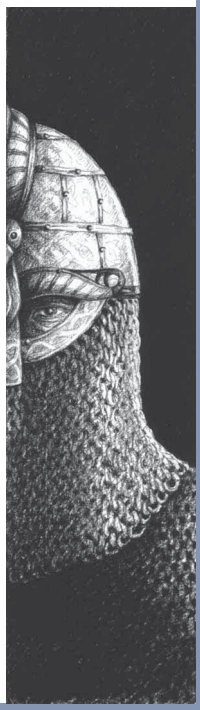
Sarah Chevalier / Thomas Honegger (eds.)

Words, Words, Words: Philology and Beyond



Festschrift for Andreas Fischer
on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday

francke VERLAG

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***Words, Words, Words:* Philology and Beyond**

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Sarah Chevalier & Thomas Honegger

Introduction

This volume has been prepared to honour our colleague and friend, Andreas Fischer. As his former students, we are delighted to be able to pay tribute to him with this *Festschrift*, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday.

Andreas Fischer was born in Basel on 25 January 1947. He attended the *Humanistiches Gymnasium* there, and went on to study English, German and Art History at the University of Basel; one year of his undergraduate studies was also spent at the University of Durham. He completed his studies in 1975 with a doctorate, *summa cum laude*, on lexical aspects of dialects in the south-west of England.

For the following six years Andreas Fischer worked as a teaching and research assistant at the English Department of the University of Basel. He completed his *Habilitation*, on engagement, wedding and marriage in Old English, in 1981 and subsequently became *Privatdozent* at the University of Basel. In 1984, he left Switzerland again for a year, this time not to study but to teach, namely as Visiting Associate Professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; and this time not alone but accompanied by his wife Melinda.

Andreas Fischer's professorial appointment came soon after the couple's return to Switzerland. In 1985, he was appointed Professor of English Philology at the University of Zurich. The couple moved to Zurich, where their daughter Emma was born.

Andreas Fischer has had a long and distinguished career at the University of Zurich. For a quarter of a century he has taught and inspired hundreds of students, published significant research in the fields of lexicology and English historical linguistics, and made a vital contribution to the running of the university.

His teaching has covered a wide range of topics and we mention a few courses here which have been particularly memorable for us: "Animals in Medieval Literature", which led to Thomas Honegger's interest in this topic and his dissertation on that very theme; "Scandinavian-English Language Contact" co-taught with Hans-Peter Naumann, which included a field trip to the Orkney and Shetland Islands; "English in Australia"; "The Bible in English"; and "Case Studies in Bilingualism", which laid the groundwork for Sarah Chevalier's *Habilitation* on trilingual language acquisition. His inspirational teaching is further attested by the number of stu-

dents who have chosen to write their theses with him: Andreas Fischer has supervised 182 *Lizenziat* theses and, to date, 27 doctoral dissertations, with several more still being completed.

Andreas Fischer's research has centred on lexis, especially from a historical perspective, as is evidenced by his many publications in this field (e.g. "The Vocabulary of Very Late Old English", 1996); this interest in lexis includes issues of lexicography (e.g. "Global English as a Challenge for Lexicography", 2002). Further areas of interest are historical linguistics in general (e.g. "The Hatton MS. of the West Saxon Gospels: The Preservation and Transmission of Old English", 1997), as well as sociolinguistics (e.g. "Language and Politics in Switzerland", 2001). Perusal of his publication list also reveals a focus on the analysis of linguistic data and concepts through classification (e.g. "Graphological Iconicity in Print Advertising: A Typology", 1999 and "The Notional Structure of Thesauruses", 2004).

This ability to make sense of phenomena via various ways of ordering and structuring them has no doubt played a role in Andreas Fischer's illustrious administrative career, which began with the position of Head of the English Department. Later, he was appointed Vice-Dean, then Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and following, Vice-President of the University. Andreas Fischer's administrative career has culminated in his current position as President (*Rektor*) of the University of Zurich.

But it has not only been a gift for analysis that has led him to succeed in and enjoy his work; as Andreas Fischer has told us, he is basically "interested in people". This warmth and interest has been appreciated by colleagues and students alike.

Turning to the present volume, it is both colleagues from around the world as well as former students who have contributed to this *Festschrift*. As in Andreas Fischer's own research, the focus is on words: descriptive adjectives in newspapers, emergent conjunctions, the inscription on the sword-hilt in *Beowulf* – to mention just a few areas of analysis. The studies appear in alphabetical order according to the name of the author; an abstract precedes each paper and a biographical sketch of the author follows. We hope that Andreas Fischer, as well as other linguists, will take pleasure in the findings, discussions, and analyses in *Words, Words, Words: Philology and Beyond*.

