como hemos dicho, trata de los problemas fundamentales del alma humana y lo hace de una manera que ha cautivado a su auditorio.

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'EOTHEOD' ANGLO-SAXONS OF THE PLAINS: ROHAN AS THE OLD ENGLISH CULTURE IN J. R. R.TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*[1]

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Resumen

Cuando Rohan, uno de los reinos que conforman la geografía de la tierra media en *El Señor de los Anillos* de J. R. R. Tolkien, se analiza en detalle desde la perspectiva del investigador en literatura inglesa medieval, los resultados de dicho análisis son muy interesantes y relevantes, pues podemos trazar un paralelismo casi absoluto entre el mundo anglosajón y los rasgos culturales que lo describen. Las características que conforman dicho reino como civilización constituyen un reflejo del mundo anglosajón prácticamente a todos los niveles. No solo se perciben referencias lingüísticas sino también réplicas culturales que provienen de la concepción del mundo anglosajón: literatura del inglés antiguo –tanto temas como obras–, historia, arquitectura, arte, etc. Podríamos decir que Tolkien realizó la construcción de Rohan tomando el mundo de los anglosajones como modelo principal. Creo que éste es un caso único en *El Señor de los Anillos*, dado que esta detallada reconstrucción cultural no se encuentra de un modo tan explícito en ninguna de las otras influencias medievales detectadas habitualmente en la obra de Tolkien. El objetivo principal de este artículo es intentar arrojar algo de luz en la sistematización de los paralelismos culturales entre Rohan y la cultura anglosajona para seguir contribuyendo al estudio que del legado literario de Tolkien –especialmente de *El Señor de los Anillos*– continúan realizando los especialistas en los estudios literarios del inglés antiguo.

Palabras clave: inglés antiguo, Tolkien, *El Señor de los Anillos*, Rohan

Abstract

When analyzed in detail from a medieval-driven literary point of view, the case of Rohan –one of the kingdoms that shape the geography of Middle-earth in John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*– is particularly interesting and relevant because we could draw an almost complete parallel between the Anglo-

Saxon world and the cultural features that outline it. The characteristics that build Rohan as a civilization constitute a reflection of the Anglo-Saxon world at all levels. We perceive not only linguistic references but also cultural replicas coming from the Anglo-Saxon *Weltanschauung*: Old English literature –works and topics–, history, architecture, art, etc. We could state that Tolkien built Rohan taking the Anglo-Saxon world as the main model. I think this could be a unique case in *The Lord of the Rings*, as this detailed cultural reconstruction cannot be so explicitly seen in the rest of the medieval influences detected in his work. The main aim of this article is trying to shed some light in the systematization of such cultural parallels to keep on contributing to the analysis of Tolkien's literary legacy –especially *The Lord of the Rings*– that is currently being made by scholars from Old English literary studies.

Key words: Old English, Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Rohan

1.   Introductory remarks

If we want to analyze the work of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien from a literary point of view, many perspectives and approaches could be adopted. No matter which one we choose, I think we could never forget to deal with the clear influence that his wide professional knowledge of Old and Middle English Literature exerted on the design and creation of his literary fiction. Leaving this issue aside would be a terrible critical mistake. Sometimes what Tolkien recreates has a wider and more ambitious purpose that goes far beyond the specific linguistic reference to a particular lexical item or the general mention of some ancient epic *locus amoenus*. Such is the case of Rohan, one of the kingdoms that shape the geography of Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings*.

In his previous work of fiction, *The Hobbit*, a very clear connection with Anglo-Saxon literature could be established (Bueno 1996) and it affected the whole work in a more general way. *The Hobbit* was full of Old English literary features in which you could clearly see the indivisibility between Tolkien the scholar and Tolkien the writer of stories deeply connected with both the language and the literature he worshipped so much. Concepts such as aristocracy, courage, revenge, *wyrd*, loyalty to one's leader, *comitatus*, weapons, banquets, treasures, riddles, kennings, fixed formulae, etc, were elements taken from Anglo-Saxon literature that built a great part –if not entirely– of the thematic structure of *The Hobbit*'s *Weltanschauung*. Besides, references to gnomic and elegiac poetry, to Germanic burial sites, or to exile, contributed to characterize *The Hobbit* as a novel closely connected with the Old English world.

