

Lyrics from the Old English

Read in Old and Modern English by

**Burton Raffel and
Robert P. Creed**

Folkways Records FL 9858

CAEDMON'S HYMN
RIDDLE EIGHT: A JAY'S SPRING SONG
RIDDLE ONE: STORM ON LAND
THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE
RIDDLE ELEVEN: WINE
THE RUIN
RIDDLE THIRTY-TWO: A SHIP
WULF AND EADWACER
RIDDLE TWENTY-NINE: THE MOON AND THE SUN
A FRAGMENT FROM A CHARM FOR BEWITCHED LAND
RIDDLE SEVEN: SWAN
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC
BEDE'S DEATH SONG

PR
1508
L97
1964
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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Lyrics from the Old English

A Reading by Burton Raffel

and Robert P. Creed
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ALL but one of the thirteen selections in this vocal anthology are lyrics. This single exception, ninety-one lines from a long poetic version of the Biblical Genesis, is however handled by the Anglo-Saxon poet as a kind of lyric drama. More important, the lines are both beautiful and powerful: Mr. Raffel and I first decided to include the passage and only then discovered this plausible justification.

The wide range of Old English lyric -- except for the most exalted religious songs of the Cynewulfian school -- is represented in this baker's dozen. There is the simple but moving thanksgiving for creation by the swineherd Caedmon. There is the ever briefer and simpler meditation attributed to Bede and first sung sometime before his death in AD 735.

Between these opening and closing songs there are the tones of many other voices. In "The Husband's Message" there is the strong voice of the lover who has endured exile and overcome it. In the strange "Wulf and Eadwacer" one seems to hear -- even through the mysterious vagueness of the setting -- the authentic sound of anguished love. "The Ruin," itself now a monumental ruin in the manuscript, sounds the note of awe and romantic reverie over the past.

The "Riddles" recorded here range from the blustering but beautiful "Storm," through the somewhat unctuous "Wine" on through the happy teasing of the "Jay" to that most graceful of lyric puzzles called here "Moon and Sun."

One final voice -- strange to our times -- completes this chorus. The three-line fragment from the "Charm for Bewitched Land" is both a prayer and a piece of magic. It is also a lyric cry from the deepest source of such cries -- from the heart that would create by the fiat of its well-shaped lyrics the world it desires.

* * * * *

Caedmon's "Hymn" may be the oldest English poem we possess, for the Venerable Bede tells, in his History of the English Church, that Caedmon miraculously began his career as a poet with this very poem. This must have been before AD 680. The "Riddles," "The Husband's Message," "Wulf and Eadwacer," and "The Ruin" are all contained in "a great English book" donated to the library of Exeter cathedral sometime before the year 1072, though they were probably sung and copied down some years before that date. The delightfully illustrated manuscript containing "Abraham and Isaac" also dates from the eleventh century, but again the poems it contains appear to be several centuries older.

* * * * *

The nameless Anglo-Saxon poets represented here, as well as Caedmon and Bede, were neither heathen

nor unsophisticated. Bede was the greatest European scholar of his time, though Caedmon, the swineherd who was illiterate at least at the beginning of his career, seems to have been the greater poet. It was possible all through the Anglo-Saxon age -- that is, from about the middle of the fifth century AD until the end of the eleventh -- to be a poet, even a great one, without being able to write or read. It was possible because the poet trained himself from listening to other poets to use a vocabulary which was made up of phrases and words which were exactly shaped to fit the needs of his rhythm and alliteration. He could use these "formulas" mechanically or he could employ them -- as the poets in this anthology do most of the time -- as skilfully and as subtly as any literate poet can do with his vocabulary. This traditional poet, or "singer," made his poems as he stood or sat before an audience in the hall of the nobleman or king, or in the refectories of the great monastic estates. The singer belonged to a long line of singers -- each generation training the next -- who had carried their art in their heads when they had left their homes in the north of Europe and, in the fifth century AD, sailed westward to the island of Britain.

For the modern reader no more convincing proof of the sophistication of this art and these artists can be found than Mr. Raffel's translations. This contemporary poet, steeped in the work of such moderns as Hopkins, Eliot, Pound and Yeats, has discovered that only the accurate language and honest rhythms created by these men fit the thousand-year-old lyrics of their predecessors.

