# アングロ・サクソン時代の衣服を表す言葉の一考察（2）
## ―『エクセター・ブック』の謎詩の例―

## Poetic Connotations of Clothes in the Anglo-Saxon Period (Part 2):
### Examples from the *Riddles* in the *Exeter Book* [1]

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**要旨**

　本学紀要人文・社会科学研究第 23 集（2015 年 1 月発行）の研究ノートで、『エクセター・ブック』における「衣服」を表す語の特徴を探るべく、謎詩の中で *wæd* の扱われ方を調査した。その結果、*wæd* の本質的な意味が「覆い」であることが推定された。次に宗教詩に頻出する *hrægl* という語の持つ意味合いを調査することによって、2 つの語の用い方に違いが見られれば、古英詩において衣服を表す語の意図的な使い分けが証明できるということが本論の目的である。

　*hrægl* は「服」を表す言葉として、謎詩では *wæd* よりもやや多く見られる。本論では『エクセター・ブック』の中の謎詩において *hrægl* の用いられ方を調査する。この語が単に「服」を表すだけではなく、衣服の装飾的な意味合いをも強調していることを、今回の調査で証明したい。

●キーワード：エクセター・ブック（The Exeter Book）／謎詩（The Exeter Riddles）／衣服（clothes）

## I. Introduction

This article aims to discover particular features of the usage of *hrægl* (clothes), as one in a series of studies exploring the connotations of 'clothes' in Anglo-Saxon poetry, following research on the usage of *wæd* (clothes), published in 2015.[2] When the word *wæd* appears in the *Riddles*, it signifies both 'covering' and 'protection'. What connotations have been recognised in the usage of *hrægl*? By identifying differences between the usage and connotations of *wæd* and *hrægl*, this paper enables readers to draw on an additional semantic range when interpreting Old English poems.

Although *hrægl* is not used very often in the *Riddles* in the *Exeter Book*, the situations in which it appears are both varied and clearly specified. It is therefore important to examine the word's peripheral context when defining its usage. In the *Riddles*, *hrægl* can be categorised within two semantic fields: trappings and simple clothes. Unlike *wæd*, which emphasises interior parts covered with a piece of fabric, *hrægl* draws the reader's attention to the exterior aspect of a suit of clothes. This article highlights differences in aspect suggested by the meaning of *hrægl*.

## II. OED/DOE glossaries

As a matter of course, we begin by looking up the word *hrægl* in the OED; the dictionary lists three different meanings.[3] In the oldest example, the 7th century *Épinal Glossary*, *hrægl* means 'a garment, a cloak; a cloth; (also) clothing'. The second meaning of *hrægl* is 'a piece of linen or other cloth worn about the neck by women; a scarf, shawl, or neckerchief—a more modern word is the now obsolete 'rail', recorded in 1482 in the Acts of the Parliament of England/Edward IV. *Lowland Lore*, written by Gordon Fraser in 1702, defines *hrægl* as 'an upper garment or jacket worn by women; (*Sc.*) an over-bodice worn on formal occasions'.

According to the OED, the first gloss associated with *hrægl* appears in the *Exeter Riddles*, a manuscript dated between 970 and 990.[4] The OED glosses provide no specific explanation of the various occurrences of the word.

It is also necessary to review references in the DOE, which confines itself to words that appear in Old

English literature, thoroughly examining each example.[5] According to the DOE, in *Riddle 10*, *hrægl* is a singular, dative noun, meaning 'garment'.[6] The first appearance of this meaning dates from about the year 425. *Hrægl* also has the following second meaning: 'in collective sense: clothes, clothing, dress, attire'. As the editors suggest, distinguishing 'a suit of clothes' from 'clothing' seems difficult, even in modern English. It may be possible, however, to semantically separate these two categories when examining instances of *hrægl* in the *Riddles* because of the precise descriptions of each item.[7] The third gloss in the DOE is 'cloth', in the material sense, followed by a fourth, the 'sail (of a ship)'. Section III of this article argues that the fourth gloss is less strongly associated with the context of the *Riddles*. Although the DOE presents thorough contextual explanations for each occurrence of *hrægl* in the Anglo-Saxon codices, a reference for each codex would be more useful. This article could then shed light on particular interpretations of *hrægl* usage, at least in the *Exeter Riddles*.