If *The Hobbit* holds a great deal of influence from the Anglo-Saxons and *The Silmarillion* constitutes his homage to Scandinavian creation myths (Bueno 1996: 133), it is far beyond doubt that his masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*, contains his personal tribute to medieval literature, both as an academic and as a skilful and gifted

storyteller. In this novel there are plenty of references to medieval literature in general. Among such a medieval myriad of influences and allusions –all equally interesting to the medieval scholar– it is my aim in this article to analyze the most Anglo-Saxon of them all –Rohan–, the one that in my opinion embraces the most important image of *Old Englishness* the novel possesses. Perhaps Rohan follows the path depicted in *The Hobbit*, as far as Anglo-Saxon influence is concerned, but undoubtedly it is an image better constructed and inserted within the overall framework of the novel's narration.

2.   Rohan: The Anglo-Saxons in *The Lord of the Rings*

As I have just said, the case of Rohan is particularly interesting and relevant because we could draw an almost complete parallel between the Anglo-Saxon world and the cultural features that outline it. The characteristics that build Rohan as a civilization constitute a reflection of the Anglo-Saxon world at almost all levels. We perceive not only linguistic references but also cultural replicas coming from the Anglo-Saxon conception of the world. Trying to offer an sketch of these references and replicas will be my aim in the following pages. To make this task easier I am going to order the references, and my commentaries on them, according to their most related Old English sub-field: Literature: Works and Topics, Language, History and Culture, Architecture and Art.

2.1.   *OE Literature: Works and Topics*

The first and most evident traces of the Anglo-Saxons you could run across when reading about Rohan's people and culture are clearly linked with the works and topics of Old English literature. In III/6[2] we find two of the most straightforward references when Aragorn quotes a sample of Rohan's oral poetry, and further in the chapter when Theoden, King of Rohan, awakes from his magical lethargy reciting the Rohanian call to arms, which will be repeated in V/5. The first case offers immediate recognition to any Old English scholar:

> 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 a mountain, like a wind in the meadow;

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[2] When quoting extracts or chapters from *The Lord of the Rings* I'll be using the standard notation used almost by every Tolkien scholar in which the Roman numeral indicates the book and the second numeral points out the chapter. So, III/6 means "Book 3, Chapter 6". Due to the wide number of editions and reprints available, this notation allows the reader to identify any reference mentioned in a critical work, regardless of the edition used.

The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow.

This piece of Rohan verse is a rewriting of one of the best known Anglo-Saxon elegies, *The Wanderer*, more precisely, an adaptation of lines 92-95a (Hamer 1970: 180, 181):

Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa?
Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
Eala þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat,
genap under nihthelm, swa heo no wære.

Where is the horse now, where the hero gone?
Where is the bounteous lord, where are the benches
For feasting? Where are the joys of the hall? (...)
Alas for the bright cup, the armoured warrior,
The glory of the prince. That time is over,
Passed into night as it had never been.

In these lines we have an adaptation not only of the shape of the verse but also of the elegiac features contained on them: the loss of the Germanic microcosm, the elegiac tone, the memories of the pleasures of life in the *comitatus*, the social values of life in the mead-hall, the banquets, the symbols of past glories, the transience of life, etc. In both texts the expression of anguish, of personal introspection when facing life is almost identical. With one single text at the beginning of this chapter, when the description of the culture of Rohan begins to be made, Tolkien offers a powerful initial connection with the Anglo-Saxon way of life, with its *Weltanschauung*. The second case appears twice in III/6 and V/5:

III/6	V/5
Arise now, arise, Riders of Theoden!	Arise, arise, Riders of Theoden!
Dire deeds awake, dark is it eastward.	Feel deeds awake: fire and slaughter!
Let horse be bridled, horn be sounded!	Spear shall be shaken, shield be splintered,
Forth Eorlingas!	A sword-day, a red day, ere the sun rises!