Mr. Raffel's Poems from the Old English (University of Nebraska Press, 1960) contains many of the translations read in this anthology. All of the translations recorded here will soon appear in a revised and augmented edition of this volume to be published in 1964.

* * * * *

The texts of the Old English poems printed below differ somewhat in spelling and occasionally in wording from the texts published in the most comprehensive and scholarly modern edition, that edited by G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (Columbia University Press, 6 volumes, 1931-1953). The main reason for these minor differences is the need for consistency. I have tried to use the same dialect throughout -- so far as scholars have been able to reconstruct and I to maintain it -- the dialect of King Alfred of Wessex who lived during the last half of the ninth century. The specific details of the spelling (and hence of the pronunciation) of the Old English poems are borrowed from the work of Professor Francis P. Magoun, Jr., of Harvard University. The rhythm of these readings is my own modification of the scansion first worked out by Professor John C. Pope of Yale University.

* * * * *

To Professors Magoun and Pope in particular, and to the vast host of Anglo-Saxon scholars in general, the Old English part of this anthology owes everything but the errors that must inevitably have crept into it. To Mr. Bruce H. Nicoll and the University of Nebraska Press thanks are due for generous permission to reprint, and to print for the first time, poems from the present and the projected editions of Mr. Raffel's Poems from the Old English. To Mr. Göran Dahlin, Head of External Relations for Radio Sweden, and to the expert assistance of the station's technical staff, great Brown University.

Robert P. Creed

I: CAEDMON'S HYMN

Nú wé sculon herian Heofon-ríces Weard,
Meotodes meahthe and His móð-geþanc,
weorc Wuldor-Fæder, swá Hé wundra gehwæs,
æðe Dryhten, ór onstealde.
Hé árest scóp ielda bearnum
Heofon to hrófe, hálig Scieppend;
þá middan-geard mann-cynnes Weard,
æðe Dryhten after téode --
fírum foldan Fréa eall-mihtig!

II: RIDDLE EIGHT: JAY

Ic þurh múp sprece manigum reordum,
wrenċum singe, wrixle ġeneahhe
hēafod-wōðe, hlūde cferme,
healde mīne wīsan, hlēoðre ne mīðe,
eald æfen-scop, eorlum bringe
blisse on burgum, þanne ic būgendre
stefne styrme; stille on wīcum
sittap hnīgende. Sege hwet ic hātte,
þe swá sciernicge scēawend-wīsan
hlūde onhyrie, hælēðum bodie
will-cumena fela wōðe mīnre.

I: CAEDMON'S HYMN

Now sing the glory of God, the King
Of Heaven, our Father's power and His perfect
Labor, the world's conception, worked
In miracles as eternity's Lord made
The beginning. First the heavens were formed as a roof
For men, and then the holy Creator,
Eternal Lord and protector of souls,
Shaped our earth, prepared our home,
The almighty Master, our Prince, our God.

II. RIDDLE EIGHT: A JAY'S SPRING SONG

My mouth talks with a thousand tongues;
I sing with an easy art, often
Altering my voice as it rings the loud
Clamor of my song. As an old poet
Of the evening I tune my sliding music
Where, in their towns, men take pleasure
In the sound, sitting quietly, sinking
Along my words. Who can I be,
Aping a singing buffoon with a shining,
Brassy voice that bellows happiness,
The welcome sound of my strident cry ?

III: RIDDLE ONE: STORM

Hwelc is hælæða þæs horsc and þæs hyge-cræftig
 þæt þæt mæge asecgan, hwá mec on sif wræce,
 þonne ic astige strang, stundum ræde,
 þrymful þunie, þrægum wræce
 fære geond foldan, folc-salu þerne,
 reced réafige? Rieðas stígaþ,
 haswig ofer hrófum. Hlemm biþ on eorðan,
 wel-cwealm wera, þonne ic wudu hrære,
 bearwas blæd-hwæte, béamas fielle,
 holme ge-hræfed, héahum meahum
 wrecen on wæðe, wide sended;
 hæbbe mec on hryge þæt ér háðas wráh
 fold-búendra, flasc and gæstas,
 samod on sunde. Sæge hwá mec þeðce,
 oppe hú ic hætte, þe þá hlæst bere.