### III. *Hrægl* in the *Exeter Riddles*

#### 1. *Hrægl* as Attire

The word *hrægl* appears only a few times in the *Riddles*; it is therefore quite remarkable that so many instances of the word express the meaning, 'trappings'. Four examples highlight the external features of a beautiful outfit. As the passage below reveals, *hrægl* clearly relates to the outward appearance of clothing:

> Hrægl min swigað  þonne ic hrusan trede
> oþþe þa wic buge  oþþe wado drefe.
> Hwilum mec ahebbað  ofer hæleþa byht
> hyrste mine  ond þeos hea lyft,
> ond mec þonne wide  wolcna strengu
> ofer folc byreð.  Frætwe mine
> swogað hlude  ond swinsiað,
> torhte singað,  þonne ic getenge ne beom
> flode ond foldan,  ferende gæst.  (Riddle 5)[8]

> My dress is silent  when I walk on the earth
> or when I live in houses  or I disturb the water.

Sometimes it raised me  over men's dwellings
my trappings  and this high sky,
and when it carries me far  clouds' strength
over people.  My trappings
make a noise loudly  and they sing,
sing clearly,  when I am not near to
a stream and a land,  a stranger going.

The answer to this riddle is 'a swan', and the bird is clearly described throughout the whole body of the poem. The phrase *hrægl min swigað* in line 1a shows that the bird moves around silently when not using its wings. Both *hyrste* and *frætwe* are presented as synonyms for *hrægl*, while the subject of the poem remains consistent to the end. The feature that lifts a swan into the air is obviously the same feature that makes noise: its wings (or feathers).  Associating the swan's clothes with trappings draws the reader's attention to the exterior beauty of bird feathers.[9]

In *Riddle 9*, whose solution is conveyed by the title, 'Barnacle Goose', feathers are once more depicted as clothes.[10]  This poem focuses on the bird's outer appearance. Moreover, the description of the bird's appearance and habitat may establish a formula for the bird songs in the *Exeter Book*, conveying images of water, air, land and sky.

> Neb wæs min on nearwe  ond ic neoþan wætre,
> flode underflowen,  firgenstreamum
> swiþe besuncen;  ond on sunde awox,
> ufan yþum þeaht,  anum getenge
> liþendum wuda  lice mine.
> Hæfde feorh cwico  þa ic of fæðmum cwom
> brimes ond beames  on blacum hrægle;
> sume wæron hwite  hyrste mine.
> Þa mec lifgende  lyft upp ahof,
> wind of wæge;  siþþan wide bær
> ofer seolhbaþo.  Saga hwæt ic hatte.  (Riddle 8)

> My beak was closed  and I beneath the water,
> going down by the wave,  by big streams
> sunk deeply;  and grew up by the sea,
> covered by the waves above,  resting upon the one

sailing wood   with my body.
I had a living life   when I came out of embrace
of the sea and the wood   in a black dress;
some were white   my trappings.
Then me, a living one,   the air raised up,
the wind of wave;   then bore far and wide
over the seals' bath.   Say what I am called.[11]

As the modern translation shows, the bird's black and white feathers are figuratively expressed as 'my trappings (*hyrste mine*)', a term that also appears in line 4a, *Riddle 5*. Here, the concept of 'clothes' is obviously based on ornaments. The word *hrægl* is used to depict the outer aspects of clothing. There is also a very significant repetition of the phrase *hyrste mine* in several riddles in the *Exeter Book*, in reference to outfits. In *Riddle 9*, as shown below, the same phrase occurs in line 1b, as a metaphor for a beautiful exterior. It is remarkable that the ornamental connotation of *hrægl* emerges gradually from the beginning of the first group of riddles.[12] This usage clearly associates the serial images of clothes with outer trappings.

