

**Pre-print extract from S. Lee and E. Solopova, *The Keys of Middle-earth: Discovering Medieval Literature through the fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Palgrave, 2005). To purchase full book go to:
<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?PID=270390>.**

4.10 The Rohirrim – *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf*, ll. 306-70 (TT, ‘The King of the Golden Hall’)

4.10.1 Plot Summary

Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas accompany Gandalf the White to Edoras to try to persuade Théoden to rally his troops against Saruman. Before arriving at Edoras, Aragorn tells Gimli and Legolas of the Rohirrim and recites some of their poetry. The first medieval text in this chapter is entitled *The Wanderer* and relates to Aragorn’s recitation; the second text, drawn from *Beowulf*, relates to the four heroes’ arrival at the court of Théoden and the procedures they adopt.

Christopher Tolkien (*Treason*, p. 389 onwards) notes the problems in reassembling the history of the chapters involving the initial encounters with the Rohirrim (describing the drafts for ‘The Riders of Rohan’ in particular as ‘difficult and chaotic’, p. 390).

4.10.2a Medieval Text 1: *The Wanderer*

The Wanderer is an Old English poem. It survives in a single copy in ‘The Exeter Book’ (ff. 76v-78r), and is usually described as an elegy (see 4.5). It is a powerful poem detailing an individual’s exile from society, their lonely wanderings, and at the same time touches on themes of general loss. Tolkien himself planned for many years to present his own edition of *The Wanderer* following on from his initial collaboration with E. V. Gordon at Leeds. Although he never completed this, in 1969 an edition of the poem did appear, this time edited by T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss, both former students of Tolkien.

Readers will note a few terms that occur in the Old English but also in Tolkien’s fiction. On lines 62 and 75 the world is referred to as *middangeard*, ‘middle-enclosure’ (MnE *yard*), or as we translate it here ‘middle-earth’; on l. 77 we have *ederas*, from *edor* meaning ‘dwelling, house’ and hence the name for Théoden’s grand chamber; l. 87 sees the repetition of the word for a giant, *ent*, as in *The Ruin* (l. 2, see 4.5); and in l. 92 we have *māppumgyfa*, or ‘treasure giver’, which is the probably the source for the hobbit word

‘mathom’ meaning treasure (hence the Mathom House or museum at Michel Delving).

4.10.2b Medieval Text 2: *Beowulf*, ll. 306-370

For a general introduction to *Beowulf* see 4.3. The following passage describes Beowulf’s arrival at the Danish court, and in particular at Heorot, the splendid hall of the Danish king Hrothgar, which is under attack from the monster Grendel. Beowulf and his troop of retainers are met by the Danish coast-guard, who asks about their identity and purpose. Beowulf explains, and the coast-guard offers to lead them to Heorot. The passage presented here starts with their first glimpse of the ‘golden hall’. The coast-guard returns to his duty, while Beowulf and his men enter the hall, put down their weapons and sit on benches. Beowulf asks Wulfgar, Hrothgar’s herald, whether he could speak to the king. Wulfgar tells Hrothgar about the arrival of the warriors and the request of their leader.

4.10.3 Discussion

As with the extract from *Beowulf* (discussed later) there are two reasons to justify the inclusion of *The Wanderer* in this collection. First, and by far the easiest, is that lines and set pieces from both Old English poems are paraphrased by Tolkien. Second, and more complex and controversial, there is the clear interlinking between the society of Rohan and that of the Anglo-Saxons.

Let us consider *The Wanderer* first. In ‘The King of the Golden Hall’ (*LR*, pp. 496-7), before the heroes arrive at Edoras, Aragorn recites a piece of Rohirrim poetry. Legolas describes the language as similar to the land surrounding them ‘rich and rolling in part, and else hard and stern as the mountains’. We have no record of what it is Aragorn actually says, but Legolas guesses that the poem is an elegy of sorts (which, as noted above, is a term usually attached to *The Wanderer*), and states that even though he can’t understand the words: ‘it is laden with the sadness of Mortal Men’ (*LR*, p. 497). Aragorn then translates it into Common Speech for his comrades:

‘Where now the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing?
Where is the helm and the hauberk, and the bright hair flowing?
Where is the hand on the harpstring, and the red fire glowing?
Where is the spring and the harvest and the tall corn growing?
They have passed like rain on the mountain, like a wind in the meadow;
The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow.
Who shall gather the smoke of the dead wood burning,
Or behold the flowing years from the Sea returning?’ (*LR*, p. 497)

Aragorn explains that the poem is by a ‘forgotten poet of Rohan’ and is related to the story of Eorl the Young. Further examples of the Riders’ poetry, are given in several other places in *LR*. There is the ‘ride to Gondor’ (*LR*, p. 786); Théoden’s battle-cry (*LR*, p. 820, which mirrors the opening of *The Fight at Finnsburg*); Éomer’s brief lament over Théoden (*LR*, p. 825); Éomer’s apocalyptic battle-cry (*LR*, p. 829) reworked again at Théoden’s burial (*LR*, p. 954); and ‘The Mounds of Mundberg’ (*LR*, p. 831). All are

based on standard Old English metrics (see 2.3.4).

Returning to our main text however, a quick comparison between Aragorn's recitation above, and lines 92-96 of *The Wanderer* show strong similarities. This is known as the *ubi sunt* passage, so called because it repeats the Latin formula of 'where are ...?'. Tolkien clearly modeled his mini-poem (or more correctly an extract from a longer text we never get access to) on the lines from the Old English, yet with some differences. The repeating of the direct questioning at the beginning is there, but the answering lines, explaining what has happened to everything, are longer in Aragorn's version. Tolkien also makes much heavier use of end-rhyme (blowing/flowing/glowing/growing, etc.) which is not apparent in the Old English, but he does not always attempt to retain the alliteration. Tolkien described *The Wanderer* as 'an epitaph on antiquity ... an epitaph on the now long-vanished Anglo-Saxon days' (Tolkien A30/1, f. 21), which in many ways provides us with a fitting summary for the events in *LR*, namely an 'epitaph' of the Third Age. Moreover it is clear that the *ubi sunt* passage in the Old English meant a lot to him throughout his life as he quotes it at the end of his Valedictory Address (*Essays*, p. 239), followed by Galadriel's lament at Lórien in Elvish (which he humbly described as 'nonsense').