Sarah Chevalier & Thomas Honegger

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1976

1. *Dialects in the South-West of England: A Lexical Investigation.* (The Cooper Monographs 25). Berne: Francke.
2. "Wörterbuch mit Anspruch auf Universalität: Zum Abschluss der Neubearbeitung des 'Muret-Sanders'". *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 164, 16 July 1976, p. 37.
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5. Charles Dickens. *Meistererzählungen*, aus dem Englischen übersetzt von Trude Fein. Zürich: Manesse. Auswahl und "Nachwort", pp. 551–568. [see also 42.]
6. Review of Karl-Gustav Ek. *The Development of OE æ (i-mutated a) before Nasals and OE æ in South-Eastern Middle English.* (Acta Universitatis Lundensis, Sectio I, 22; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1975). *English Studies* 59, p. 369.

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1980

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1981

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1984

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17. John Galsworthy. *Meistererzählungen*, aus dem Englischen übersetzt von Irma Wehrli. Zürich: Manesse. Auswahl und "Nachwort", pp. 459–471.

1986

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1987

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2009

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2011

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Dieter Bitterli

Two Old English Prose Riddles of the Eleventh Century

Abstract

The two short Old English riddles preserved in a mid-eleventh-century manuscript from Winchester are the only surviving examples of their kind written in prose. Yet despite their uniqueness, the two prose riddles show close similarities not only to the celebrated verse riddles of the Exeter Book, but also to the earlier Latin *enigmata* that circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. Their exact subject matter is unknown (there are no solutions in the manuscript), but they both deal with paradoxical family constellations that not only are similar to those of the traditional relationship riddles about biblical characters but also occur in mathematical problems known from the period. This paper explores some of these intriguing intertextualities as it attempts to situate the two Winchester prose riddles in the context of the rich Anglo-Saxon riddle tradition. Its primary concern is not to propose a new or "correct" solution to either of the two riddles; rather, it seeks to identify the literary framework in which they are rooted (and perhaps can be solved), and to provide further evidence for the many-voiced dialogue between Anglo-Latin and Old English enigmatography.

Riddles, puzzles, and conundrums are a perennially popular genre, yet in the literate circles of Anglo-Saxon England, the literary riddle – in both verse and prose, and in Latin as well as in the vernacular – appears to have been held in particularly high esteem, constituting a major literary genre from as early as the seventh century.

It was Aldhelm of Malmesbury (d. 709/10) who initiated the tradition of riddle-making in early England. His prototypical collection of one hundred Latin *enigmata* in hexametrical verse was studied in the Anglo-Saxon classroom and often copied in manuscripts together with the verse riddles of the late Roman poet Symphosius (4th/5th c. AD) and those of the Anglo-Saxon churchmen Tatwine (d. 734), Eusebius (8th c.), and Boniface (d. 754).

Their elegant collections of poetic riddles, in turn, were known to Alcuin of York (d. 804), whose literary oeuvre includes both occasional verse *enigmata*, a riddle dialogue in prose, and a series of riddle-like mathemati-

cal problems.[1] The distinctively English tradition of early medieval enigmatography is further evidenced by two Anglo-Saxon texts once attributed to Bede: the *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae*, a compilation of monastic wisdom questions and riddles in prose and verse, and the so-called *Joco-seria*, a group of grammatical puzzles that survive in the famous "Cambridge Songs" manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 5.35) alongside the complete riddle cycles of Symphosius, Aldhelm, Tatwine, and Eusebius. Symphosius' pithy tristichs, in particular, also circulated outside these collections: ten of them were incorporated into the Late Latin Apollonius romance (which was translated into Old English in the tenth century), and Aldhelm quotes several of them in his metrical treatises, fashioning his own century of *enigmata* after that of his Roman model.

Given such a rich and long-standing practice of the riddle genre in Anglo-Saxon England, it comes as no surprise that riddles in vernacular Old English were composed not only in alliterative verse – as exemplified by the ninety-odd *Riddles* of the 10th-century Exeter Book – but also in prose. Only two genuine Old English prose riddles, however, are known to have come down to us. They uniquely survive in a mid-eleventh-century psalter manuscript from Winchester (British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius E.xviii) as part of a short entry about secret writing. The two riddles, which were printed for the first time in Wanley's catalogue (1705), are virtually unknown even to the specialists in the field, although they were discussed in a series of notes by Max Förster (1905, 1906a, 1906b, 1916) and have occasionally been referred to in studies of the Exeter Book riddles.