The third example of *hrægl* in this category appears in *Riddle 9*, the solution for which is 'cup of wine (or spirits)'. Here, in contrast to *Riddles 5* and *8*, an inorganic object is personified as wearing a beautiful dress. The outer decoration of the cup is the evident focus. It seems to be a distinctive feature of Anglo-Saxon poetry to personify a tool as an entity putting on a gem-studded suit of clothes.

Hrægl is min hasofag;   hyrste beorhte
reade ond scire   on reafe hafu.
Ic dysge dwelle   ond dole hwette
unrædsiþas;   oþrum styre
nyttre fore.   Ic þæs nowiht wat,
þæt heo swa gemædde,   mode bestolene,
dæde gedwolene,   deoraþ mine
won wisan gehwam.   Wa him þæs þeawes
siþþan heah bringað   horda deorast,
gif hi unrædes   ær ne geswicaþ. (Riddle 9)

My dress is grey;   bright trappings

red and shining   I have on the garment[13]
I deceive the foolish   and encourage the idiots
of a foolish enterprise;   I hinder others
of a useful journey.   So I know nothing,
that they are made so foolish   deprived of a heart,
by a foolish deed,   they praise me,
an evil nature, to everyone. So woe of custom to them
after they bring high   the most precious of hoards,
if they formerly   cease not a crime.

This elaborate way of personifying the cup contrasts with the bird songs discussed above. Surprisingly, although the object described here is thoroughly inanimate, it imbues the poem with life. Technically, the garment (*reafe*) in line 2b is a counterpart to *hrægl* in line 1a. The association between the garment and the red and shining decorations on its surface clearly emphasise the gorgeous exterior of the cup. In contrast to the first stage of poem, the following lines draw the reader's attention to the dark and evil role played by the cup in promoting habitual drinking. Repeatedly, the metaphor of clothing is used to describe the outer appearance of a decorative item.

Another piece of evidence for *hrægl* denoting a beautiful outfit appears in another bird song. *Riddle 11*, the solution for which is 'ten chickens'. This riddle clearly describes the birth of ten baby birds, who set off on their lives in the world. Interestingly, an equivalence is drawn between the eggshell and the birds' feathers; both are described as clothes in the last three lines:

Ic seah turf tredan—   ten wæron ealra,
six gebroþor   ond hyra sweostor mid—
hæfdon feorg cwico.   Fell hongedon
sweotol ond gesyne   on seles wæge
anra gehwylces.   Ne wæs hyra ængum þy wyrs,
ne side þy sarre,   þeah hy swa sceoldon,
reafe birofene,   rodra weardes
meahtum aweahte,   muþum slitan
haswe blede.   Hrægl bið geniwad
þam þe ær forðcymene   frætwe leton
licgan on laste,   gewitan lond tredan.   (Riddle 11)

I saw treading upon the soil—   ten of all were
six brothers   and their sisters likewise—
had living lives.   Skins hung
evident and manifest   from the wall of the house
of each ones'.

        Not was worse to anyone of them by that,
not sore side by that,   although they must
be deprived of a garment,   of heavens' guardian
awaken by the power,   to tear by mouths
grey flowers.   Dress was renewed
to them who were formerly come forth

                let the trappings go
to remain behind, departed the land to tread upon.[14]

In this bird song, the eggshells are interestingly replaced with new garments, in other words, feathers. The garment (*reafe*) in line 7a refers to the eggshell (*haswe blede*) in line 9a, according to the context. Again, the connotation of outer beauty in dress (*hrægl*) in line 9b can be inferred from the trappings (*frætwe*) in line 10b. These lines tell the story of ten chicks with bare skins, who were born tearing apart the eggshells that were supposed to be their beautiful outfits. After birth, they left their shells behind and obtained new garments to set forth in the world.