It is often said that the Anglo-Saxons were obsessed with the transient nature of life, as embodied in the *ubi sunt* passage, and in the poems we call 'the Old English elegies' (see 4.5). Tolkien, however, did not think this was accurate or fair. As he noted, by 800 AD the monasteries at both Lindisfarne and Jarrow had been sacked. He remarked that:

'if Englishmen became acutely aware of the perishable nature of the world, and especially of the institutions of men under such circumstances. It could be called 'facing the facts'' (Tolkien A38, ff. 12r-v).

The Wanderer, in its full version, is over 100 lines longer than the brief paraphrase in *LR*, but the themes it raises have overall resonances with Tolkien's work. It is an extremely powerful poem, but at first glance is not that easy to understand (Shippey (1972), for example, describes it as 'vexed', p. 56), and many scholars have argued over its possible meanings. The structure of the poem is fairly straightforward in one way, in that it has an opening and closing (almost like a prologue and epilogue), and in between is a lengthy speech by a solitary individual. Like *The Seafarer* (a text which it always compared to, see 4.13) it opens with an image of a lonely individual suffering hardship at sea (ll. 1-4). This is the wanderer of the title, who we discover to be an outcast, pacing the earth without the solace of friends, relations, or lords (ll. 8-10). In such harsh times as the early Middle Ages we can only guess at the difficulties of such an existence, and how abhorrent it would have seemed to the audience who relied on the close bonds of kinship and loyalty to keep their tribal societies together. The poet then proceeds to explore a range of ideas and topics familiar to other Old English poems opening up from a single incident (the exiled wanderer of the poem's title) to explore wider issues about the nature of suffering, and the transitory nature of existence. For these reasons, as mentioned above, it is often put under the category of an 'elegy' – the loss here being both individual and generic.

Contained therein, though, is a myriad of topics. As it stands this is a Christian poem. Yet the poem on the face of it is not concerned with any great theological debate, but instead concentrates on the plight and personal loss of one human being – the wanderer. They tell us of their loss, and exile, and how they wander the lands seeking comfort and friendship. They dream of the past and contrast it with the harsh present. In their mind they can summon up images of past joys and friends but they cannot capture them forever. On wakening such images simply disappear and ‘swim away’ (ll. 41-8). The wanderer is lonely because they have outlived all of their friends, and have no-one to talk to. They extrapolate from their own situation the observation that all worldly glory and comforts seem transitory. Although one is tempted to cry in despair at the loss of the horse, the warrior, and the hall (ll. 92-96), the wanderer reminds us that everything passes, and all is on loan (ll. 108-10). Yet at the same time a person must not bemoan their loss and instead must hold resolute (or ‘keep a stiff upper lip’ ll. 112-13). Fortitude, to the wanderer, is seen as a distinct virtue. For suffering, they state, can in itself lead to wisdom (ll. 64-5), as if to say that it is necessary to bear a loss in order to get things into perspective and understand true values. The poet appeals, therefore, to all lonely voyagers and wanderers in exile – which to a Christian outlook is everyone, i.e. we are all exiled from Eden and temporarily from Heaven. Throughout all of this the poet contrasts images of the hall and society, symbols of safety, protection, and warmth, to those of the loneliness of the exiled wanderer.

It is a tale, therefore, of personal loss, but to many readers it also offers advice and consolation to everyone. The beginning and end of the poem are linked by *ar* or ‘mercy’ which the subject of the poem is clearly seeking. Shippey (1972, p. 58) sees this as a promise that God’s mercy will eventually be bestowed on the sufferer (ll. 114-15). There are other stylistic balances to the poem. Around lines 58-62 we shift from the first person to the third person widening out the discussion from the single individual to a broader perspective. Moreover in the beginning we are presented with the harsh past and present, but the end of the poem tells us that we can look forward to a brighter future.

It is now worth considering how appropriate it is that lines from *The Wanderer* are put into the mouth of Aragorn. He himself is a Ranger, one of ‘the wandering folk’ (*LR*, p. 153). The poem terms its subject as the *eard-stapa* (literally ‘the earth-stepper’), and Aragorn is known derogatorily among the men of Bree as ‘Strider’. Like the subject of the Old English poem he is in exile, looking for his home, seeking peace and the joys of the hall. He is suffering, knowing the pressure on him to face the challenge of Sauron, and at the same time bears the burden of his seemingly hopeless love for Arwen. Yet unlike the Old English wanderer, Aragorn does not himself seek a Lord or protector for he himself is destined to be king. This is his challenge, and the quest and challenges he undergoes are needed to find the resolve and wisdom to take on the mantle of kingship.

Let us now consider our second extract. Beowulf’s arrival at Heorot is presented as a series of ceremonial meetings with various members of the Danish court: the initial meeting with the coast-guard is followed by the one with Wulfgar, and finally with Hrothgar. Though these meetings appear to delay the main events, such as Beowulf’s

fight with Grendel, they have an important role of introducing the hero in a way appropriate for his status and consonant with his future role (Beowulf, like Aragorn, will become king of his people). The description of Beowulf's preparation for the expedition and the scene with the coast guard include references to the appearance of Beowulf's troop of retainers, where the emphasis is on distinction, prominence and splendour: the poet mentions *beorhte frætwe* (l. 214) 'bright armour', *guðsearo geatolic* (l. 215), 'splendid war-gear', *beorhte randas* (l. 231) 'bright shields'. The brilliance of the warriors' appearance reflects their heroic qualities, and makes these qualities evident both to the audience and the Danes. Such is indeed, the impression the warriors make on the coastguard, who says:

Næfre ic maran geseah
 eorla ofer eorþan, ðonne is eower sum,
 secg on searwum; nis þæt seldguma,
 wæpnum geweorðad, næfne him his wlite leoge,
 ænlic ansyn. (*Beo* ll. 247-51)

‘I have never seen a greater
 warrior on earth than is one of your,
 a man in armour; this is not a hall-retainer
 made to look distinguished by his weapons, unless his appearance belies him,
 his matchless bearing’.

The same pattern continues in the meeting with Wulfgar, Hrothgar's herald: again the description of Beowulf's troop arriving to Heorot includes details which emphasize prominence and brightness: 'war-corselet gleamed', 'bright chain-mail', 'gold-plated shields'. This, again, makes Beowulf's high standing and noble intentions evident to Wulfgar who says:

I have not seen strangers -
 so many men - more bold.
 I think it is for daring, not as exiles,
 but for greatness of heart you have sought Hrothgar (*Beo* ll. 336-9).