One aspect that connects the two Winchester prose riddles with both the Latin *enigmata* and the earlier Exeter Book collection is the combination of riddling and cryptography. The riddles occur in the section of the manuscript (fols. 2r–17v) which precedes the glossed psalter and also contains computistical tables and notes, charms, prognostications, and prayers.[2] As they stand in the manuscript, the riddles form part of a one-page treatise on secret codes that occupies about two thirds of fol. 16v and elucidates a writing technique known in the Middle Ages as *notae sancti Bonifatii*.[3] In this cryptographic method, the vowels *a e i o u* are either substituted by the consonants which follow them in the roman alphabet

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[1] The *Disputatio Pippini cum Albino* and the *Propositiones ad acuendos iuvenes*; see Bitterli (2010).

[2] See Ker (1957:298–301, no. 224); Pulsiano & Treharne (1998), with a facsimile of fol. 16v (plate 12); Gneuss (2001:73, no. 407).

[3] The best edition is Howlett (2002:109–12). A brief section of the treatise, without the riddles, occurs also in the earlier manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 572, fol. 40r; see Ker (1957:376–77, no. 313); Howlett (2002:107). For the *notae sancti Bonifatii*, see Levison (1946:290–94); Bischoff (1992:177 and 255); Howlett (2002:105–12).

(*b f k p x*), or expressed by dots (one dot for *a*, two for *e*, three for *i*, etc.). Copyists of medieval codices, especially, would occasionally use this device to encode their names in signatures and subscriptions. In the Winchester text, both codes are explained and illustrated with some examples in Latin and Old English, including an encrypted scribal colophon that associates the short treatise with Ælfwine of Winchester, who was abbot of the New Minster from 1031 to 1057.[4] Strictly speaking, the two riddles precede the cryptographic treatise, but they are introduced by a formula which employs the system of vowel substitution explained later in the text:

> Nys þks frfgfn syllkc þknc to rædfnnf.
> [Nys þis fregen syllic þinc to rædenne.]
> Þu þe færst on þone weg gret ðu minne broðor, minre modor ceor[l], þone acende min agen wif. And ic wæs mines broðor dohtor and ic eom mines fæder modor geworden. And mine bearn syndon geworden mines fæder modor. a e i o u. a^{b} f^{e} k^{i} þ^{o} x^{u} –
>
> (This question is not a strange thing to guess: You who journey on the way, greet my brother, my mother's husband, whom my own wife gave birth to. And I was my brother's daughter, and I became my father's mother. And my children became my father's mother. a e i o u. a^{b} f^{e} k^{i} þ^{o} x^{u} –)[5]

Then, on a new line, the explanations of the vowel substitution code follow: "Ðis is quinque vocales. mid þysum fif stafum man mæg writan swa hwæt swa he wile" (This is [the system of] five vowels; with these five letters one can write whatever one wishes), and so on.

It is interesting to note that riddles and secret writing also occur together elsewhere in the early medieval riddle corpus. In some manuscripts of the Latin *enigmata*, for instance, the Bonifatian method of vowel substitution was used to encrypt riddle solutions or add scribal comments, and in the Exeter Book *Riddle* 36, there is an interpolated line with encrypted vowels in Old English and Latin providing a hint to the solution.[6] However, no such connection between the riddles and the explanations about secret writing which follow them on the page seems to exist in the case of the two Winchester riddles. It would be tempting to read the riddles as an oblique instruction of how to use the secret writing code shown in the opening formula and expounded in the treatise. If this was the case, the

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[4] The conclusion reads, transliterated: "Ælfwine me wrat ræd nu ðu ðe cunne" (Ælfwine wrote me, now you guess who might be able). This is not Tolkien's Ælfwine (cf. Honegger 2006), but the Winchester monk and owner of a tiny Prayerbook (British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvi + xxvii) of about 1023/31, which also contains an encrypted scribal note using vowel substitution; see Pulsiano & Treharne (1998:99); Lapidge (1999).

[5] Howlett (2002:109), except w for Anglo-Saxon "wynn", and and for "7"; my punctuation and translation.