IV: THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

Nú ic onsundran þe secgan wille
 ymb þissum tréo-cynne þær ic túdre awéox;
 in mec ealdor sceal ellor landes
 settan searu-stafas, sealte stréamas
 . . . Full oft ic on bátes
 hryge hælæða hámas geáhte
 þær mec man-dryhten min onsende
 ofer lánh-bufu: eom nú lér cumen

RIDDLE ONE: STORM ON LAND

How many men are so knowing, so wise,
 That their tongues can tell who drives me into exile,
 Swells me brave and strong and fierce,
 Sends me roaring across the earth,
 Wild and cruel, burning men's homes,
 Wrecking their palaces? Smoke leaps up,
 Grey like a wolf, and all the world
 Crackles with the sounds of pain and death.
 When I shake forests, uproot peaceful
 Groves, clouds cover me; exalted
 Powers hurl me far and wide.
 What once protected the world, sheltered
 Men, I bear on my back, bodies
 And souls whirled in the mist. Where
 Am I swallowed down, and what is my name?

IV: THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

(Spoken by the staff on which the message has been incised. The MS is torn; this text is partly based on reconstructions. The Runes of lines 49-50 may mean, in slightly expanded form, either "Follow the sun's path across the ocean, and ours will be joy and the happiness and prosperity of the bright day," or "Follow the sun's path across the sea to find joy with the man who is waiting for you.")

A tree grew me; I was green, and wood.
 That came first. I was cut and sent
 Away from my home, holding wily
 Words, carried out on the ocean,
 Riding a boat's back. I crossed
 Stormy seas, seeking the thresholds
 Where my master's message was meant to travel
 And be known. And now the knotted planks

on céol-pele, and nú cunnan scealt
 hú þú ymb mód-lufan mines fréan 10
 on hyge hycge. Ic gehátan dearr
 þat þú þær tír-faste tréowe findest.
 Hwæt, þeð þonne biddan hét se þisne béam agróf
 þat þú sinc-hroden self gemunde
 on gewitlocan word-béotunga, 15
 þe git on ár-dagum oft gesprácon,
 þenden git móston on meodu-burgum
 eard weardian, án-land búgan,
 fríond-scipe fremman. Hine fáhpu adráf
 of sige-þéode; hét nú selfa þe 20
 lustum lóran, þat þú lagu drófe,
 sibban þú gehíerde on hlíðes óran
 galan ge morne géac on bearwe.
 Ne lát þú þeð sibban síðes getwáfan,
 láde gelettan lifíendne mann. 25
 Onzinn mere sóðan, mæwes óðel,
 onste sá-nacan, þat þú súþ hionan
 ofer mere-láde mannan findest,
 þær se þéoden is þín on wánum.
 Ne mæg him weorolde willa gelimpan 30
 mára on gemyndum, þas-þe hé mé saðde,
 þanne inc geunne ealwealdend God
 þat git atsanne sibban mótan
 secgum and gesíðum sinc brytnian
 næglede béagas; hé genóg hafap 35
 fattan goldes fíoh-gestréona
 þat hé mid el-þéode óðel healde,
 fægere foldan and him fela þéowiap,
 holdra háleða, þeah-þe hér mín wine
 níede gebáded, nacan út aprang, 40
 and on fða geond ána scolde

10- Of a ship have brought me here, and you
 Shall read my lord's heart and hear
 His soul's thought. I promise a glowing
 Faith shall be what you find. Read.

See: this wood has come to make you
 Remember the hands that carved it, to take you
 15- Back to the love and the pledges you shared,
 You two, in that buried time when you both
 Could walk unharmed across this festive
 Town, the land yours, and you
 Each other's. Your people fought, and the feud
 20- Brought him exile. Now he asks you
 To listen for the sad cuckoo calling
 In the grove: when its song has reached the edge
 Of the woods, he wants you to come to him over
 The waves, letting nothing lead you
 25- Aside and no man living stop you.