What must have been already clear to the audience from the description of Beowulf and his warriors is confirmed by Beowulf's replies to the coast-guard and Wulfgar about his ancestry, and intention to offer Hrothgar his help. The notion that there is a correspondence between the hero's appearance, reputation and role is fundamental to Beowulf's portrayal in the poem. The depiction of the heroes and their deeds was one of the traditional themes of epic poetry, and Old English poets had vocabulary and phraseology appropriate for such descriptions. Traditional epithets, compound words, and formulas made the narrative fit for its subject and *soðe gebunden* (*Beo* l. 871) 'bound in accordance with truth'. The scenes at the beginning of *Beowulf* introduce the hero to the audience therefore, as the man who is destined to end the sufferings of the Danish king

and his people.

Tolkien noted that ‘the author of *Beowulf* was deeply interested in the contemporary ‘code’ of the aristocratic class, its values and assumptions’ (Tolkien A28/B, f. 132), and this is apparent in both the approach to Heorot, and in the approach to Edoras. It is noteworthy that some similar devices, including ceremonial scenes and references to the characters’ exceptional appearance, are used when Gandalf, Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas arrive at Edoras. They are met and questioned by the guards at the doors, and escorted to the king’s hall. In Edoras they follow a ‘broad path, paved with hewn stones’ (*LR*, p. 498) which resembles the description of the path in l. 320 below. As with the coast-guard in *Beowulf*, the guide bids them farewell at the doors of the hall, saying that he must return to his duty at the gate. Before being admitted to speak to the king they talk to Háma, the Doorward of Théoden. Shippey (2000, pp. 94-96) notes here that the lines given to the coast-guard in *Beowulf* (ll. 287b-289a) are transposed in *LR* to Háma, who puzzles over whether he should allow Gandalf to enter with his staff and concludes: ‘Yet in doubt a man of worth will trust to his own wisdom’ (*LR*, p. 500). As in *Beowulf*, the guards at the gates of Edoras are impressed by the appearance of the four companions, and remark that they have never seen ‘other riders so strange’, nor any horse ‘more proud’ than Shadowfax. Though initially hostile, the guards detect that the appearance of the newcomers is not that of ordinary travelers; and as in *Beowulf*, this asserts their role as heroes who will free Théoden and his people from the power of Saruman.

We should also consider at this point a more general observation about the Rohirrim – that to all intensive purposes they are fictional depictions of the Anglo-Saxons. Many commentators on Tolkien have noted the strong similarities between the Riders of Rohan and the early English (see for example Shippey’s lengthy analysis, 1992, pp. 111-16, 182), and it is worth summarising some of the major points. They reside in the ‘Mark’ a name derived from the Old English *mierce/mearc*, meaning ‘border’, and hence the real-life kingdom of Mercia. Interestingly this corresponds to the area of England that Tolkien was brought up in, hence in his letter to his son, Christopher (*Letters*, 65, p. 108), he states ‘you are a Mercian’. Rohan names are also from Old English and in his notes to translators of *LR* (Lobdell, 1975, p. 172) Tolkien confirms this when, for Shadowfax, he states: ‘This is an anglicized form of Rohan (that is Old English)’. Christopher Tolkien observes that his father often toyed with original Anglo-Saxon words for the characters and placenames (e.g. Meodarn, Meduarn, Winseld, Eodor, Hasufeld, Hasupada, Halfheah – *Treason*, p. 402, 405, etc.). As Shippey notes, however, these are also in a Mercian dialect of Old English (1992, p. 112 fn.), which perhaps explains Tolkien’s comment that their names are ‘like (but not identical with) Old English’ (*Letters*, 144, p. 175), that is they are from one dialect of Old English only.

Moreover, the Rohirrim live like Anglo-Saxons. Their main settlement, Edoras, is an idealized Saxon village dominated by the great feasting hall Meduseld (Old English for ‘mead-hall’ as in *Beo* l. 3065). Meduseld is described as ‘a great hall of Men’ which parallels *goldsele gumena* ‘golden hall of men’ in *Beowulf*, l. 715. Legolas says that Théoden’s hall looks as if it is ‘thatched with gold’, whereas Heorot is often referred to as ‘golden’ hall and in l. 307 as ‘timbered’. The phrase ‘The light of it shines far over the

land' (*LR*, p. 496) in Tolkien's description closely parallels l. 311 in the passage below. It appears that Tolkien admired the image of the 'golden' hall sending forth the light: in his commentary to *Beowulf* he wrote that it is 'A touch of pictorial imagination, all the more vivid for the general austerity of the poem' (Tolkien A28/B, f. 41). The description of the guards of Edoras as 'men in bright mail' whose corslets were 'burnished bright' resembles the descriptions of warriors in *Beowulf*.

The Rohirrim model themselves on an ideal of society that the Anglo-Saxons would have recognized, namely loyal to one's ruler (in this case Théoden, the Old English word for 'lord') even in the face of death. Their leader in return rewards them with protection and treasure (see the discussion of *The Battle of Maldon*, 4.11). Judging by Tolkien's comment that 'the styles of the Bayeux Tapestry (made in England) fit them well enough' (*Letters*, 211, p. 281), they even looked like the early English. Aragorn, prior to their earlier encounter with the Riders, describes them to his companions (*LR*, p. 420). To many, Aragorn's comments provide an idealized description of the Anglo-Saxons, encapsulating many of their virtues that survive in their written records:

'They are proud and wilful, but they are true-hearted, generous in thought and deed; bold but not cruel; wise but unlearned, writing no books but singing many songs...'.

We also know that the language of the Rohirrim was clearly a form of Old English (the language of the Anglo-Saxons), though it appears they tended to speak Common Speech in the Golden Hall (*Letters*, 193, p. 254). Tolkien himself clearly stated this in a set of notes recorded by Christopher Tolkien (*Treason*, p. 424). When the heroes encounter the guarding Rohirrim (p. 497), the men are noted as saying 'Stay, strangers here unknown!', but in 'the tongue of the Riddermark' which only Gandalf (and presumably Aragorn) could understand. Yet originally Tolkien went further than this and had written a longer opening challenge. Christopher Tolkien records this as: 'Abidath cuman uncuth!' ('Stay, strangers unknown!'), with much more Old English being rejected at the time of writing ('Hwæt sindon ge ... Theoden urum hlaforde?' or 'Who are ye ... Theoden our lord?', *Treason*, p. 443).