[6] See Orchard (2005:285); Bitterli (2009:71–75) and Bitterli (2010:19).

siblings, parents, and children mentioned in the text might stand for the vowels and consonants (and the dots) following and replacing one another in the code – comparable to Aldhelm's riddle about the alphabet (*Enigma* 30), in which the letters appear as 'voiceless' yet speaking sisters[7] – yet here, the family relations are too complex and paradoxical to support such a reading. Nor do the cryptographic explanations encode the solutions to the riddles or help in any way to solve them. Rather, we should take the two riddles as constituting a separate sub-entry, independent, as it were, of the cryptic code used and explained on the same manuscript page, yet as part of a scribal note whose purpose seems to have been to collect a few brain-teasers from medieval writing practice and monastic sport.[8]

Obviously, we are dealing with two separate riddles: in the first of them, beginning with "Þu þe færst on þone weg", there seems to be a male speaker and the subject to be guessed must be a man (or a subject metaphorically disguised as a man), while the phrase "ic wæs mines broðor dohtor" changes the perspective to introduce a female speaker who is also the subject of the second riddle. This was already noticed by Dietrich (1859:489–90), who suggested that the solution to the first riddle is "day", while the subject of the second (and perhaps even of the first) is the biblical Eve, a solution supported by Grein (1865:309), Förster (1906a), and Tupper (1910:175–76).[9] "Eve" indeed appears to be the solution to the second item: Eve can be said to be her "brother's daughter" ("mines broðor dohtor") because she was born from Adam's rib (Gen 2.21); she became her "father's mother" ("mines fæder modor") when she died and turned to earth, from which Adam, her "father", was made (Gen 2.7); and her "children became [her] father's mother" ("mine bearn syndon geworden mines fæder modor") because she is the typological figure of Mary, the Mother of God, whom she preceded in the biblical genealogy. As such, the riddle is indeed "full of popular motives common in riddle and dialogue literature", as Tupper (1910:176) has noted. Witty puzzles and wisdom questions about biblical characters, especially Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and the Old Testament patriarchs, circulated widely in the early medieval *Ioca monachorum* and related monastic dialogues, both in Latin and the vernacular languages. The paradoxical nature of Adam and Eve was among their frequent subjects, as in this 8th-century Latin version of the *Ioca monachorum* from St. Gallen:

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[7] See Bitterli (2009:114–15), with further examples.

[8] The discreteness of the entries is also suggested by the use of paragraphs and capital letters in each of the first words, Nys, Þu and Ðis.

[9] Dietrich must have thought of Aldhelm's *Enigma* 48 "De die et nocte" (Glorie 1968:258), in which the day and the night are referred to as unlike "sisters". "Day and Night" also seems to be the solution to *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae* no. 122 (Bayless and Lapidge 1998:136).

> Qui est mortuos et non est natus? – Adam.
> Qui dedit et non accepit? – Eva lacte.
>
> (Who died and wasn't born? – Adam. Who gave and didn't receive? – Eve the milk.)[10]

In the anonymous *Collectanea* of Pseudo-Bede, a compilation of wisdom questions and riddles from mostly Hiberno-Latin and Anglo-Saxon sources of the eighth century, there is a similar item about Adam:

> Dic mihi quis homo, qui non natus est, et mortuus est, atque in utero matris suae post mortem baptizatus? Est Adam.
>
> (Tell me, what man was not born, and died, and was baptized in the womb of his mother after his death? It is Adam.)[11]

According to medieval tradition, Adam was buried at Golgotha and baptized after his death by Christ's blood flowing from the Cross which had been erected over his tomb ("the womb of his mother", i.e. the earth). The legend is also referred to in the late Old English prose dialogue of *Adrian and Ritheus*:

> Saga me, hwilc man wære dead and nære acenned and æfter þam deaðe wære eft bebyried in his moder innoðe.
> Ic þe secge, þæt wæs Adam se æresta man, for þam eorðe wæs his moder and he wæs bibiriged eft in þære eorðan.
>
> (Tell me which man died and was not born, and after death was later buried in his mother's womb. I tell you, that was Adam the first man, because the earth was his mother and he was buried afterwards in the earth.)[12]

Adam may indeed also be the subject of the first of the two Winchester prose riddles. If we assume that here, too, Eve (and not a man) is the speaker, the elements could be explained as follows: "gret ðu minne broðor": Adam is Eve's "brother", because they both were created by God; "minre modor ceor[l]": Adam is also the "husband" of Eve's "mother", the earth; "þone acende min agen wif": the earth, of which Adam was made is both the mother and the metaphorical "wife" of the first parents who both were brought forth by it and subdued it (Gen 1.28).[13] The solution "Adam" is perhaps not as satisfactory as the one suggested for the second riddle

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[10] Suchier (1955:108); my translation.

[11] Text and translation from Bayless and Lapidge (1998:136–137, no. 123), whose note (p. 228) lists numerous medieval analogues.

[12] *Adrian and Ritheus* 28, ed. and trans. Cross and Hill (1982:38 and 76); see their commentary pp. 75–79.