### 2. *Hrægl* as a Simple Suit of Clothes

    The following examples suggest that the word *hrægl* was also used to indicate simple human clothing. In the *Exeter Book*, *hrægl* appears in four riddles for which the solutions have a double meaning, undoubtedly obscene. *Riddle 42*, for which the polite solution is 'key', is cited in the DOE as follows, '⋯þonne se esne his agen *hrægl* ofer cneo hefeð, wile þæt cuþe hol mid his hangellan heafde gretan þæt he <efenlang> ær oft gefylde (polite solution is 'key')'.[15] It is followed by another embarrassing riddle called 'Dough'. *Riddle 43*, in which a lump of dough is kneaded by the lord's daughter, who covers the swelling thing with cloth in the following lines, 'hrægl þeahte þrindende þing þeodnes dohtor' (lines 4b-5). A further double entendre, *Riddle 52*, known as 'Churn' by many scholars, denotes the simple clothing of a man who lifts up his clothes

when using a churn to get milk from a cow. In this riddle, *hrægl* simply refers to the man's clothes, as shown in the lines '...hof his agen hrægl hondum up, hrand under gyrdels...' (lines 3b-4).[16] In these three cases, *hrægl* conveys a concrete image of clothing, in the form of a suit of clothes that a person can put on. The word is not a lyrical or aesthetic metaphor, as discussed in Section III-1; it simply denotes the common, practical use of clothes.

    As a final example of clothing, it is important to mention that *Riddle 60*, for which Williamson has provided the solution, 'borer', provides another example of ordinary clothes. This outfit is worn in the workplace, judging from the meaning of the lines 'Rinc bið on ofeste se mec on þyð æftanweardne, hæleð mid hrægle.' (lines 4b-6a).[17] Like the other three examples, this wording suggests that the man's clothes are probably work clothes, which are generally simple and practical. As discussed above, in Section III-2 of this article, some occurrences of *hrægl* in the *Exeter Riddles* may denote simple clothes, unlike the various examples discussed in Section III-1. In these cases, the word *hrægl* provides a concrete image of people's clothes, which may even distinguish a human being from an animal or tool.

### IV. *Hrægl* and *Wæd*

    As this article discusses the connotations of *hrægl*, it is important to compare them with those of *wæd*, discussed in the previous article.[18] It seems remarkable that *hrægl* does not include the metaphorical meaning of 'covering', which makes the word *wæd* so distinctive. The only possibile example of *hrægl* being used metaphorically to mean 'covering' appears in lines 4b-5 of *Riddle 43*. This poem has a double solution; its hidden meaning explicitly depicts a man putting on his clothes after intimate contact with a maiden. As the scene is excitingly and frankly depicted to help the reader decode the riddle, it is unclear whether the man feels that his action is embarrassing enough to require covering up.

    The discussion above suggests that *hrægl* is generally used to denote the exterior appearance of clothing, which is often evaluated for its beauty. By

contrast, *wæd* generally appears in contexts in which a suit of clothes is used to suggest a covering for something precious inside. Although the distinction between the usage of these two words is difficult to confirm, given the shortage of exemplars in the *Exeter Riddles*, a study of Anglo-Saxon terminology may help to understand the wordage of the Anglo-Saxon poets.

## V. Conclusion

To reveal the distinctive features of *hrægl* in the *Exeter Riddles*, it may be useful to review the points discussed in this article. First of all, the most characteristic usage of *hrægl* involves the embellishment of outfits. Through a frequent association with bird feathers, the outer beauty of clothing is clearly recognised. The decoration on the outside of a cup is also depicted through an image of metaphorical clothes. If this analysis of the *Riddles* establishes a potential reading of the term in Anglo-Saxon poetry, a further study of *hrægl* in other poetic works could generate a new interpretation of individual verses.