It is not surprising then that Tolkien remarked that Anglo-Saxon was a 'fertile field', and more importantly the 'sole field' to study the etymology of the language and names of the Rohirrim (*Letters*, 297, p. 381). To all intensive purposes then, the Rohirrim are the Anglo-Saxons, with the only major difference being the latter's apparent reluctance to fight on horseback (see Shippey, 1992, pp. 114-5). Yet, at the same time Tolkien clearly shied away from ever taking the step of saying that the Rohirrim were an accurate representation of the Anglo-Saxons. Indeed, he downplayed the relationship to such an extent that he tried to argue that the similarities were there only in a 'general way due to their circumstances' (*LR*, p. 1110). Yet, as Shippey (1992, p. 106) observes 'this claim is totally untrue ... the Riders of Rohan resemble the Anglo-Saxons down to minute details'. Shippey, is of course correct, and presents a plausible explanation in that the Rohirrim represent the Anglo-Saxons of Old English poetry, an idealized state, but may

not be true accurate representations of the tribes and people who lived in and eventually governed England from the 5th to the 11th centuries.

Tolkien, also provides us with another reason for downplaying the similarities between the Rohirrim and the Anglo-Saxons (in his unpublished notes). He states that he was not attempting to 're-create' anything but instead to come up with something 'new (in art)'. In particular he was at pains to state that:

'No one would learn anything valid about the 'Anglo-Saxons' from any of my lore, not even that concerning the Rohirrim; I never intended that they should' (Tolkien A30/1, f. 121r).

With particular reference to Aragorn's recitation of the *ubi sunt* passage, Tolkien pointed out quite categorically that it should not be seen as a translation of the lines from *The Wanderer* (for an actual translation by Tolkien see the note for l. 92). The lines, he argued, were brought into 'something wholly different' being a reference to:

'a great hero and his renowned horse, and they are suppose\d/ to be part of the song of a minstrel of a proud and undefeated people in a hall still populous with men. Even the sentiment is different: it laments the ineluctable ending and passing back into oblivion of the fortunate, the full-lives, the unblemished and the beautiful' (Tolkien, A30/1, f. 121r).

This is a key quote, cited more or less in full. It shows that even as a novelist Tolkien has the requirements of his academic background to the fore. Although he clearly modeled the Rohirrim on the Anglo-Saxons, he felt the need to stress that you could not learn about the Anglo-Saxons from them. To do that you needed to return to traditional sources – history books, Old English poetry and prose, and archaeology. Tolkien's borrowings and reworkings, as he realized, did not suffice, and indeed did not attempt to reproduce historical truth. This throws new light on the discussion and although we can accept Shippey's argument that the Rohirrim were the Anglo-Saxons of poetry, we can now see why Tolkien, as a teacher of the period, was keen to stress the inadequacies of his fiction as an instructive tool. As he outlined in his essay 'On Fairy-Stories', he used elements of the Anglo-Saxon poetry and culture, that is true, but created something 'new' to entertain, not to inform.

In closing let us return to *The Wanderer*. Tolkien, throughout his life had been plagued by accusations that *LR* in particular was an allegory for the Atomic Age or the Second World War, something which he refuted continuously. However he was open to application (*LR*, p. xvii) of texts to present day events. Writing, around the time of the outbreak of WWII (or even during the conflict), he did just this with *The Wanderer*. It was a poem, he stated, which offered 'sustenance and support' during the current 'catastrophe' that threatened to engulf Europe. More importantly though it demonstrated to those threatened by the likes of Hitler and Stalin that there was:

‘no happy ending to cyningas or caesars of this world, whichever new names they may give themselves, and whichever side they be on, left or right, black or white. The Old English poets knew that at any rate.’ (Tolkien A38, f . 12v.)

4.10.4a *The Wanderer*

Oft him anhaga are gebideð,
metudes miltse, þeah þe he, modcearig,
geond lagulade longe sceolde
hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ,
wadan wræclastas. Wyrð bið ful aræd. (5)
Swa cwæð eardstapa, earfeþa gemyndig,
wraþra wælsleahta, winemæga hryre:
'Oft ic sceolde ana uhtna gehwylce
mine ceare cwipæn. Nis nu cwicra nan
þe ic him modsefan, minne durre, (10)
sweotule asecgan. Ic to soþe wat
þæt biþ, in eorle, indryhten þeaw
þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde,
healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille.
Ne mæg werig mod wyrde wiðstandan, (15)
ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman.
Forðon, domgeorne, dreorigne oft
in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste;
swa ic modsefan minne sceolde,
oft earmcearig, eðle bidæled, (20)
freomægum feor feterum sælan,
siþþan geara iu goldwine minne
hrusan heolstre biwrah, ond ic hean þonan
wod, wintercearig, ofer wraþema gebind.
Sohte, sele dreorig, sincas bryttan, (25)
hwær ic feor oþþe neah findan meahte
þone þe in meoduhealle min mine wisse,
oþþe mec, freondleasne, frefran wolde,
weman mid wynnum. Wat se þe cunnað,
hu sliþen bið sorg to geferan, (30)
þam þe him lyt hafað leofra geholena.
Warað hine wræclast, nales wunden gold,
ferðloca freorig, nalæs foldan blæd.
Gemon he selessecgas ond sincþege,

4.10.4a *The Wanderer*

Always for himself the solitary man waits for grace,
the mercy of fate, although he, sad at heart,
throughout the seaways must for a long time
stir with his hands the ice-cold sea,
and wade the paths of exile. Fate is entirely set. (5)
Thus spoke the Wanderer, mindful of hardships,
of cruel slaughters, and of the fall of beloved kin:
'Always I must alone at every dawn
lament my sorrow. There is now no-one living
to whom I dare, my mind, (10)
openly tell. I truly know
that it is, in a man, a very noble virtue
that he may bind fast his breast,
hold his heart, whatever he might wish to think.
Nor may the weary spirit withstand fate, (15)
nor the troubled heart bring about help.
Therefore, the one eager for glory, often binds fast
the agony in their heart;
As I my spirit had to bind with fetters,
often troubled, and deprived of a homeland, (20)
far from noble kinsmen,
since years ago I covered my gold-lord
in the dark earth, and I wretched thence
went, winter-desolate, over the waves' binding.
I sought, sad at the loss of the hall, a giver of treasure, (25)
where I far or near might have found
him who in the meadhall might know my own [people],
or me, friendless, would comfort,
and entertain with pleasures. He will understand, he who discovers
how cruel is sorrow as a companion, (30)
to that person who has few beloved friends for himself.
The path of exile holds him, and the cold breast,
[and] not at all the wound gold, nor the glory of the earth.
He remembers the retainers and the receiving of treasure,

