famina* dramatizes the rhetorical exercises of a group of students, who are challenged by a master to compose in Latin on a wide range of topics. The version known as the A-text includes two passages that describe in detail some of the tools used by scholars, *De tabula* (On the Writing Tablet) and *De taberna* (On the Book-container).[55]

These two descriptive passages share a similar structure, and it is likely that their formulaic elements made it easier to compose for as long as possible on the given topics.[56] The recurring elements include an introductory account of the various raw materials that constitute the finished products – in the case of the writing tablet, wood and wax:

> Haec arborea lectis plasmata est tabula fomentis,
> quae ex altero climate caeream copulat lituram.
> Defidas lignifero intercessu nectit colomellas,
> in quis compta lusit caellatura.
> A535   Aliud iam latus arboreum maiusculo ductu stipat situm,
> uaria scemicatur pictura,
> ac comptas oras artat.
> Haec olim frondea glaucicomi creuit inter robora fundi,
> ferrialique crescentem amputauit opifex scuri stipitem,

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52 *Epistola* 6 in *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, p. 494, line 15: 'a quodam sancto uiro de nostro genere nutritus es'. For more evidence of Aldhelm's firsthand experience with Irish education, see Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 4–5; Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', pp. 26–7; and G. T. Dempsey, *Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Ending of Antiquity* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 31–8.

53 For the claim that Aldhelm's diction and style was heavily indebted to the *Hisperica famina*, see Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 487–8; and P. Grosjean, 'Confusa Caligo: Remarques sur les "Hisperica Famina"', *Celtica* 3 (1956), 35–85, at 65–7; but cf. M. Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style and its Origin', *ASE* 6 (1977), 39–76, at 46–62; and J. Marenbon, 'Les sources du vocabulaire d'Aldhelm', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 41 (1979), 75–90. For the view that Aldhelm nonetheless knew the *Hisperica famina*, see Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 26; A. M. Juster, *Saint Aldhelm's 'Riddles'* (Toronto, 2015), pp. xiv, 76–7, 105; and Orchard, *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* I, xxi–xxii.

54 A. Orchard, 'The *Hisperica famina* as Literature', *Jnl of Med. Latin* 10 (2000), 1–45, at 12–3.

55 For the two passages, see *Hisperica famina*, lines 512–30, 531–46 (ed. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 104–7).

56 See Orchard, 'The *Hisperica famina* as Literature', pp. 10–2, 14–6.

> A540 quadrigonum ligneo dolauit incrementum neruo,
> micram eruit ascia margeriam,
> ornatamque perfecit tabulam,
> quae dexterali historium gestatur iduma,
> ac sophica caereis glomerat misteria planetis.
> A545 Nunc loquelarem celeri flexu retraho tramitem,
> ne ingeniosas rhetorum grauauero domescas.[57]

The speaker begins by describing the principal materials of the writing tablet, wood and wax. These are referred to in the extravagant language typical of the *Hisperica famina*; the wood is *lectis … fomentis* ('from select kindling'), and the beeswax is *caeream … lituram* ('a waxy smearing').[58] The passage then describes the physical appearance of the object, as if the speaker were holding a writing tablet in his hand (lines 533–37). When this description has been exhausted, the speaker imagines how the object was once transformed from its raw materials into the finished product, deviating into an account of the object's origin at line 538: 'Haec olim frondea glaucicomi creuit inter robora fundi'.[59] After recounting the process of manufacture (lines 539–42), the speaker concludes with the customary formulaic ending, beginning with *nunc* in line 545.[60] The other passage, *De taberna* (On the Book-container), has the same structure: the raw materials are mentioned first, then the physical appearance of the object is described, and finally the origin and transformation of the object are recounted. The opening lines of these two passages are thus similar to each other, and they also recall the description of raw materials in the opening lines of Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32:

> Melligeris apibus mea prima processit origo,
> sed pars exterior crescebat cetera siluis;
> calciamenta mihi tradebant tergora dura.[61]