Go down to the sea, the gull's home,
 And come to a ship that can carry you south,
 Away, out on the water to where
 Your husband and lord longs for your coming.
 30- Nothing the world can send him, he says
 Through me, could bring him more delight
 Than for Almighty God to grant him you,
 And for you and he together to bless
 His soldiers and friends with treasure, with hammered
 35- Bracelets and rings. For though his home
 Is with strangers, he lives in a lovely land
 And is rich: shining gold surrounds him.
 And though my master was driven from here,
 Rushing madly down to his ship
 40- And onto the sea, alone, only
 Alive because he fled, and glad

faran on flot-weȝ, forþ-siðes ȝeorn,
 menȝan mere-stréamas. Nú se mann hafap
 wéan oferwunnen; nis him wilna ȝád,
 ne méara ne máðma ne meodu-dréama,
 45
 ȝenizes ofer eorðan eorl ȝestreóna,
 þeodnes dohtor, ȝief hé þín beneah
 ofer eald ȝebfot incer twéȝa.
 ȝeȝyre ið ȝsamne siȝel, ráð ȝeador
 éar, wynn and dæg áða benemnan,
 50
 þæt hé þá wære and þá wine-tréowe
 be him lifiendum læstan wolde,
 þe ȝit on ár-dagum oft ȝespræcon.

V: RIDDLE 11: WINE

Hræl is mín hasu-fág, hyrste beorhte,
 réade and scíre, on réafe mínum.
 Ið dysiȝe dwelle and dole hwette
 unrédsiðas, ðörum stiere
 nyttre fóre. Ið þæs ná-wiht wát
 þæt hie swá ȝemádde, móde bestolene,
 dæde ȝedwolene, dierap míne
 wann wisan ȝehwam. Wá him þæs þeawas,
 siþþan héah bringap horda dierest,
 ȝief hie unrédas ár ne ȝeswicap.

VI: THE RUIN

Wráttlið is þes weall-stán, wyrde ȝebracon;
 ourȝ-stede burston, brosap enta ȝeweore.
 Hrófas sind ȝehrorene, hréorize torras,

To escape, yet now he is served and followed,
 Loved and obeyed by many. He has beaten
 Misery: there's nothing more he wants,
 45-
 Oh prince's daughter, no precious gems,
 No stallions, no mead-hall pleasure, no treasure
 On earth, but you, you to enjoy
 In spite of the ancient oath that parted you.
 And I fit together an S and an R,
 50-
 And E, an A, a W and D,
 In an oath to prove that your pledge is sacred
 To him, and his faith as steady as his heart.
 As long as life shall be in him, he'll long
 To fulfill the vows and the love you shared.

RIDDLE ELEVEN: WINE

I wear grey, woven over
 With bright and gleaming gems. I bring
 The stupid to folly's paths, fool
 The ignorant with sin, urge all useless
 Roads and ruin the rest. I can't
 Explain their madness, for I push them to error
 And pick their brains, yet they praise me more
 For each seduction. Their dullness will be sorrow,
 When they lead their souls on high, unless
 They learn to walk wisely, and without my help.

VI: THE RUIN

(Ancient Roman wreckage, perhaps Bath. Lines 12-19a and 42b-49 are fragmentary; the MS was partly destroyed by fire.)

Fate has smashed these wonderful walls,
 This broken city, has crumbled the work
 Of giants. The roofs are gutted, the towers

hrung-geat berofen, hrim on lime,
 scearde scúr-béorge scorene, gedrorene, 5
 ieldu underetene. Eorþ-gráp hafap
 wealdend wyrhtan forworene, gelorene,
 heard-gripe hrúsan, op hund cnéo
 wer-þéoda gewiton. Oft þas wág gebád
 ræz-hár and réad-fág riçe after óðrum, 10
 ofstanden under stormum; stéap géap gedréas.
 . . .
 . . .
 grimme zegrunden . . .
 . . . 15
 . . .
 . . . lám-rindum béag
 móð móðigra myne swiftne zebrazð
 hwæt-ræð in hringas, hyze-róf zeband
 weall-walan wírum wundrum tozædere. 20
 Beorht wáron burg-reced, burn-sele manize,
 héah horn-zestréon, here-swáz miçel
 medu-heall maniz mann-dréama full,
 op-þat þat onwende wyrd sío swíðe.
 Crungon walu wíde, cómon wól-dagas, 25
 swylt eall fornam secg-rófra were;
 wurden hira wíz-steall wásten staðolas,
 brosnade burg-steall. Bótend crungon
 herzas to hrúsan. For-pon þas hofu dréorizlaþ,
 and þas téafor-zéapa tizelum scádeþ 30
 hróst-béages hróf. Hryre wang zecrang
 zebrocen to beorgum, þær zeð beorn maniz
 gláð-móð and gold-beorht glioma zefratwod,
 wlanc and wín-gál wíz-hyrstum scán;
 seah on sinc, on siolfur, on searu-zimmas, 35
 on éad, on áht, on eorcan-stán,