hu hine on geoguðe his goldwine (35)
wenede to wiste. Wyn eal gedreas.
Forþon wat se (þe sceal his winedryhtnes
leofes larcwidum longe forþolian),
ðonne sorg ond slæp somod ætgædre
earmne anhogan oft gebindað. (40)
þinceð him on mode þæt he, his mondryhten,
clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge
honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum ær
in geardagum giefstolas breac.
Ðonne onwæcneð eft, wineleas guma, (45)
gesihð him biforan fealwe wegas,
baþian brimfuglas, brædan feþra,
hreosan hrim ond snaw hagle gemenged.
Ðonne beoð þy hefigran heortan benne,
sare æfter swæsne. Sorg bið geniwad, (50)
þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð;
greteð gliwstafum, georne geondsceawað
secga geseldan; swimmað eft on weg.
Fleotendra ferð no þær fela bringeð
cuðra cwidegiedda. Cearo bið geniwad (55)
þam þe sendan sceal swiþe geneahhe
ofer waþema gebind werigne sefan.
Forþon ic geþencan ne mæg geond þas woruld
for hwan modsefa min ne gesweorce,
þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence, (60)
hu hi færlice flet ofgeafon,
modge maguþegnas. Swa þes middangeard
ealra dogra gehwam dreoseð ond fealleþ;
forþon ne mæg weorþan wis wer ær he age
wintra dæl in woruldrice. Wita sceal geþyldig, (65)
ne sceal no to hatheort, ne to hrædwyrde,
ne to wac wiga, ne to wanhydig,
ne to forht ne to fægen, ne to feohgifre,
ne næfre gielpes to georn, ær he geare cunne.
Beorn sceal gebidan, þonne he beot spriceð, (70)

how in youth his gold-lord (35)
entertained him at the feasting. All joy is perished.
Therefore he understands (who must forgo the counsels
of his beloved dear lord for a long time),
when sorrow and sleep both together
often bind the wretched solitary man. (40)
It seems to him in his mind that he, his liege-lord,
may embrace and kiss, and on the knee lay
hands and head, as he sometimes before
in days of yore enjoyed the gift-stool.
When he wakes up again, a friendless man, (45)
he sees before him the yellow waves,
the bathing seabirds, spreading feathers,
falling frost and snow mingled with hail.
Heavy then because of that are the wounds of the heart,
sore after the loved one. Sorrow is renewed, (50)
when the mind considers the memory of kin;
it greets joyfully, [and] eagerly examines
the companions of men; [but] they always swim away.
The seafarers' spirit never recalls many
of the remembered speeches. Care is renewed (55)
for him who has to send very often
a weary heart over the waves' binding.
Therefore I can not think throughout this world
why my heart does not grow dark,
when I fully think about the warriors' life, (60)
how they suddenly abandoned the hall,
the brave thegns. Just as this middle-earth
in each of all the days declines and falls;
therefore a man may not become wise until he owns
a deal of winters in the worldly kingdom. A wise one must be patient, (65)
he must never [be] too hot of heart, nor too hasty of speech,
nor too weak of battles, nor too reckless,
nor too afraid nor too happy, nor too greedy,
nor never too eager of the boast, until he clearly understands.
A warrior must bide, when he speaks a vow, (70)

oþþæt collenferð cunne gearwe
 hwider hreþra gehygd hweorfan wille.
 Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið,
 þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð,
 swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard (75)
 winde biwaune weallas stondaþ,
 hrime bihrorene, hryðge þa ederas.
 Woriað þa winsalo, waldend licgað,
 dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal gecrong,
 wlonc bi wealle. Sume wig fornom, (80)
 ferede in forðwege, sumne fugel oþbær
 ofer heanne holm, sumne se hara wulf
 deaðe gedælde, sumne dreorighleor
 in eorðscræfe eorl gehydde.
 Yþde swa þisne eardgeard ælda scyppend, (85)
 oþþæt burgwara breahmta lease
 eald enta geweorc idlu stodon.
 Se þonne þisne wealsteal wise geþohte,
 ond þis deorce lif deope geondþenceð,
 frod in ferðe, feor oft gemon (90)
 wælsleahta worn, ond þas word acwið:
 'Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom maþpumgyfa?
 Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
 Eala, beorht bune! Eala, byrnwiga!
 Eala, þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat, (95)
 genap under nihthelm, swa heo no wære.
 Stondeð nu on laste leofre duguþe,
 weal wundrum heah, wrymlicum fah.
 Eorlas fornoman asca þryþe,
 wæpen wælgifru, wryd seo mære, (100)
 ond þas stanhleoþu stormas cnyssað,
 hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð,
 wintres woma, þonne won cymeð,
 nipeð nihtscua, norþan onsendeð
 hreo hæglfare hæleþum on andan. (105)
 Eall is earfoðlic eorþan rice,
 onwendeð wyrd gesceaft weoruld under heofonum.

until (he) the stout-hearted one readily knows
whither the hearts' intention will turn.
The wise man must perceive how terrifying it is,
when all the prosperity of this world stands deserted,
as now in various places throughout this middle-earth (75)
blown by the wind the walls stand,
covered by frost, those snow-swept buildings.
The halls decay then, the rulers lie dead,
deprived of joy, the troop is all perished,
splendid by the wall. Some war destroyed, (80)
ferried on the way forth, some the bird bore away
over the steep sea, some the grey wolf
dealt death, a certain one, an earl,
the sad-faced one, hid in an earth-hole.
Thus the creator of men destroyed this earth, (85)
until devoid of the revelries of the city-dwellers
the old work of giants stood idle.
He who then wisely considered this wall-foundation,
and deeply thought through this dark life,
wise in spirit, often remembers far back (90)
the large number of slaughters, and utters these words:
'Where has gone the horse? Where has gone the young man? Where has gone the giver
of treasure?
Where has gone the dwellings of the feasts? Where are the joys of the hall?
Alas, the bright cup! Alas, the mailed warrior!
Alas, the glory of the prince! How the time went, (95)
grew dark under night's helm, as if it never were.
It stands now in the trace of the beloved people,
the wonderfully high wall, wormlike adorned.
The multitude of spears took away the warriors,
the corpse-hungry weapons, the infamous fate, (100)
and these stone-cliffs storms batter,
the falling snowstorm binds the earth,
the winter's howling, [and] when the wanting comes,
the night-shadow darkens, [and] sends, in malice, from the north
a fierce hail-storm to the heroes. (105)
The earth's kingdom is all full of hardship,
the creation of the fates changes the world under the heavens.

Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,
her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne,
eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð!' (110)

Swa cwæð snottor on mode, gesæt him sundor æt rune.