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[57] *Hisperica famina*, lines 531–46 (ed. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 106): 'From select kindling this wooden tablet was formed, which combines a waxy smearing from another place. With a wood-bearing joint it unites divided columns, on which a heavenly carving plays. The other side now crowds its wooden structure with a larger construction; it is formed with various pictures, plus it has decorated edges. Once this thing grew among the leafy oaks of the glaucous-coloured ground, and a worker cut off a growing bough with an iron axe, hewed the four-cornered offshoot from wooden fibre, chiselled a tiny border with a blade, and finished the ornamented tablet, which is borne in the right hand of historians, plus it collects sophistical mysteries on its waxen planes. Now I draw back my verbal track with a swift turn, lest I should burden the ingenious abilities of the rhetoricians'. On the bizarre prosody of the *Hisperica famina*, see Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 16–7, 54.

[58] *Hisperica famina*, lines 531–2 (ed. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 106).

[59] *Hisperica famina*, lines 538 (ed. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 106): 'Once this thing grew among the leafy oaks of the glaucous-coloured ground'.

[60] See Orchard, 'The *Hisperica famina* as Literature', p. 18.

[61] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares*, lines 1–3 (ed. Ewhald, p. 111): 'From honey-bearing bees my first origin proceeded, but my other, exterior part grew in the woods; hard hide gave me a covering'.

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Since Aldhelm likely knew the *Hisperica famina* in some form, such formulaic passages may well have inspired the beginning of his three unusual transformation riddles – *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares* (Writing Tablets), *Aenigma* 52 *Candela* (Candle), and *Aenigma* 61 *Pugio* (Dagger).

There thus is no need to posit Aldhelm's knowledge of Greek riddles from the origin of the writing tablet that begins *Aenigma* 32. The two-part structure of Aldhelm's transformation riddles, including *Aenigma* 32, was clearly modelled after the 'once … now' riddles of Symphosius. Their general resemblance to the Greek riddle on a writing tablet is due to the shared influence of epigrams on all these texts. Symphosius and the authors of the Greek riddles in the *Anthologia Palatina* all intentionally imitated the form of epigrams. The opening lines of *Aenigma* 32, which describe the various raw materials that compose the writing tablet, do not resemble the Greek riddle on the same topic; they rather look like the formulaic passages about physical objects in the *Hisperica famina*, a work that Aldhelm likely knew in some form. This peculiar feature of *Aenigma* 32 therefore can be explained using Latin texts known in seventh-century England without appealing to Greek sources.

DICTION, METAPHOR AND ETYMOLOGY IN *AENIGMA* 32

Although the structure of *Aenigma* 32 does not reveal Aldhelm's knowledge of Greek riddles, perhaps some of its diction does. As we have seen, Milovanović-Barham proposed that Aldhelm's use of *melliger* ('honey-bearing') in line 1 was inspired by a similar compound adjective in a Byzantine Greek riddle about a candle, γλυκυγόνον ('sweet-bearing').[62] Both words are unattested before their occurrence in their respective texts. But Aldhelm's use of *melliger* should be viewed in the wider context of his unusual diction and its place in the Latin literary tradition. As many scholars have noted, Aldhelm was especially fond of compound adjectives ending *-fer* and *-ger*.[63] Such compounds had long been a part of the Latin poetic tradition,[64] and were popular among some of Aldhelm's favourite poets, such as Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator.[65] Their initial use by ancient Roman

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[62] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 59.

[63] See, e.g., M. Lapidge, 'Old English Poetic Compounds: a Latin Perspective', *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. V. Blanton and H. Scheck (Tempe, AZ, 2008), pp. 17–32, at 25–6; and Orchard, *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* II, 5–6.

[64] See G. D. Chase, 'The Form of Nominal Compounds in Latin', *Harvard Stud. in Classical Philol.* 11 (1900), 61–72, at 61–2; J. C. Arens, '*-Fer* and *-Ger*: their Extraordinary Preponderance among Compounds in Roman Poetry', *Mnemosyne*, 4th ser., 3 (1950), 241–62, at 242–3; and D. C. Swanson, *A Formal Analysis of Lucretius' Vocabulary* (Minneapolis, 1962), pp. 95–6.