These Rohanian calls to battle, recited by Theoden in two specific moments of the story, are built (Shippey 2001: 97) following another Old English text, connected with the epic discourse and with *Beowulf*: the Finn and Hengest episode, commonly known as *Finnsburg Fragment*. Curiously enough, this text was carefully studied, translated and edited by Tolkien himself and Alan Bliss (1998). In lines 10 to

12 –and I am quoting Tolkien's translation and edition (1998: 147)– we have the following:

Ac onwacnigeað nu, wigend mine!   *Awaken now, my warriors! Grasp*
Habbað eowre hlencan,   hicgeaþ   *your coats of mail, think of deeds*
on ellen,   *of valour, bear yourselves proudly,*
Þindað on orde, wesað onmode!   *be resolute!"*

Again, the reference is quite precise, as the epic tone of the fragment completely matches –in this and in subsequent moments of Tolkien's narration– the content of Theoden's call.

These two are the most direct references one could find in the description of Rohan's people and culture. Besides, undertones of *Beowulf* and Anglo-Saxon epic poetry customarily appear in several moments of the story, not as clear-cut traceable quotations but as part of the narrative thread of Tolkien's novel in general and of the description of Rohan in particular. Thus, for instance, as Tom Shippey (2001: 94) pointed out, when Gandalf, Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas arrive at Theoden's Golden Hall "the etiquette of arrival and reception corresponds to that of *Beowulf* point for point". In this way, the arrival before the guards, the conversational interchange with them, the dropping of weapons, the entrance before the king, and so on, follow a pattern similar to that appearing in *Beowulf* (lines 230-350). This example I have just mentioned also indicates that Tolkien does not merely reproduce some episodes taken from *Beowulf* or from some other Anglo-Saxon epic poem, but rather, he uses such scenes to describe his characters at a deep level. And such descriptions connect Rohan with other topics of Anglo-Saxon culture that also belonged to Rohan's *Weltanschauung*: Concepts such as honour, boasting, wish for fame –'lof geornost'–, loyalty, feasting, the individual facing himself and the group, wisdom and strength, outline the behavior of all the characters connected to the world of Rohan. Because of this and other cases it is evident that Tolkien closely followed the Anglo-Saxon epic culture as the model to shape Rohan with.

Sometimes, epic poetry was not the only Old English poetic discourse he used. As we have seen in the first reference, and it is easily perceived in several moments of Tolkien's novel (Shippey 2001: 97), the poetry of Rohan holds an openly elegiac tone and is written in almost strict Old English metre. Let us quote as an example these lines taken from the song of the ride to Gondor (V/3) and the song of the Mounds of Mundburgh (V/6):

V/3	V/6
Forth rode Theoden. Five nights and days	We heard of the horns in the hills ringing,
east and onward rode the Eorlingas (...)	The swords shining in the South-kingdom.
Doom drove them on. Darkness	Steeds went striding to the

toke them,
horse and horseman; hoofbeats afar
sank into silence; so the songs tell
us.

Stoningland
As wind in the morning. War was
kindled.
There Theoden fell, Thengling
mighty,
To his golden hall and green
pastures.

The first feature you notice in extracts of this sort is that their external appearance resembles the shape of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with its alliterative structures and the usual metrical patterns of versification that build the lines. Taking four lines as an example we perceive how they comply with the Old English classic patterns of poetical composition:

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   /   X   /  X  /  `   x/                    /    / X `   / X  / X
A horse and horseman; hoofbeats afar E  Db There Theoden fell, Thengling mighty, A
   a       a          a        x           a      a           a        x