Til biþ se þe his treowe gehealdeþ, ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene
beorn of his breostum acyþan, nemþe he ær þa bote cunne,
eorl mid elne gefremman. Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð. (115)

Here is money on loan, here is friendship on loan,
here is man on loan, here is the kinsman on loan,
all of this earth's foundation becomes idle!' (110)
Thus speaks the wise one in his mind, [and] sat himself apart at counsel.
Good is he who holds his faith, never must a man his grief too quickly
from his breast proclaim, unless he, the warrior, beforehand might know the remedy,
[and] bring [it] about with courage. Well it is to that one who for himself looks to the
Father in the heavens,
for mercy and comfort, where security stands for us all. (115)

4.10.4b *Beowulf*, ll. 306-70

	Guman onetton, (306)
sigon ætsomne,	oþþæt hy [s]æl timbred,
geatolic ond goldfah,	ongyton mihton.
Þæt wæs foremærost	foldbuendum
receda under roderum,	on þæm se rica bad; (310)
lixte se leoma	ofer landa fela.
Him þa hildedeor	[h]of modigra
torht getæhte,	þæt hie him to mihton
gegnum gangan;	guðbeorna sum
wicg gewende, word æfter cwæð: (315)	
‘Mæl is me to feran;	Fæder alwalda
mid arstafum	eowic gehealde
siða gesunde!	Ic to sæ wille
wið (w)rað werod	wearde healdan.’

V

Stræt wæs stanfah,	stig wisode (320)
gumum ætgædere.	Guðbyrne scan,
heard hondlocen,	hringiren scir
song in searwum,	þa hie to sele furðum
in hyra gryregeatwum	gangan cwomon.
Setton særepe	side scyldas, (325)
rondas regnhearde,	wið þæs recedes weal;
bugon þa to bence,	byrnan hringdon,

4. 10. 4b *Beowulf* ll. 306-70

Men hastened, (306)
advanced together, until they could see the timbered hall,
splendid and adorned with gold.
Amongst the earth-dwellers this was the most famous
building under the sky, where the mighty one dwelled; (310)
the light shone over many lands.
To them the brave one pointed out the home of strong men
resplendent, so that they could
go straight to it; one of the warriors,
he turned his horse, then spoke these words: (315)
'It is time for me to go; may the all-ruling Father
through his favour keep you
safe in your undertakings! I shall go back to the sea
against the hostile troops to keep watch.'

V

The road was paved with multicoloured stones, the path showed the way (320)
to the men walking together. Battle-corslet gleamed,
hard and hand-locked, bright chain-mail
sang on their armour, when they first approached the hall
in their fearsome gear.
Sea-weary they set their broad shields, (325)
protection supremely strong, against the building's wall;
then they sat down on the bench, mail-coats rang,

guðsearo gumena.	Garas stodon,
sæmanna searo,	samod ætgædere,
æscholt ufan græg;	wæs se irenþreat (330)
wæpnum gewurþad.	þa ðær wlonc hæleð
oretmecgas	æfter [æþel]um frægn:
‘Hwanon ferigeað ge	fætte scyldas,
græge syrcan	ond grimhelmas,
heresceafta heap?	Ic eom Hroðgares (335)
ar ond ombiht.	Ne seah ic elþeodige
- þus manige men -	modiglicran.

Wen’ ic þæt ge for wlenco, nalles for wræcsiðum,
ac for hige(þry)mmum Hroðgar sohton.’

Him þa elle(n)rof	andswarode, (340)
wlanc Wedera leod	word æfter spræc,
heard under helme:	‘We synt Higelaces
beodgeneatas;	Beowulf is min nama.
Wille ic asecgan	sunu Healfdenes,
mærum þeodne,	min ærende, (345)
aldre þinum,	gif he us geunnan wile,
þæt we hine swa godne	gretan moton.’

Wulfgar mæþelode -	þæt wæs Wendla leod,
wæs his modsefa	manegum gecyðed,
wig ond wisdom:	‘Ic þæs wine Deniga, (350)

frean Scildinga, frinan wille,
battle-gear of men. Spears stood
all together, the seamen’s arms,
ash-wood topped with grey; thus was this iron-troop (330)
made worthy with its weapons. Then the proud hero
asked the warriors about their lineage:
‘From where do you bring the gold-plated shields,
grey mail-shirts and mask-helmets,
this multitude of spears? I am Hrothgar’s (335)
herald and officer. I have not seen strangers -
so many men - more bold.
I think it is for daring, not as exiles,
but for greatness of heart you have sought Hrothgar.’
The man famous for his courage replied to him, (340)
the proud man of the Geats, strong under helmet,
spoke words in return: ‘We are Higelac’s

table-companions; Beowulf is my name.

I will tell to Healfdene's son,

famous prince, your lord, (345)

my errand, if he would grant,

that we may greet him, good as he is.'

Wulfgar spoke – he was a man of the Wendels,

his proud spirit was known to many,

his courage and wisdom: 'I will ask the friend of the Danes, (350)

the lord of the Scyldings,

beaga bryttan,	swa þu bena eart,
þeoden mærne,	ymb þinne sið,
ond þe þa andsware	ædre gecyðan,
ðe me se goda	agifan þenceð.' (355)
Hwearf þa hrædlice	þær Hroðgar sæt,
eald ond unhar,	mid his eorla gedriht;
eode ellenrof	þæt he for eaxlum gestod
Deniga frean;	cuþe he duguðe þeaw.
Wulfgar maðelode	to his winedrihtne: (360)
'Her syndon ge(fere)de,	feorran cumene,
ofer geofenes (be)gang	Geata leode;
þone yldestan	ore(t)mecgas
Beowulf nemnað.	Hy benan synt,
þæt hie, þeoden min,	wið þe moton
wordum wrixlan.	No ðu him wearne geteoh
ðinra gegncwida,	glædman Hroðgar!
Hy on wiggetawum	wyrðe þinceað
eorla geæhtlan;	huru se aldor deah,
se þæm heaðorincum	hider wisade.' (370)

the giver of rings, as you request,
the famous king, about your errand,
and will swiftly make known to you the answer,
that the good one thinks fit to give me.' (355)
He returned quickly to where Hrothgar sat,
old and grey, with his company of noblemen;
the man famous for his courage went forth till he stood in front
of the lord of the Danes; he knew the custom of retainers.
Wulfgar spoke to his kindly lord: (360)
'Here have journeyed, come from afar,
over the sea's expanse the men of the Geats;
their leader the warriors
call Beowulf. They ask
that they, my lord, might (365)
exchange words with you. Do not refuse to give them
your answer, gracious Hrothgar!
From their battle-gear they seem worthy
of nobles' esteem; indeed strong is the leader,
who has brought these warriors here.' (370)

4.10.5a. Notes

See Tolkien's notes in Tolkien A38 including some longer essays, and in ff. 26-39 an extensive analysis of individual words. Christopher Tolkien dates these notes as quite early, suggesting 1927 for some of this.