[65] See R. P. H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 42–3, 218–20. For Aldhelm's knowledge of these poets, see Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 161–70.

poets may have been inspired by similar compounds in Greek poetry, but they had been fully absorbed into the Latin poetic lexicon by Aldhelm's time.[66] Most of the compound adjectives used by Aldhelm can be found in earlier texts, although he does seem to have coined a few himself, such as *melliger* in *Aenigma* 32.[67] It is nonetheless likely that these few neologisms were modelled after existing Latin combinations. In the case of *melliger* ('honey-bearing'), Aldhelm was probably thinking of Ovid's description of bees as *mellifer* (also 'honey-bearing').[68] Perhaps Aldhelm indulged here in the substitution of *-fer* for *-ger* in the spirit of the *Hisperica famina*, where many more such neologisms occur;[69] note, for example, the rare word *lignifer* ('wood-bearing') and the neologism *glaucicomus* ('glaucous-coloured') in the above quotation at lines 533 and 538. So here again an apparent parallel between *Aenigma* 32 and a Greek riddle can be best explained by Aldhelm's use of his immediate Latin sources.

Another similarity noted by Milovanović-Barham is the martial metaphor. Aldhelm referred to the stylus as *ferrum* ('iron stylus', 'iron weapon'), and described its erasing power with the phrase *diris … armis* ('by cruel arms'). Milovanović-Barham suggested that these warlike images might have been modelled after the figurative use of Ares in the Greek riddle on a writing tablet.[70] But Aldhelm's representation of the stylus as a weapon was probably inspired yet again by the *Hisperica famina*. The image of scholars as warriors characterizes the whole of the *Hisperica famina*, as Herren and Orchard have both noted.[71] In the two most complete versions, the *Hisperica famina* portrays a rhetorical contest that begins with the speaker extending an open challenge to a group of newly arrived students; the A-text reads 'huic lectorum sollertem inuito obello certatorem'.[72] After boasting of his previous victories, the speaker then describes his weapons and armour in the manner of a heroic arming scene, including his writing tablet and stylus:[73]

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[66] See Arens, '*-Fer* and *-Ger* ', pp. 243–54; L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London, 1969), pp. 101–3; and M. Fruyt, 'Latin Vocabulary', *A Companion to the Latin Language*, ed. J. Clarkson (Malden, MA, 2011), pp. 144–58, at 152.

[67] See my 'The Poetic Tradition of Anglo-Saxon Riddles', pp. 162–78.

[68] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* xv. 383. For Aldhelm's knowledge of Ovid, see Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 141, 145–9.

[69] See *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, p. 488; and Grosjean, 'Confusa Caligo', pp. 64–5; but cf. Marenbon, 'Les sources du vocabulaire d'Aldhelm', pp. 83–4. For neologisms formed with *-fer* and *-ger* in the *Hisperica famina*, see Herren, *Hisperica Famina I*, 48–9, 208–9.

[70] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 59.

[71] M. Herren, 'Hisperic Latin: Luxuriant Culture-Fungus of Decay', *Traditio* 30 (1974), 411–9, at 417; and Orchard, 'The *Hisperica famina* as Literature', pp. 21–5.

[72] *Hisperica famina*, line 22 (ed. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 64): 'I invite the clever combatant to this battle of scholars'.

[73] See Orchard, 'The *Hisperica famina* as Literature', p. 22.

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Dum truculenta me uellicant spicula,
30   protinus uersatilem euagino spatham,
quae almas trucidat statuas;
arboream capto iduma peltam,
quae carneas cluit tutamine pernas;
ferralem uibro pugionem,
35   cuius pitheum assiles macerat rostrum cidones;
ob hoc cunctos lastro in agonem coaeuos.[74]

Here the scholar is portrayed as an armed warrior, with his wooden writing tablet for a shield and his iron stylus for a dagger. In the *Hisperica famina*, this martial metaphor even exists at the level of individual words, such as the Hisperic term *arcator*, which Orchard compared to both *arca* ('book-chest') and *arcus* ('bow').[75] Although it is clear in the text that the word *arcator* refers to a scholar – that is, to someone who uses an *arca* ('book-chest') – the potential connection to *arcus* ('bow') nonetheless encourages the association of the scholar to a warrior.