Fallen, the gates ripped off, frost
 In the mortar, everything moulded, gaping,
 Collapsed. The earth has clutched at rulers
 And builders, a hundred generations rotting
 In its rigid hands. These red-stained stones,
 Streaked with grey, stood while governors
 And kingdoms dissolved into dust, and storms
 Crashed over them; they were broad and high, and they fell.

 strong-hearted men hung
 19-
 20- The walls together with beaten wire.
 It was a shining city, filled with bath-houses,
 With towering gables, with the shouts of soldiers,
 With dozens of rousing drinking-halls,
 Until Fate's strength was swung against it.
 25- The riches dried away, pestilence
 Came, the crowds of soldiers were dead;
 Their forts and camps crumbled to the ground,
 And the city, with all its idols and temples,
 Decayed to these ruins, its buildings rotted,
 30- Its red-stoned arches splitting brick
 From brick. And the ruined site sank
 To a heap of tumbled stones, where once
 Cheerful, strutting warriors flocked,
 Golden armor gleaming, giddy
 35- With wine; here was wealth, silver,
 Gems, cattle, land, in the crowning
 City of a far-flung kingdom. There were buildings
 Of stone, where gleaming currents threw up
 Surging heat; a wall encircled
 40- That brightness, with the baths inside at the glowing
 Heart. Life was easy and lush.

on þás beorhtan burg bráðan ríces.

Stán-hofu stóðon, stréam háte wearp

wíðan wíelme; weall eall beféng

beorhtan bósmes, þær þá baðu wáron,

hát on hreðere. Ðæt was hýðe-líf.

Léton þanne gétan . . .

ofer hárne stán háte stréamas

un . . .

op-þæt hring-mere háte stréamas

. . . þær þá baðu wáron.

Þanne is . . .

. . . þæt is cyne-líf þing,

húse . . . burg . . .

40

45

VII: RIDDLE 32: A SHIP

Is þes middan-geard missenlífum
wísum gewlitigod, wrættum gefratwod.
Sífum sellíf ic seah searu hweorfan,
grindan wip gréote, ziellende faran.
Næfde sellícu wiht síene ne folme,
eaxe ne earmas; sceal on ánum fót
searu-ðeap swífan, swíðe færan,
faran ofer feldas. Hæfde fela ribba;
mūþ was on middan. Man-cynne nytt,
fereþ fódor-welan, folc-scipe dréogeþ,
wist in wizeþ, and werum zieldeþ
gafol gæara gehwam þæs-pe guman brúcaþ,
ríce and héane. Reófe, gief þú cunne,
wís, worda gléaw, hwæt sío wiht síe.

They'd make the warm streams pour over

Old grey stones

..... until

45- The rounded pools grew hot

.....

.....

48- a kingly thing,

49- A house a city

RIDDLE THIRTY-TWO: A SHIP

Our world is lovely in different ways,
Hung with beauty and works of hands.
I saw a strange machine, made
For motion, slide against the sand,
Shrieking as it went. It walked swiftly
On its only foot, this odd-shaped monster,
Travelled in an open country without
Seeing, without arms, or hands,
With many ribs, and its mouth in its middle.
Its work is useful, and welcome, for it loads
Its belly with food, and brings abundance
To men, to poor and to rich, paying
Its tribute year after year. Solve
This riddle, if you can, and unravel its name.

VIII: WULF AND EADWACER

Léodum is minum swelce him man lác gíefe;
 willaþ hie hine specgan, gíef hé on préat cymeþ.
 Ungeþíc is ús.
 Wulf is on íege, íc on óþerre.
 Fæst is þæt íeg-land, fenne bi-worpen.
 Sindon wæl-réowe veras þár on íege;
 willaþ hie hine specgan, gíef hé on préat cymeþ.
 Ungeþíc is ús.
 Wulfes íc mines wíð-lástum wénum dogode;
 þanne hit wæs regniz weder and íc réotízu sæt,
 þanne meó se beadu-cáfa bogum belezde,
 wæs mín wynn to þan, wæs mé hwæðere éac láp.
 Wulf, mín Wulf, wéna mé þíne
 séoce gedýdon, þíne seld-cymas,
 murnende móð, nealles mete-léaste.
 3ehíerest þú, Ead-wacer? Uncerne eargne hwelp
 bireþ wulf to wuda.
 Þæt man éaðe toslíteþ þætte náfre gesamnod wæs,
 uncer gíedd geador.