A second feature of *hrægl* provides an image of practical clothing, when it appears in poetic lines. Several obscene songs mentioned in Section III-2 offer hidden but explicit secondary solutions that suggest a sensual body in clothes. It is interesting that this method of composing a poem is the inverse of prosopopoeia, in which a human being is depicted as a tool. In other words, the suit of clothes that a man wears may highlight the poem's double solution: a human being versus a tool.

One additional argument involves the use of *hrægl* to denote practical clothes. The beautiful outfits described in Section III-1 also support the idea that the word *hrægl* was used to denote clothing in a general sense. The fact that *hrægl* appears at the beginning of a piece of verse seems to provide a literary formula within Anglo-Saxon poetry.[19] Beginning a song with *hrægl* presents the reader with a simple depiction of clothes, without any referential presuppositions. Anglo-Saxon readers must have recognised the practical, everyday usage of *hrægl* as soon as it appeared in the texts. This placement suggests that the word *hrægl* was regularly used to denote people's everyday clothes. As the above discussions suggest, this article concludes that the term *hrægl* was used much more often than *wæd* to denote appearance; it denotes either the external decorations on an outfit or everyday clothing worn for common use.

**NOTES**

1) I would like to thank Editage (www.editage.jp) for English language editing.

2) Naoko Shirai, 'Poetic Connotations of Clothes in the Anglo-Saxon Period (Part 1); Examples from the *Riddles* in the *Exeter Book*', *Journal of Bunka Gakuen University* Vol. 23, (Tokyo: Bunka Gakuen University, 2015), 61-67.

3) Michael Proffitt, ed., *The Oxford English Dictionary* online, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

4) Craig Williamson, *The Old English Riddles of the 'Exeter Book'*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 3-4.

5) Angus Cameron, ed., Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey *et al.*, *The Dictionary of Old English: A to I* online, (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018).

6) In the DOE, the gloss represents 'garment, article of clothing; some instances are difficult to distinguish from sense 2'.

7) Every riddle in the *Exeter Book* is supposed to have one specific solution, such as 'a key', 'a cup', etc.

8) All of the following citations of the *Riddles* are attributed to Williamson's *The Old English Riddles of the 'Exeter Book'*.

9) Williamson also suggests, in his notes, that 'Tupper (p.265) defines the word here and in *Rid*. 8.8 as 'wings;' however, *hyrste* is used generally in the *Riddles* to refer to any outer covering (cp. Rids. 9.1, 12.11, 29.20, 51.7, and 84.12). See Williamson, p.153.

10) Williamson suggests that this solution is now accepted by all editors. See Williamson, p.161.

11) 'The one sailing wood' probably refers to a ship, while 'the seals' bath', a typical kenning in Anglo Saxon poetry, is apparently the sea where many seals are seen.

12) The riddles in the *Exeter Book* are segmented and recorded in three groups of folios. *Riddles 5, 8* and *9* appear in the first group of folios: 101a-115a. See Williamson, p.3.

13) The exact nature of the red, shining, and bright trappings is unknown. However, they obviously refer to the decorations covering the cup. The personification of tools also appeared distinctively in one 16th-century Japanese picture scroll, the *Night Parade of One-Hundred Demons' Picture Scroll (Hyakki Yagyo Emaki)*, where an instrumental tool resembling a lute with human hands and legs carries away another instrumental tool.

14) In this poem, 'the house' is interpreted to mean the eggshell; likewise 'the grey flowers'.

15) This riddle is Number 44 in the DOE. The modern translation of the lines above is as follows: '...when he raises the clothes covering his knees, he desires to approach the familiar hole that he often filled many times

before, with its hanging head'.

16) In a modern translation, the lines are translated: '...lifted up his own clothes with his hands, pushed under the belt...'

17) The meaning of the Old English lines is as follows: 'A man is in haste to push me on that behind, the man in clothes'.

18) See Note 2.

19) '*Hrægl min swigað*' (line 1a, *Riddle 5*); '*Hrægl is min hasofag*' (line 1a, *Riddle 9*); '*Hrægl bið geniwad*' (line 9b, *Riddle 11*).