L. 1. *Oft* 'Always'. As Mitchell and Robinson note (2001, p. 271) the Old English word *oft* can mean 'often', but in poetry it can also mean 'always'. This accentuates the opening of the poem. The word *anhaga* (cf. also *anhogan* in l. 40) is difficult to pin down, but this may be intentional. Dunning and Bliss (1969, pp. 37-4) see several possible interpretations including 'a hermit', 'one who thinks alone', and 'one who encloses himself alone.' In his lecture notes (Tolkien A30/1, ff. 140-60v) Tolkien provides a lengthy discussion of 'anhaga'. The *an-* prefix meant 'solitary', whilst *-haga*, he noted, may have been a possessive (describing an attribute), like *an-horn(a)* 'unicorn', or agental (describing an active performer of some action, like Modern English 'wanderer', 'worker', 'writer', etc). Tolkien looked at occurrences of this word in other Old English poems, including *Guthlac* (l. 970), *Andreas*, and *Elene*, and demonstrated the range of meanings from 'hermit', to 'lonely/isolated' (due to bereavement), and an 'outcast', or 'a man who dwells alone' (Tolkien A30/1, f. 122r). Tolkien suggests this latter meaning is probably what appears in *The Wanderer*, i.e. 'He is not an exile, but wishes to escape from his homeland ... and has no friend to assist him'. In his justifiable attack on translations published by Burton Raffel (Tolkien A30/1, f. 113r) Tolkien stated: 'anhaga does not mean just 'lonely one', but refers to a man living in special conditions and is not applicable (for instance) to a man in a boat'.

gebideð 'waits'. This can mean either 'await' or 'experience' which implies two interpretations: 1) the solitary man always experiences mercy; or 2) the solitary man always awaits mercy. The former (adopted here) seems to allow for a looser interpretation, whereas the latter (accepted by Muir 2000, p. 503, for example) enforces early on a Christian didactic approach, i.e. this is what will happen.

Ll. 1-7. Tolkien provides a translation of these lines in his lecture on 'Anglo-Saxon Verse' (Tolkien A30/1, f. 37). For *eardstapa*, 'the Wanderer', he noted that this was an example of the unhappy 'men or creatures who lived in a solitary place alone, by nature, choice, or necessity' (Tolkien A30/1, f. 118r), i.e. the *anhagan*. He disliked the title 'The Wanderer' as it suggested 'aimless wandering', and preferred for *eardstapa* 'haunting the land alone', or 'walking wild in the land of his dwelling'.

L. 2. *metudes miltse* 'the mercy of fate'. Readers should note that a slight alteration to *Metudes miltse* would make this 'the mercy of the Creator', bringing in a Christian interpretation early on.

Ll. 2-4. The sense here is probably: 'Though he, sad at heart, must for a long time stir the ice-cold sea with his hands, and tread the paths of exile throughout the sea-ways.'

L. 5. *aræd* probably 'set' (the verb *arædan* literally means 'to read'). Here the modern meaning of 'set', as in 'set in their ways' is used. In other words 'fate' (or *wyrd*) is

entirely predetermined.

L. 7. *hryre* 'kin'. Mitchell and Robinson (2201, p. 271) note the problems of this word and suggest 'of kinsmen'. See Muir (2000, p. 505) for a summary of other interpretations.

L. 8. There is considerable debate as to where the speech should be opened. The manuscript, of course, has no such punctuation. Here we keep with the punctuation of *ASPR*, Mitchell and Robinson, and Treharne.

Ll. 10-11. *Lit.* 'Which I to them mind my dare, openly tell.'

L. 11. *to soþe* 'to truth' or 'truly', MnE 'soothsayer'.

Ll. 17-18. *Lit.* 'often agony in their heart binds fast'.

LL. 19-20. *Lit.* 'As I my spirit had to, often troubled, deprived of the homeland, from noble kinsmen far, bind with fetters'.

LL. 22-23. Other editors have suggested 'since long ago the earth covered my lord with darkness' for these lines (see Muir, 2000, p. 506).

Ll. 32-33. *Lit.* 'The path of exile holds him, not at all the wound gold, the cold breast, nor the glory of the earth'.

Ll. 37-40. *Lit.* 'Therefore he knows who must of his beloved, dear lord, the counsels for a long time forgo: when sorrow and sleep both together the wretched solitary man often binds'. Dunning and Bliss (1969, p. 19) describe this as one of the most difficult passages of the poem with a variety of possible translations.

Ll. 51-53. Mitchell and Robinson (2001, p. 272) note that there are two possible translations of this line 'the memory of kinsmen passes through his mind' or 'the mind passes through the memory of kinsmen'. Either way the sense is of a dream, with the subject of the poem wandering in and out of his memories, thinking of his past friends until he awakens and sees the images of his companions 'swim away'. See Dunning and Bliss (1969, pp. 21-22).

L. 54 *bringeð* 'brings there', translated here as 'recalls'.

L. 57. *Lit.* 'Over the waves' binding the weary heart'.

L. 59. *modsefa* and *gesweorce*. The mind 'darkens', i.e. the wanderer reaches the pit of despair.

L. 60. *Lit.* 'when I the warriors' life fully think about'. (60)

L. 61. *flet ofgeafon* 'the hall abandoned'. This is probably a euphemism for dying.

L. 64-5. *Lit.* 'Therefore may not become wise the man, before he owns a deal of winters in the worldly kingdom.'

Ll. 81-83. The appearance of the wolf and the bird (presumably a raven or similar) is a familiar motif in Old English poetry signifying death, usually after a battle where the beasts gorge on the corpses of the dead.

Ll. 83-4. *Lit.* 'One the sad-faced one in an earth-hole the earl hid'. The 'sad-faced one' would be a mourner in this case.

Ll. 85-7. *Lit.* 'Destroyed thus this earth, the creator of men, until of the citizens of the revelries devoid, the old work of giants idle stood'. The *enta geweorc* also appears in line 2 of *The Ruin*, and elsewhere.

L. 88-8. *Lit.* 'He who then this wall-foundation wisely considered, and this dark life deeply thought through'.

L. 92. Cassidy and Ringler (1974, p. 328) suggest 'What has become of...?'. For a discussion of this famous 'ubi sunt' passage, see the main section. Tolkien translates this passage as: 'Where now the horse, where now the man, where now the giver of gold? Where now the places of feasting? Where are the glad voices of the hall? Alas, the bright goblet! Alas, the mailclad knight! Alas, the glory of the King! How that hour hath passed dark under night-shade, as had it never been!' (Tolkien A30/1, f. 33ff., lecture on 'Anglo-Saxon Verse').