[13] Alternatively, "ceorl" might take the sense of "peasant" so that the "mother's peasant" would denote Adam as the first husbandman. This reading was favoured by Grein (1865:309).

("Eve") – it also leaves unexplained why the speaker addresses traveling on their way – but the point here is the seemingly contradictory combination of both brother, husband, and son, which the reader must unravel in order to arrive at a solution. Similar paradoxical family constellations are described in a number of so-called relationship or kinship riddles found elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon riddle corpus. In the Exeter Book *Riddle* no. 46, for instance, the incestuous consanguinity of Lot and his offspring (another familial group of Old Testament figures) is turned into a grotesque orgy of wives, sons, daughters, sisters, sons, uncles, and nephews, who all join their father in his wine:

> Wer sæt æt wine mid his wifum twam
> ond his twegen suno ond his twa dohtor,
> swase gesweostor, ond hyra suno twegen,
> freolico frumbearn; fæder wæs þær inne
> þara æþelinga, æghwæðres mid
> eam ond nefa. Ealra wæron fife
> eorla ond idesa insittendra.
>
> (A man sat at wine with his two wives and his two sons and his two daughters, dear sisters, and their two sons, noble first-born children. In there was the father of these noble youths, (who were) at the same time each other's uncle and nephew. In all there were five men and women sitting within.)[14]

Here, the solution is obscured by the fact that Lot's children stood in more than one relationship with their father: the two daughters were also Lot's "wives", and their sons were at the same time each other's uncle and nephew. Such perplexing puzzles about marital relations already occur in the Carolingian *Propositiones ad acuendos iuvenes*, a collection of mathematical and combinatorial "Problems to Sharpen the Young" now generally attributed to Alcuin of York (d. 804), as well as in the anonymous *Enigmata risibilia* or "Amusing Riddles" preserved in a late 10th-century manuscript from the Abbey of Reichenau. They all deal with strange family constellations resulting from remarriage and intermarriage. Alcuin's "Problem about two men marrying each other's mother" (*Propositio* 11a) is a typical example. It is one of three related combinatorial puzzles that follow each other in some of the many surviving manuscripts of the *Propositiones*:

> Si duo homines alter alterius matrem similiter in coniugium sumpserit, quali cognatione filii eorum sibi coniungantur.
>
> (If two men each take each other's mother in marriage, what would be the relationship between their sons?)[15]

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[14] Krapp and Dobbie (1936:205); my punctuation and translation.

[15] Alcuin, *Propositio* 11a, ed. Folkerts (1978:50), trans. Hadley and Singmaster (1992:109).

The answer is that the two sons – like Lot's sons – are both each other's uncle and nephew; or as a ninth-century manuscript of the *Propositiones* explains: "Filius igitur meus et filius matris mee avunculi et nepotes sunt" (Hence my son and my mother's son are uncles and nephews).[16] In the *Propositiones*, the same unusual setting is duplicated by the analogous problem about a father and a son marrying a widow and her daughter (*Propositio* 11b), and there is a similar problem about two men who marry each other's sister (*Propositio* 11).[17] Obviously, matters are complicated when the people involved are widowed and remarry, so that not only natural parents and children, but widows, stepfathers and stepsons come into play, as in this particularly knotty item from the tenth-century *Reichenau Riddles*, the last of a group of only six short riddles in Latin:

> Porto filium filii mei,
> mariti mei fratrem,
> alterum unicum filium meum.
>
> (I carry the son of my son, my husband's brother, my second only son.)[18]

There is no solution to this riddle in the Reichenau manuscript, but as Schmidt (1936:199) has demonstrated, its speaker appears to be a woman who is pregnant by her own stepson and second husband – a pattern not entirely unusual in the Middle Ages: the woman must have been married before to a man who had a son from an earlier marriage; after her husband's death she married her stepson whose baby she is now carrying. Her baby is, therefore, the son of her stepson ("filium filii mei") and at the same time her husband's stepbrother ("mariti mei fratrem") since the baby will be born from one and the same mother and be her second yet only natural son ("alterum unicum filium"). This solution, as far-fetched as it may seem, is somewhat corroborated by the even shorter relationship riddle which precedes it in the manuscript. Like the remaining items of the group, this one is accompanied by its solution, which was added by the scribe in secret writing, employing the very code of the *notae sancti Bonifatii* explained in the Winchester treatise. It reads:

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[16] Folkerts (1978:50).

[17] Folkerts (1978:50–51); see Folkerts (1993:308–310); Bitterli (2009:58).

[18] *Reichenau Ridldle* 6, ed. Müllenhoff and Scherer (1873:14); repr. in Schupp (1972:31); my translation.