IX: RIDDLE 29: MOON AND SUN

Íc wiht geseah wundorlífe
 hornum betwéonum húða lédan,
 lyft-fæt léontlífe, listum gegíerwed,
 húðe to þám hám of þám here-síðe;
 wealde hire on þære byríz búr atimbran,
 searwum asettan, gíef hit swá meahte.

VIII. WULF AND EADWACER

(Wulf-the exiled lover; Eadwacer-the captor husband.)

My people may have been given a warning:
 Will they receive him, if he comes with force ?

It is different for us.

Wulf is on an island, I on another.
 An island of forts, surrounded by swamp.
 That island belongs to bloody barbarians:
 Will they receive him, if he comes with force ?

It is different for us.

Hope has wandered in exile, with Wulf.
 When the rain was cold and my eyes ran red
 With tears, when heavy arms reached out and took me
 And I suffered pleasure and pain. Wulf,
 Oh my Wulf, it was hoping and longing for you
 That sickened me, starved for the sight of you,
 Bent with a despair deeper than hunger.

Listen, Eadwacer! The wolf will carry
 Our wretched suckling to the shade of the wood.
 It's easy to smash what never existed,
 You and I together.

IX. RIDDLE TWENTY-NINE: THE MOON AND THE SUN

I saw a silvery creature scurrying
 Home, as lovely and light as heaven
 Itself, running with stolen treasure
 Between its horns. It hoped, by deceit
 And daring and art, to set an arbor
 There in that soaring castle. Then,

Dá côm wundorlicu wiht ofer wealles hróf,
 sfo is eallum cūp eorþ-búendum,
 ahredde þá þá húðe and to hām bedráf
 wreccan ofer willan, gewát hire west þanan
 fāhpum fōran, forþ ónette.
 Dúst stanc to heofonum, déaw féoll on eorðan,
 niht forþ gewát. Nānig sippan
 wera gewiste þære wihthe sīp.

X: A FRAGMENT FROM A CHARM FOR BEWITCHED LAND

Hál wes þú, folde, fíra módor!
 Bío þú grówende on Godes fæðme,
 fódre gefylled fírum to nytte.

XI: RIDDLE SEVEN: SWAN

Hrægl mín swigaþ þanne ió hrúsan trede
 op-þe þá wíð búe op-þe wadu drófe.
 Hwílum meó ahebbap ofer hǣleða byht
 hyrste míne and þíos héah lyft
 and meó þanne wíðe wolcna strengu
 ofer folc bireþ. Fræstwe mína
 swógaþ hlúde and swinsiaþ,
 torhte singap þanne ió zetengfe ne bíom
 flóde and foldan, fārende gíest.

XII: ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Dá þæs rinces se ríca ongann
 Cýning costian, cunnode georne

A shining creature, known to everyone
 On earth, climbed the mountains and cliffs,
 Rescued his prize, and drove the wily
 Impostor back to darkness. It fled
 To the west, swearing revenge. The morning
 Dust scattered away, dew
 Fell, and the night was gone. And no one
 Knew where the soft-footed thief had vanished.

X. A FRAGMENT FROM A CHARM FOR BEWITCHED LAND

Soil, be well again.
 Earth, mother of men,
 Let God fulfill you with food, be ripe
 And fruitful, and give us life.

XI. RIDDLE SEVEN: SWAN

My clothes are silent as I walk the earth
 Or stir the waters. Sometimes that which
 Makes me beautiful raises me high
 Above men's heads, and powerful clouds
 Hold me, carry me far and wide.
 The loveliness spread on my back rustles
 And sings, bright, clear songs,
 And loud, whenever I leave lakes
 And earth, floating in the air like a spirit.

XII. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

(This episode comprises the final 91 lines of the long poem "Genesis A.")