   /  X  / X   X X  /  / X              X X / X  / X  /  / X
A sank into silence; so the songs tell us. B  To his golden hall and green pastures. C
C
                                                     a   x   a   x
   a       a          a    x
```

Leaving formal aspects aside, you could also perceive the Old English epic and elegiac poetic discourses in the way the narrative structure and the Rohan topics are developed, in the conception of the world traced on them. We are told at the beginning of the description of the Rohirrim that their culture had an specific oral quality, that they used songs and poems to remember past deeds. Thus, being a culture without written records, as Tom Shippey (2001: 97) points out properly, they also shared with the Anglo-Saxons "a major function of poetry, at once to express and to resist the sadness of oblivion".

Even if we take the story as a whole, Patrick Curry (1998: 27, 128, 129) notes that the three worlds upon which the narration of *The Lord of the Rings* spin around are "the social ('The shire'), the natural ('Middle Earth') and the spiritual ('The Sea') world". He also points out that the Space/Time parameter –a fact also noted by Derek Brewer (1979: 261, 262)– and the personal/psychological dimension are two concepts that guide the thematic structure of the novel. It is curious enough that the Old English elegiac poetic discourse could be described by means of three general parameters (Bueno 2001: 128, 129 & forthcoming): Psychology –reflecting the expression of the personal/psychological sphere–, space/time and their passing and ecology. I have the personal impression that the fact that these are also the parameters that guide the Tolkienian *Weltanschauung* is not simply accidental. I think it is not a matter of mere coincidence that these parameters not only guide the conception of the

world of both *The Lord of the Rings* and a vivid poetic Anglo-Saxon genre but also constitute, according to Patrick Curry (1998), the reason of the vitality and modernity of Tolkien's text.

2.2.   OE Language

Linguistic references in Tolkien's work have been frequently traced and studied by the academic community, dealing with both the usage Tolkien made of real languages to create names, places, etc, and the languages he invented. As far as real languages are concerned, I would like to highlight that –besides the connection between Old English and the names belonging to other peoples from Middle-earth–, Rohan constitutes the only culture in Middle-earth having a 100% of its words and names directly derived from Old English, exception made of the words 'Rohan' and 'Rohirrim'. These are translations made by the Gondorians from the Old English derived language of the mark into the grey-elven tongue. So, Rohan –'Horse Country'– and Rohirrim –'master of horses'– are translations of 'Eotheod', which is OE 'horse-folk', the name the people of Rohan gave to themselves (Noel 1980). Leaving these two names aside, as I have already mentioned, all of the words and names of the Rohirrin used in *The Lord of the Rings* are Old English.[3]

Some scholars have gone further saying that the references derived specifically from Mercian Old English. This statement would help to explain the term 'Mark', a name used to describe the area in which the Rohirrim –who sometimes are called "Riders of the Mark"– lived, i.e. Rohan itself. Tom Shippey (2001: 91-92) makes a very good and coherent explanation of this point:

> The West Saxons, in whose dialect most Old English texts survive, called their neighbours the *Myrce*. If their name for their neighbours' kingdom had survived it would certainly have been the **Mearc*. Tolkien, however, a native of Mercia as he often proclaimed, would have had no trouble in translating this back into Mercian, removing the West Saxon diphthongization and coming up with the *Marc*. (…) All names given to the Riders and their horses and their weapons are pure Anglo-Saxon, and (a point less noted) pure Mercian, not West Saxon.

As a final example it is interesting to notice that the connection of Rohan's language with Old English is one of the many details magnificently adapted in the excellent film version of *The Lord of the Rings* directed by Peter Jackson. In *The Two Towers* (2002) we see a scene (figure 1) showing Theodred's funeral in which Eowyn sings a funerary *planctus* composed of several lines in Old English:

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[3] The complete list of words and names in Rohan mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings* have been listed and explained by Ruth S. Noel (1980: 22-30) in "The Language of the Rohirrim", a chapter contained in his extraordinary analysis of the languages of Middle-earth.

Fig 1. Eowyn singing in OE (Jackson 2002)

2.3. OE History and Culture

In the cultural characterization of Rohan and its people, the only element that does not coincide with the Anglo-Saxon world is the fact that they are riders –'horse-folk'–, that horses are a cultural-defining element. We actually have small traces pointing out that the Anglo-Saxon did not get on very well with horses. In the first three verses of *The Battle of Maldon* (Hamer 1970: 50-51) the narrator describes how the Anglo-Saxon *hlaford* "Het þa hyssa hwæne hors forlætan,/feor afysan, and forð gangan, /hicgan to handum and to hige godum", that is to say, "He ordered then that each young warrior/Should leave his horse and drive it far away,/Advance, and think on arms and noble valour". And in the entry for the year 1055, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Garmonsway 1992: 186, Plummer 1980: 186) reveals how in battle "ær þær wære ænig spere gescoten, ær fleah ðæt Englisce folc, forðan þe hig wæran on horsan", that is, "before a spear was thrown, the English fled, because they had been made to fight on horseback". As Tom Shippey (2001: 92) noted very appropriately "the reluctance of the Anglo-Saxon military to have anything to do with horses approaches the doomed, or the comical".

Be that as it may, we could explain the presence of horses in the culture of Rohan as an artistic licence Tolkien uses in his cultural recreation of the Anglo-

Saxons. We could see the people of Rohan as a sort of Vikings of the prairie, of Anglo-Saxons of the plains, with horses instead of ships. And, as a simple but interesting anecdote, we could not forget that two of the historical-mythical names from the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon History, Hengest and Horsa, meant in OE "stallion, horse". Maybe the Anglo-Saxon's discomfort with horses could have been less serious than it seems.

Exception made of the presence of horses, the rest of Rohan's inner history clearly echoes the culture of Anglo-Saxon England: the *comitatus*, the social and class structure, the king and his court, the loyalty to one's lord, the duty to one's kin, the presence of the ancestors, the importance of ancestral history,[4] and so long and so forth. Rohan might have very well taken part of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy as one of its kingdoms.

2.4. Architecture and Art

In the fields of Art, Architecture, even Archaeology, we could also draw parallels between the buildings of Rohan and those of Anglo-Saxon England. The first of such parallel is, evidently, Theoden's Golden Hall. Meduseld is the mirror image of an Anglo-Saxon hall, more specifically of Heorot, King Hrothgar's hall in *Beowulf*. In the poem we even find the very word 'Meduseld' in line 3065, being this term the standard common word in OE to refer to mead-halls where feasting took place. Tolkien's description –visually backed up again (figures 2 & 3) by Peter Jackson's adaptation (2002)– runs as follows (III/6):

(...) a green hill rises upon the east. A dike and mighty wall and thorny fence encircle it. Within there rise the roofs of houses; and in the midst, set upon a green terrace, there stands aloft a great hall of Men. And it seems to my eyes that it is thatched with gold. The light of it shines far over the land. Golden, too, are the posts of its doors.

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[4] On discussing the making of myths related to migration in Anglo-Saxon literature –both as a literary topic and as a cultural construct– Nicholas Howe's monograph (2001) is very clarifying. He devotes a whole chapter on *Beowulf* and the myth of the Ancestral Homeland, which is very interesting as regards the building of the oral story and the evolution from facts into legends.