A similar word-play may even lurk behind the solution to Aldhelm's *Aenigma 32 Pugillares* (Writing Tablets). As Nicholas Howe explained, Aldhelm composed many of his riddles around the etymology of the solutions, believing that the words for his solutions were not arbitrary signifiers but rather revealed some essential truth about the things they signified, often drawing on Isidore's *Etymologiae*.[76] It is interesting then that Aldhelm chose an unusual word for his writing tablet, *pugillares*, where one might expect the common word *tabula* ('tablet'), as in the passage in the *Hisperica famina*. Although the word *pugillares* does not occur in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, it clearly came from *pugillus* ('fistful', itself related to *pugil*, 'boxer', and *pugnus*, 'fist'). Aldhelm therefore would have thought that the word *pugillares* expressed the image of the warrior-scholar, as Orchard has suggested.[77] The *pugillares* are literally 'what is held in the fist' – they are a scholar's *arma* ('weapons', 'arms'). The martial metaphor in Aldhelm's *Aenigma 32* is thus an

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[74] *Hisperica famina*, lines 29–36 (ed. Herren, *The Hisperica Famina I*, 66): 'When ferocious darts pinch me, I instantly unsheathe my versatile sword, which slaughters sacred pillars; I take my wooden shield in hand, which covers my bodily limbs with protection; I brandish my iron dagger, whose deadly point vexes retreating archers; I therefore invite all my equals to combat'.

[75] Orchard, 'The *Hisperica famina* as Literature', p. 7; and see Grosjean, 'Confusa Caligo', p. 44; and Herren, *Hisperica Famina I*, 116.

[76] Nicholas Howe, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata* and Isidorian Etymology', *ASE* 14 (1985), 37–59. For Isidore's influence on Aldhelm in general, see, e.g., B. Bischoff, 'Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla', in his *Mittelalterliche Studien: ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1966–1981) I, 171–94, at 183, 185–6; Marenbon, 'Les sources du vocabulaire d'Aldhelm', pp. 86–8; and M. Salvador-Bello, *Isidorean Perceptions of Order: the Exeter Book Riddles and Medieval Latin Enigmata*, Med. European Stud. 17 (Morgantown, WV, 2015), 177–221.

[77] See Orchard, *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* II, 41–2.

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etymological clue that reveals the connection between *pugillares* ('writing tablets') and *pugillus* ('fistful'), *pugil* ('boxer'), and the rest. That Aldhelm should develop a martial image that describes the use of a stylus as *diris … armis* ('by cruel arms') should come as no surprise then; it does not imply a knowledge of the Greek riddle on the same topic.

There may even be a reference to this etymology in the text of *Aenigma* 32 itself. Line 7 reads 'quod largos generat millena fruge maniplos', where the noun *manip(u)lus* literally means 'a handful' (related to *manus* 'hand'), and by extension can refer to 'a sheaf of wheat' among other things (such as 'a company of soldiers').[78] The word *manip(u)lus* therefore mirrors the etymology of the solution *pugillares*, as well as participating in the agricultural metaphor developed in the second half of *Aenigma* 32, which Milovanović-Barham considered largely irrelevant to a discussion of its sources.[79] The writing tablets (*pugillares*) are thus 'hand-held' things, where the *largi manipuli* ('plentiful handfuls') of the Holy Word can be harvested. If a source is needed for this word-play, there is an intriguing analogue in a passage by one of Aldhelm's favourite Latin poets, Arator – a name that means 'ploughman', incidentally. Here, Arator portrayed the Apostles as holy harvesters in the same agricultural metaphor developed by *Aenigma* 32.[80] The many double-meaning words in the passage, including *manip(u)lus*, are given in parentheses in the translation below:

> 365   Da semina uerbi
> per tua dona coli, signisque noualibus usa,
> colligat ista manus, te fructificante, maniplos,
> de quibus ipse tui componas horrea caeli.[81]

Arator thus described how the Apostles should disseminate the Word of God and reap new followers of Christ, with *maniplos* in line 367 referring to these new Christians as both 'companies of soldiers' and 'sheaves of wheat' for God's heavenly granary. It is not implausible that this punning passage by Arator inspired Aldhelm to play with the polysemy of the word *manip(u)lus* in *Aenigma* 32. Aldhelm's riddle about the writing tablet is thus fully immersed in the Latin

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[78] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares*, line 7 (ed. Ehwald, p. 111): '[the field] which produces plentiful sheaves [literally 'handfuls'] with a thousand-fold fruit'.

[79] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 58–9, although she did suggest that etymology was at play in the word *calceamenta* ('shoe', 'foot covering') in 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 59–60.

[80] On Arator's interest in etymology, see Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 307–8.

[81] Arator, *Historia Apostolorum* i. 365–9 (ed. A. P. Orbán, *Aratoris Subdiaconi Historia Apostolica: Pars I*, CCSL 130 (Turnhout, 2006), 250–1): 'Grant that the seeds of the Word be worshipped (*or* cultivated) by your gifts, and with you making things fruitful, let this band (*or* hand), which enjoyed new signs, collect (*or* harvest) companies of soldiers (*or* sheaves of wheat), from which you yourself compile the granaries of your heaven'.

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literary tradition, making artful and inventive use of his Latin sources, especially the *Hisperica famina*. There is little reason to infer a knowledge of Greek sources from this riddle alone.

GENERAL SIMILARITIES

What about the general similarities between Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* and Greek riddles? Do these similarities reveal Aldhelm's knowledge of the Greek tradition or do they have other explanations? As I mentioned above, Milovanović-Barham noted three characteristics of Aldhelm's collection that were better attested by Greek riddles than by Symphosius: the use of logographs; an emphasis on origins and birth; and the inclusion of verbal challenges to solve the riddles.[82] With respect to logographs, Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* and the riddles in the *Anthologia Palatina* certainly include a few verses that play with words, such as *corbus/orbus* and *paries/aries*.[83] Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 63 *Corbus* (Raven), for example, contains this clue: 'littera tollatur: post haec sine prole manebo', which refers to the word *orbus* ('bereft of children') contained within the solution *corbus* ('raven').[84] But as Milovanović-Barham herself acknowledged, Symphosius also included such logographs, as in the final line of *Aenigma* 36 *Porcus* (Pig), 'nomine numen habens si littera prima periret', which alludes to the word *Orcus* ('god of the underworld') contained within the solution *porcus* ('pig').[85] Another two Latin riddles in the *Anthologia Latina* use similar logographs, including one on *paries/aries*, a plausible source for Aldhelm's own logograph on the same pair of words.[86] It is likely then that Aldhelm's logographs were inspired by these Latin sources rather than by Greek ones.

The other two similarities are common to many riddle traditions, and thus cannot prove Aldhelm's knowledge of Greek riddles in particular. It is true that many of Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* mention the origin of their subjects (thirty-four by my count), including *Aenigma* 32 discussed above.[87] But this is not a particularly

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[82] Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', pp. 55–60.

[83] For Aldhelm's logographs, see *Aenigma* 63 *Corbus*, line 10 (ed. Ehwald, p. 126), and *Aenigma* 86 *Aries*, line 8 (ed. Ehwald, p. 137). For these and other logographs in Anglo-Latin riddles, see Orchard, *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* II, 71–2.

[84] Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 63 *Corbus*, line 10 (ed. Ehwald, p. 126): 'A letter may be taken away: then I shall remain without offspring'.

[85] Symphosius, *Aenigma* 36, line 3 (ed. Leary, p. 44): 'I possess divinity in my name, if my first letter were to perish'. For another logograph in Symphosius, see *Aenigma* 74 *Lapis*, line 3 (ed. Leary, p. 48).