And then God determined to tempt
 Abraham, test His blessed prince

hwelð þæs æðelinges ellen wære, stíðum wordum spræc him stefne tó:			And try his strength. The Lord's stern voice Called:
"Ȝewit þú ofostlice, Abraham, færan, lástas leogan and þe låde mid þin ágen bearn. Ðú scealt isaac mé onsecgan, sunu þinne, self to tífre.	2850	2850-	"Go, Abraham, take Isaac, your only son, and go Quickly. Your child must die on my altar, And You must make the offering. Leave This place, and climb the steep mountain, Ringed around with rocky peaks, which I shall shew you. Ascend on foot, and there build a funeral fire, A blazing mound for your son, and take your sword and kill him In honor of my name, and let the dark flames destroy The flesh of his beloved body, burn it and leave me my offering."
Sippan þú ȝestíȝest stéapa dúne, hrycg þæs heán landes þe ic hīnan ȝetáce, upp þinum ágnum fótum, þær þú sceal áð ȝeȝierwan, bál-f̅r bearme þinum, and blótan self sunu mid sweordes ecge and þanne sweartan líeȝe léofes líc forbarnan and mé lác bebéodan."	2855	2855-	Abraham hurried to obey, began To prepare for his journey. The Ruler of angels Spoke Law, and Abraham loved his Lord. He rose from his bed, that blessed prince, No rebellion in his heart, no protest at his Lord And Saviour's command: quickly, he dressed And called for his grey sword, declaring that fear of the King Of angels still dwelled in his breast, and filled it. He ordered asses Saddled, that saintly old giver of rings, and commanded two men To ride with him. They were four in all, his servants, himself, And Isaac his son. And then he was ready And left his dwelling, leading his half-grown Son, exactly as God had said. He drove the beasts, hurried them down Winding desert paths, as the Lord Had declared, until the glowing source Of day and light rose over the deep Ocean a third time, and that blessed Man saw, as the Prince of Heaven Had told him, a steep, towering mountain.
Ne forsaet hé þý síðe ac sóna ongann fýsan to fóre. Him was Fréan engla word ondryane and his wealdend léof. Ðá se éadiga Abraham síne niht-ræste ofȝeaf. Nealles Neriendes háse wiphogode ac hine se hálga wer ȝyrde grágan sweorde, cýpde þat him gásta weardes eȝesa on bréostum wunode. Ongann þá his esolas bātan gamol-ferhþ goldes brytta, hét hine ȝeonge twáȝen menn mid síðian. Mæȝ was his ágen þrida and hé feorða self. Ðá hé fús ȝewát fram his ágnum hofe isaac lādan, bearn unweaxen, swá him bebéad Meotod. Æfate þá swiðe and ónette forþ fold-weȝe, swá him Fréa táhte wegas ofer wēsten, op-þat wuldor-torht dæȝes þridan upp ofer déop water ord aráemde. Ðá se éadiga wer ȝeseah hlífian heā dūna swá him sæȝde ár sweȝeles Ealdor.	2860	2860-	
Ðá Abraham spræc to his ambih̅tum:	2865	2865-	
	2870	2870-	
	2875	2875-	
	2880	2880-	Then Abraham turned to his servants, and said:

"Rincas mine, restap incit
 hér on þissum wicum. Wit eft cumap
 sibban wit árende uncer twéga
 Gást-cyninge aziefen habbaþ."

Þewát him þá se æðeling and his ágen sunu 2885 2885-
 tó þæs gemearces þe him Meotod tálhte,
 wadan ofer wealdas. Wudu bær sunu,
 fæder fýr and sweord. Þá þæs friegan ongann
 wer wintrum geong wordum Ábraham:

"Wit hér fýr and sweord, fréa mín, habbaþ; 2890 2890-
 hwær is þæt tifer þæt þú torht Gode
 to þæm byrne-zielde bringan þencest?"

Ábraham maðelode --hafde on án gehogod
 þæt hé gedáde swá hine Dryhten hét--:

"Him þæt Sóp-cyning Selfa findeþ, 2895 2895-
 mann-cynnes Weard, swá him gemot þýnceþ."

Þestág þá stíp-hydlg stéape dúne
 upp mid his eaforan, swá him se Ūce bebéad,
 þæt hé on hrófe gestóð heán landes
 on þære stówe þe him se Stranga tó, 2900 2900-
 wær-fæst Meotod, wordum tálhte.

Ongann þá áð hladan, áled weócan,
 and gefeterode fót and handa
 bearne sínum and þá on bál ahóf
 Isaac geongne, and þá édre zegráp 2905 2905-
 sweord be gehiltum, wolde his sunu cwellan
 folmum sínum, fýre scenéan
 mæges dréore.