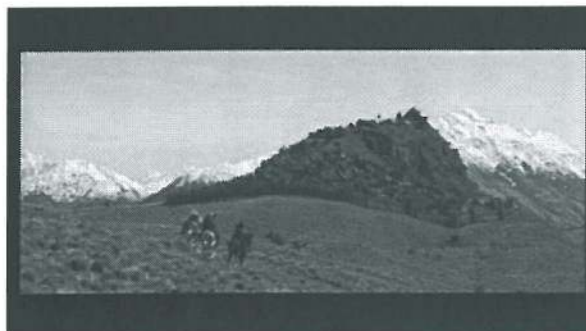
Fig 2. Edoras (Jackson 2002)

Fig 3. Meduseld, the Golden Hall (Jackson 2002)

If we compare this beautifully written passage with the description of Hrothgar's "medo-ærn micel", as Heorot is described in *Beowulf* (lines 306-311), we perceive an identical tone in both descriptions (Mitchell & Robinson 1998: 58, Heaney & Donoghue 2002: 10) :

,guman ongetton,	*They marched in step*
sigon ætsomne oþ þæt hy sæl timbred	
geatolic on goldfah ongyton mihton;	*hurrying until the timbered hall rose before them, radiant with gold.*
þæt wæs foremærost flodbuendum receda under roderum on þæm se rica bad;	*Nobody on earth knew of another Building like it. Majesty lodged there,*
lixte se leoma ofer landa fela.	*Its light shone over many lands.*

Both descriptions of the external appearance of the hall are quite similar, specially the golden decoration –"geatolic ond goldfah"/"it is thatched with gold"– and the light they both bestow as a symbol for power and majesty in a sentence that seems to be an exact replica of *Bewoulf*: "lixte se leoma ofer landa fela"/ "The light of it shines far over the land". Leslie Webster (1998: 186-187) pointed out in his work on archaeology and *Beowulf* that:

> there is no archaeological evidence for the embellishment of Anglo-Saxon or any other Germanic halls with gold; but if the description is not simply pure hyperbole, it would not seem unreasonable to read in the description of the golden, shining-plated exterior a poetic image of the thatch or of gleaming shingles, both attested in the archaeological record.

In this sense Tolkien would be depicting not only the real image of the Anglo-Saxon hall but also the poetic description that appears in texts such as *Beowulf*.

Tolkien states through Gandalf's voice, when he says "it seems to my eyes that it is thatched with gold", the same reasonable hypothesis Webster declares in his article.

Apart from the hall, other elements that shaped the Anglo-Saxon's built environment are present in Rohan. As depicted in III/6, the "great barrows where the sires of Theoden sleep (...) seven mounds upon the left and nine upon the right" have a great resemblance with the Anglo-Saxon 'beorg' or 'hlæw', i.e., the burial mounds that appear quoted, for instance, at the end of *Beowulf* (lines 3155- 3165). In this case we have plenty of archaeological evidence and the similarities between the Anglo-Saxon mounds and those of Rohan are pretty evident as these two images (figures 4 & 5) –compared again with Peter Jackson's adaptation (figure 6)– demonstrate:

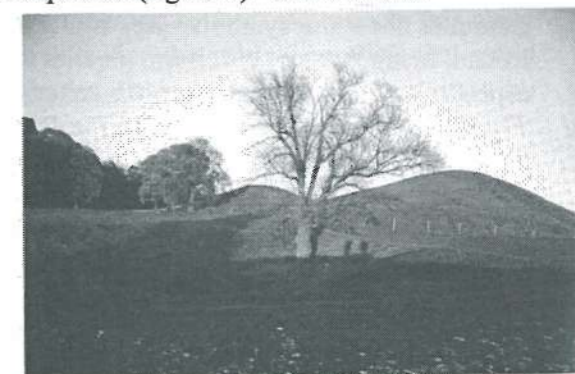Fig 4. Sutton Hoo mounds in 1983 (Carver 1998: III)

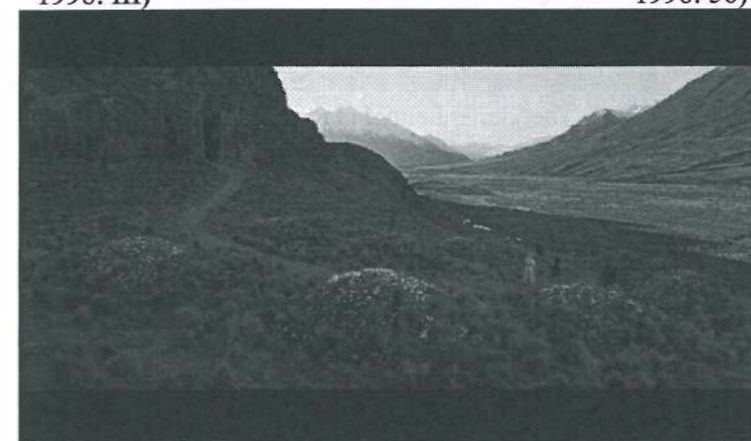Fig 5. 6th cent. Swedish burial mound (Carver 1998: 56)

Fig 6. Rohan's mounds outside Edoras (Jackson 2002)

Although not so thoroughly described –and perhaps as a logical deduction from the rest of the cultural construction I have mentioned so far–, helmets, shields,

and swords as symbols[5] for the Anglo-Saxon *Weltanschauung* are also replicated in Rohan's weapons and war gear. We could perceive their presence in Rohan as they have appeared in several archaeological findings[6] and as they are described in *Beowulf*: helmets with face masks –'heregriman' (l. 396)–, cheek-guards –'grimhelm' (l. 334)–, neck protections, bronze or silver elements –'goldfahne' (l. 2811)– (Webster 1998: 188), etc, etc. As far as the symbolic/totemic cultural use of helmets is concerned, we have to remember that the name Eowyn took when she rode to Gondor disguised in Rohan's man armour was 'Dernhelm', which means in OE 'secret helmet'; also, the name Theoden's doorward held was 'Hama', meaning 'coat of mail' in Old English. I think these two cases are not a coincidence. These and other examples show the symbolic use, at a conceptual level, of weapons and war gear in Rohan, being this a new cultural parallel we could draw with the Anglo-Saxons. This aspect, again, has been correctly adapted in Peter Jackson's version of *The Lord of The Rings*, as it could be seen in the following figures comparing two real Anglo-Saxon helmets with that of Theoden:

Fig 7. A-S York helmet   *Fig 8*. Theoden's helmet (Jackson 2002)   *Fig 9*. Sutton-Hoo helmet

3.   Final remarks