[86] For these riddles, see *Anthologia Latina sive Poesis Latinae supplementum*, ed. F. Buecheler and A. Riese 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1894–1906) I, fasc. 1, 220 (nos. 738a, 738b). On Aldhelm's knowledge of these riddles, see Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 208–9.

[87] Thirty-four of Aldhelm's riddles refer overtly to the origin or birth of their subjects: see *Aenigma* 5 *Iris*, lines 2–3; *Aenigma* 14 *Pavo*, line 2; *Aenigma* 17 *Perna*, line 1; *Aenigma* 19 *Salis*, line 1; *Aenigma*

striking characteristic of his collection, since the riddles of many traditions refer to the birth or origin of their subjects.[88] Although Milovanović-Barham claimed that Symphosius only included 'about a dozen' riddles 'concerned with the provenance of the subject in question', I count twenty-one references to a subject's birth or origin, a comparable number to that of Aldhelm's much larger collection.[89] Aldhelm's interest in origins then does not obviously reveal the influence of Greek riddles. And finally, his inclusion of verbal challenges to solve his riddles is not uncommon in riddle traditions.[90] As Milovanović-Barham rightly noted, Aldhelm's few challenges to the reader, such as 'sciscitor inflatos, fungar quo nomine, sophos', have no precedent in the *Aenigmata* of Symphosius, whereas similar challenges do occur in some Byzantine Greek riddles.[91] But the earlier Greek riddles in the *Anthologia Palatina* do not include such challenges to the reader, so it is hard to say to what extent they were in fact characteristic of the earlier Greek tradition. Verbal challenges arise naturally from the competitive nature of the riddle genre itself, and they often appear in literary representations of riddle contests. After each riddle in the Old Norse contest in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks ins vitra*, for example, the command *Heiðrek konungr, hyggðu at gátu* is

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20 *Apis*, line 1; *Aenigma* 21 *Lima*, line 2; *Aenigma* 23 *Trutina*, line 1; *Aenigma* 24 *Dracontia*, line 1; *Aenigma* 27 *Coticula*, line 1; *Aenigma* 28 *Minotaurus*, line 4; *Aenigma* 30 *Elementum*, lines 1–5; *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares*, lines 1–3; *Aenigma* 33 *Lorica*, line 1; *Aenigma* 44 *Ignis*, line 1; *Aenigma* 45 *Fusum*, line 1; *Aenigma* 48 *Vertico poli*, line 1; *Aenigma* 51 *Eliotropus*, line 1; *Aenigma* 52 *Candela*, lines 1–3; *Aenigma* 54 *Cocuma duplex*, line 7; *Aenigma* 59 *Penna*, line 1; *Aenigma* 61 *Pugio*, line 1; *Aenigma* 62 *Famfaluca*, line 1; *Aenigma* 69 *Taxus*, line 5; *Aenigma* 70 *Tortella*, lines 1–2; *Aenigma* 72 *Colosus*, lines 1, 7; *Aenigma* 78 *Cupa vinaria*, lines 8–10; *Aenigma* 87 *Clipeus*, line 1; *Aenigma* 92 *Farus editissima*, line 3; *Aenigma* 93 *Scintilla*, lines 3, 10–11; *Aenigma* 96 *Elefans*, line 7; *Aenigma* 97 *Nox*, line 1; *Aenigma* 98 *Elleborus*, line 1; *Aenigma* 99 *Camellus*, line 1; *Aenigma* 100 *Creatura*, lines 1–4.

88 For riddles that refer to the origin or birth of their subjects, see, e.g., Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition*, pp. 38–9, 136–7, 235–53, 392–5, 698–9, 729–30, 754–8, 789–90 (nos. 88–95, 401–4, 661–80, 1007–11).