L. 98. 'wormlike adorned' presumably refers to the decorations within the building, possibly interlace carvings on pillars, etc.

Ll. 99-105. *Lit.* 'Took away the warriors the multitude of spears, the corpse-greedy weapons, the infamous fate, and these stone-cliffs storms batter, the falling snowstorm the earth binds, the winter's howling, when the wanting comes, darkens the night-shadow, sends from the north a fierce hail-storm to the heroes in malice'.

L. 100. *wyrd* 'fate'. Tolkien described this as 'The ineluctable series of events that has marched, and will march on and over Man ... without regard to any man, Caesar or churl; or as a flooding stream of things that can by some great men, or by many men united in some hope or passion, be turned this way or that: yet even it runs down eventually to the Great Sea at last' (Tolkien A38, f. 9).

L. 106. *Lit.* 'All is full of hardship the earth's kingdom'.

L. 108. *laene* 'loan'. The Old English word *laene* is also often translated as 'transitory', i.e. passing or temporary.

Ll. 112-5. *Lit.* 'Good is he who his faith holds, never must his grief too quickly a man from his breast proclaim, unless he beforehand might know the remedy, the warrior, with courage, bring about. Well it is to that one who for himself mercy seeks, comfort to the Father in the heavens, where for us all the security stands'.

4.10.5b Notes

L. 307. *[s]æl timbred* ‘timbered hall’. The manuscript reads *æltimbred* ‘all-timbered’. Though the manuscript reading makes sense, it is unlikely for metrical reasons. The prefix *æt-* as in the word *ætsomne* in this line usually does not alliterate in *Beowulf*, and alliteration seems to require a word beginning with an ‘s’.

L. 312. *[h]of*. MS: *of*. Both *bildedeor* (‘warrior brave in battle’) in this line and *guðbeorna sum* (‘one of the warriors’) in l. 314 refer to the coast-guard who is showing Beowulf and his men the way to Heorot.

L. 317. *ar-stafum*, dative of *ar-stafas* (*ar* ‘honour’, *stafas* ‘letters’).

L. 320. *stan-fah* ‘multicoloured stones’. This is from *stan* ‘stone’, and *fah* ‘variegated, decorated, multicoloured’. It can be compared with the Gothic *filu-faihs* ‘multi-coloured’. We must also remember that inside Heorot, as with Edoras, there is a mosaic floor, tapestries, and decorated pillars.

L. 322. *bond-locen* ‘linked, locked by hand’.

L. 326. *regn-heard* ‘supremely hard’. *regn-* is etymologically related to ON *regin*, n. pl., ‘gods, powers’ (used in ON poems in this volume), and Gothic *ragin*, n., ‘decision, counsel’.

L. 327. *bugan* ‘bow down, bend, sit down’.

L. 328. *guðsearo* ‘battle gear’. This is a compound word which consists of *guð* ‘war, battle, fight’ and *searo* ‘contrivance, device, skill, equipment, armour’.

L. 330. *æsc-holt* ‘ash wood’. This is a metaphor for a spear; ‘grey’ refers to the colour of iron (see Jack, 1994, p. 47).

L. 331. *wurþian* ‘to ennoble, make worthy’.

wlonc hæleð ‘the proud hero’. The speaker here is Wulfgar, king Hrothgar’s herald.

L. 332. *[æpel]um* ‘descent, nobility’. The manuscript has *hælepum* ‘men, heroes’ which makes sense, but is usually emended because in *Beowulf* it always alliterates with words beginning with an ‘h’. Tolkien commented that this is an interesting error, provoked by the fact that *hælep* and *æpelu* belong ‘to the same general sense-sphere’, and that in Middle English *hælep* developed into *hapel* ‘knight’ influenced by *æpele* ‘noble’ (Tolkien A28/B, f. 42r).

L. 334. *grim-helm* ‘mask helmets’. This refers to a helmet with a ‘mask’ for the protection of the face (OE *grima* ‘mask’). See Jack (1994, p. 48) for a brief discussion of how this relates to the helmet at Sutton Hoo.

L. 335. *here-sceaf* ‘spears’. Literally this means ‘army-shaft’, a metaphor for spear.

L. 341. *Wederas*. This is the poetic name of the Geats.

L. 348. *Wendlas* ‘Wendels’. Possibly the Vandals (a group of East-Germanic tribes), or the inhabitants of modern Vendsyssel in North Jutland, or of Vendel in Uppland, Sweden. They are also referred to in the Old English poem *Widsith* (l. 59).

L. 351. *Scildinga* ‘of the Scyldings’. Descendant of Scyld, the mythological founder of the Danish royal dynasty (see 4.8).

L. 352. *beaga brytta* ‘the giver of rings’. Literally this means the ‘breaker of rings’, the one who divides, distributes wealth, a ruler (compare OE *breatan*, v. ‘to break, cut down, kill’).

L. 357. *unbar* ‘grey’. The *un-*, usually a negative particle, appears to have intensifying meaning here (see Roberts, 1980).

L. 359. Tolkien commented that *duguð* is related to OE *dugan* ‘be of worth, service’, but it developed a special meaning possibly through its association with the word *geogoð* ‘youth, young warriors’ (*duguþe ond geogoþe*, Beo ll. 160, 621). It came to mean ‘all men who had *duguð*’, that is the host of tried retainers who were most of service. According to Tolkien in this context it is not clear whether the meaning is ‘knew the manners of tried retainers’ or ‘knew worthy manners’ reviving the older meaning of *duguð* (Tolkien A 28/B, f. 43r).

L. 367. *glædman Hroðgar*, OE *glæd*, adj. ‘kind, gracious, lordly, glorious’. Tolkien commented that the basic sense of *glæd* is ‘bright’, and that in such expressions as *glæde Scyldingas* (l. 58) the sense is probably archaic ‘bright, glorious’ (Tolkien A 28/B, f. 48r-v).

4.10.6 Further Reading

For readings on *Beowulf* see 4.3. *The Wanderer* is often anthologized and numerous editions and translations exist. For example see *ASPR* iii, pp. 134-7, Hamer (1970, pp. 174-9), Cassidy and Ringler (1974, pp. 323-9), Muir (2000, vol I, pp. 215-9 and vol II, pp. 503-13), Treharne (2000, pp. 42-7), and Mitchell and Robinson (2001, pp. 268-75). Two other single volume editions are also worth tracking down, as both present lengthy analyses of the poem: Dunning and Bliss (1969), and Leslie (1966).