Þá Meotodes þeƷn,
 ufan engla sum Ábraham hlúde 2910-
 stefne éfegde. Hé stille gebád 2910
 áres apráde and þæm engle oncwæp.
 Him þá ofostum tó ufan of rodorum

"Wait, my men; rest here, both of you,
 And wait for us. Isaac and I will return,
 Come back down the mountain when we've done what God
 Has commanded."

Then the prince, and Isaac his only
 Son, climbed through woods and groves,
 As his Maker had said. The boy brought wood,
 Abraham brought fire and his sword. As they walked
 The child began to ask his father:

"We've brought fire, my lord, and a sword,
 But where is the burnt-offering, the sacrifice,
 You plan to kill in God's bright name?"

Abraham answered, never intending
 Anything but whatever the Lord had commanded:

"The King of Truth, Protector of Men,
 Will provide a victim as He thinks it best."

Then he climbed steadily on, up
 The steep mountain, Isaac at his side,
 Until he stood at the top of that towering
 Place, in the spot the Almighty, Creator
 Of covenants and men, had directed. Then he built
 The funeral pyre, and kindled flame,
 And bound his son, foot and hand,
 And lifted the boy and laid him on the pyre,
 And swiftly took his sword in his hand,
 Ready to kill his son, Isaac,
 Pour his blood, smoking and hot,
 For the fire to drink. Then God's messenger,
 An angel high in the clouds, called
 To Abraham with a loud voice. And Abraham
 Stood and listened for the angel's words.
 And the servant of eternity's Lord, hidden

wuldor-gæst Godes wordum mæide:

"Ábraham léofa, ne sleah þín ágen bearn

ac þú cwíčne abrezd cniht of áde,

2915

eaforan þínne. Him ann wuldres God.

Magu Ebréa, þú mædum scealt

þurh þæs Hálgan hand, Heofon-cyninges,

sóðum sigor-léanum selfa onfôn,

zinn-fæstum ziefum. Þý wile wæsta Weard

2920

lißsum zieldan þæt þé was léofra His

sibb and hylðu þanne þín selfes bearn."

Ád stóð onáled. Hæfde Ábrahame

Meotod mann-cynnes, wæge Lóthes,

bréost zeblißsod þá Hé him his bearn forzeaf,

2925

ísaac cwíčne. Þá se éadiga bewlát,

rinc ofer eaxe, and him þær ramm zeseah

unfeorr þanan éinne standan,

bróðor Haranes, bremsbrum fæstne.

Þone Ábraham zenam and hine on ád ahóf

2930

ofostum miçelum for his ágen bearn.

Abrezd þá mid þý bille, byrne-zield onhréad,

réocende wíoh rammes blóde,

onbléot þæt lác Gode, sægde léana þanc

and eallra þára sárlða þe Hé him síp and ár,

2935

ziefena Dryhten forziefen hæfde.

2915-

2920-

2925-

2930-

2935-

In Heaven, spoke quickly, saying:

"Belovèd Abraham, take back your child,

Lift him from the pyre alive, your only

Son! God has granted him glory!

And you, son of a Hebrew father,

Accept your reward from the hands of Heaven's

King Himself -- rewards beyond number

For the victory you've won, joy and grace

From the Saviour of Souls, to whom you were loyal,

Whose love and protection meant more than your son."

The fire burned on. God had filled

Abraham's heart with joy, allowing him

Isaac, his only son, alive.

Then Lot's blessèd kinsman, Haran's

Brother, looked, suddenly, and saw

A ram standing nearby, its horns

Caught in bramble. Abraham took it,

Quickly raised it onto the pyre

In Isaac's place, then killed it with his sword:

Its steaming blood stained the altar

Red, a perfect burnt-offering

To God. And Abraham thanked the Lord

For the ram, and for all the blessings, the happiness,

God had sent him, and would send again.

XIII: BEDE'S DEATH SONG

For þam néad-fóra nánig wyrþeþ

þances snotora, þanne him þearf síe

to zehycgenne ár his hionan-gange

hwæt his gæste gódes oppe yfeles

after déaðe hionan dæmed weorðe.

XIII. BEDE'S DEATH SONG

For no man thinks

More than he need,

Of where he is going

And what he will meet

At the hands of Heaven's King.