89 Twenty-one riddles by Symphosius refer overtly to the origin or birth of their subjects: see *Aenigma* 3 *Harundo*, line 2; *Aenigma* 6 *Tegula*, line 2; *Aenigma* 7 *Fumus*, line 3; *Aenigma* 10 *Glacies*, line 1; *Aenigma* 11 *Nix*, line 3; *Aenigma* 14 *Pullus in ovo*, lines 1–3; *Aenigma* 15 *Vipera*, lines 1–3; *Aenigma* 29 *Phoenix*, lines 1–3; *Aenigma* 36 *Porcus*, line 1; *Aenigma* 37 *Mula*, lines 2–3; *Aenigma* 42 *Beta*, line 3; *Aenigma* 43 *Curcurbita*, line 1; *Aenigma* 48 *Murra*, lines 1–2; *Aenigma* 50 *Faenum*, line 1; *Aenigma* 56 *Caliga*, line 1; *Aenigma* 66 *Flagellum*, line 1; *Aenigma* 81 *Lagena*, line 1; *Aenigma* 82 *Conditum*, line 1; *Aenigma* 85 *Perna*, line 1; *Aenigma* 91 *Pecunia*, line 1; *Aenigma* 93 *Miles podagricus*, line 1. Cf. Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 55.

90 On the formulaic challenges to the reader in Anglo-Latin and Old English riddles, see A. Orchard, 'Enigma Variations: the Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Tradition', *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and A. Orchard, 2 vols. (Toronto, 2005) I, 284–304, at 286–7.

91 Aldhelm, *Aenigma* 100 *Creatura*, line 83 (ed. Ehwald, p. 149): 'I ask of the puffed-up wise men by what name I am called'. See Milovanović-Barham, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata*', p. 56.

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repeated.[92] Even outside riddle contests, such challenges became formulaic in the Old English riddles of the Exeter Book, as in the famous challenge *saga hwæt ic hatte* and its variations.[93] It is plausible then that the few challenges to the reader in Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* arose from the inherently competitive nature of the riddle genre, rather than being imitations of such challenges in Greek riddles. Their occurrence in Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* is not likely evidence of his knowledge of Greek riddles.

As we have seen, there are indeed some general features of Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* that are more noticeable in Greek riddles than in his main source Symphosius, and in particular there are many similarities between Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32 *Pugillares* (Writing Tablets) and the Greek riddle on the same topic. Both riddles take the form of a two-part progression from the past to the present, recounting the origin of their subjects, and both are told from the perspective of the solution itself. But these resemblances do not necessarily imply that the Greek riddle was Aldhelm's source. Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32 is a transformation riddle, a type of riddle that he modelled after similar transformation riddles by Symphosius, who in turn modelled them after epigrams. The Greek riddle on a writing tablet was also modelled after similar epigrams, so it naturally resembles Aldhelm's riddle on the same topic. Many of the details of Aldhelm's *Aenigma* 32 have precedents in the *Hisperica famina*, which he is more likely to have known than Greek riddles; although he could have encountered Greek riddles at Canterbury, we have no evidence that he did. Like *Aenigma* 32, the *Hisperica famina* mentions the raw materials of the writing tablet and the martial metaphor of the stylus, so it is not at all implausible that Aldhelm was directly inspired by some form of this text when he composed *Aenigma* 32. If it could be shown that Aldhelm did in fact know Greek riddles, it would be an exciting development in the understanding of his works, and it would provide important evidence for the reception of Greek texts in seventh-century England. But it is in fact more likely that Aldhelm's *Aenigmata* were more directly inspired by the *Hisperica famina* than has generally been recognized, suggesting that further study of the connections between these two seventh-century Latin texts would be very much worthwhile.

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[92] See *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, ed. C. Tolkien (London: 1960), pp. 32–44: 'King Heidrek, consider this riddle!'

[93] For the formulaic challenge 'saga hwæt ic hatte' ('say what I am called!') and its variations in the Exeter Book Riddles, see P. Orton, 'The Exeter Book *Riddles*: Authorship and Transmission', *ASE* 44 (2015), 131–62, at 139–40; and Orchard, *The Old English and Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* II, 336, n. 1.14b–15.