Considering the references and the examples presented in this article, we could state that Tolkien built Rohan taking the Anglo-Saxon world as the main model. This close and direct relationship with the Anglo-Saxon world is only found in Rohan. I think this could be a unique case in *The Lord of the Rings*, as this detailed cultural reconstruction cannot be so explicitly seen in the rest of the medieval influences detected in his work. It is true that the issue of cultural parallels between

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[5] For an exhaustive research on real and symbolical aspects of the sword in Anglo-Saxon culture, the work of Hilda Ellis Davidson (1998) is still a fundamental and strongly recommended reading.

[6] As regards the explanation of literature and history using the findings of archaeology, the book by Kendall & Wells (1992) on Sutton Hoo is a very useful reading. The chapter on Sutton Hoo, *Beowulf* and Anglo-Saxon history is strongly recommended.

Rohan and the Anglo-Saxons has been dealt with by literary critics in some interesting works (i.e. Shippey 2001, Day 2003), but it is also true that some of these works tend to solve the question just by indicating only minor references without examining any of them in detail. Such references only touch the subject in passing as they are commonly inserted in works of great scope that intend to cover in depth all the medieval influences *The Lord of the Rings* presents. We still have the need of examining all these brief references individually. Instead of presenting the academic community with long general works on *The Lord of the Rings*, literary analysts would have to reduce the scope of their works to divide the task and write in-depth monographs devoted to single issues: Anglo-Saxon references, Germanic topics, romance structure, myth and legends, and so long and so forth. My aim in this paper has been trying to offer the first steps to systematize the cultural parallels that could be drawn between *The Lord of the Rings* and the Anglo-Saxons, offering as an example the cultural construction of Rohan.

One last point to conclude. When describing how the *Beowulf* poet handled his sources to create his tale, Tolkien (1997: 33) stated that:

> *Beowulf* is not a 'primitive' poem: it is a late one, using materials (then still plentiful) preserved from a day already changing and passing, a time that has now for ever vanished, swallowed in oblivion: using them for a new purpose, with a wider sweep of imagination.

Frequently accused by literary critics of writing a simple novel, of offering mere entertainment with no quality at all, I think that in these lines on *Beowulf* Tolkien wrote, decades before his novel was published, one of the best defenses of *The Lord of the Rings*. In this quotation, we could easily remove *Beowulf* and write *The Lord of the Rings* instead, and the explanation speaks by itself. We could now state that Tolkien's magnificent tale is neither simple nor primitive, that Tolkien as an author used materials preserved from a day already changing and passing to accomplish the task of looking for a new Mythology for England, to write a story that served at the same time to entertain and to bring the medieval legends, stories and myths he loved so much back to life. Re-writing Patrick Curry's words (1998: 133), Tolkien's myth[7] –*The Lord of the Rings*, Middle-earth itself– is not just mere entertainment, but rather the crystallization of experience, –of the updated Medieval experience we could say–, and far from being escapist literature, fantasy is an intensification of reality.

Although this sketch I offered in this paper had the aim to keep on contributing to the analysis of Tolkien's literary legacy that is currently being made by scholars from Old English literary studies, I could say that in the analysis of Tolkien's work from a medieval-driven point of view, the Road *still* goes ever on and on.

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[7] Although we have an overwhelming bibliography on the issue of Myth and the Mythical and how Tolkien dealt with such concepts, the reading of Flieger & Hostetter 2000, Clark & Timmons 2000 and Jones 2002 is strongly recommended.

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