Leeds Studies in English

'Wyrd' and 'Wearð ealuscerwen' in *Beowulf*

Richard North

'Wyrd' [fate] has a distinguished role to play in Alfred's late ninth-century translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, but it is unlikely that 'wyrd' was ever personified in England as a deity.[1] Aldhelm's line on fate, 'me veteres falso dominam vocitare solebant', implies only that the power of events was respected in the early eighth century.[2] As Weber and Stanley have shown, the case for a deified 'wyrd' rested on dubious assumptions from the beginning, chief of which was that Urðr, its Old Icelandic cognate, was a goddess rather than a 'Norn' or personified aspect of time.[3] In their surviving instances, Urðr and her sisters Verðandi and Skuld are imagined rising out of a lake beneath the world-tree. In Kormákr's late tenth-century *Sigurðardrapa*, 'komsk Urðr ór brunni' [Urðr came out of the well].[4] To Eilífr Goðrúnarson, in a fragment also of the late tenth century, the king of Rome sits 'sunnr at Urðar brunni' [south by the well of fate];[5] and in *Vǫluspá* (c.1000):[6]

> Urð héto eina,   aðra Verðandi,
> – scáro á scíði –   Sculd ina þriðio;
> þær lǫg lǫgðo,   þær líf kuro
> alda bornom,   ørlǫg seggia.   (*Vsp* 20)
> [One was called Urðr [what has happened], the other Verðandi
> [what is happening] – they were cutting on a piece of wood – the
> third one Skuld [what must happen]; they established laws, they
> elected lives for the sons of mankind, chose the destiny of men.]

Their cutting of men's fates on wood is the Icelandic poet's stylisation of intangible but potentially dreadful activities. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition there are some eighth-century images of spinning or weaving fate which may owe some debt to

Classical mythology.[7] In this essay, however, *Vǫluspá* may be taken as evidence that where a fate can be shown to be marked or written down in Anglo-Saxon literature, the motif is more likely to descend from a Germanic *topos*. Here I suggest that the well known crux and *hapax legomenon* 'ealuscerwen' (*Beo* 769) is part of the same tradition.

'Wearð ealuscerwen' and 'meoduscerwen wearð'

Grendel ravages Heorot unchecked until he meets Beowulf the Geat, who grips his arm with such strength that the monster thinks of escape. Grendel is afraid, his mind set on flight, but Beowulf, remembering his vow, continues to hold him firmly, now standing upright; the giant pulls away towards the door:

> þæt wæs geocor sið
> þæt se hearmscaþa   to Heorute ateah.
> Dryhtsele dynede;   Denum eallum wearð,
> ceasterbuendum,   cenra gehwylcum,
> eorlum ealuscerwen.   (*Beo* 765-69)
> [That was a dismal journey that the destructive enemy made to
> Heorot. The retainers' hall resounded; for all Danes dwelling in
> the fortress, for each brave man, for warriors, good fortune was
> cut.]

Thirteen lines later, and still in the grip of Beowulf, Grendel sends up the howl of the damned; then, if not earlier with 'ealuscerwen', it becomes clear that he is losing the battle.

Like its opaque parallel 'ealuscerwen', 'meoduscerwen' is both a unique compound and a semantic crux. It occurs at the start of a long description of an overwhelming flood of water, which Andreas calls out from marble pillars against his Mermedonian torturers. A stream wells out over the ground, then

> Famige walcan
> mid ærdæge   eorðan þehton,
> myclade mereflod.   Meoduscerwen wearð
> *æfter symbeldæge,   slæpe tobrugdon*

searuhæbbende.   Sund grunde onfeng.   (*And* 1524-28)
[With the coming of dawn foamy breakers were covering the
earth, the sea's flood grew bigger. There was a dispensation of
mead after the day of feasting, wearers of armour drew
themselves out of sleep. The sea embraced the land.]

Young men are swept away and drowned in the ocean's salt waves:

> þæt wæs sorgbyrþen,
biter beorþegu.   Byrlas ne gældon,
ombehtþegnas.   þær wæs ælcum genog
fram dæges orde   drync sona gearu.   (*And* 1532-35)
[That was a burden of sorrow, a bitter receiving of beer.
Cupbearers did not dally, nor did serving men. From the start of
the day there was drink soon enough ready for everyone.]

In *Andreas* 'meoduscerwen' thus appears to be the foundation of a grim metaphor
that turns a deluge into a spontaneous and unlimited helping of beer. In his edition
of *Andreas* Brooks translates 'meoduscerwen' as 'serving of mead: (by metaphor)
distress, panic'.[8] As 'meoduscerwen' and 'ealuscerwen' are formally similar,
'ealuscerwen' would thus have to mean 'dispensation of ale'. On the other hand,
the contexts of 'meoduscerwen' and 'ealuscerwen' are fundamentally different.
While the Mermedonians are portrayed as wicked pagans, and the flood that comes
after 'meoduscerwen wearð' almost destroys them, the Danes are relatively
sympathetic and suffer no physical hardship at or after the moment of 'wearð
ealuscerwen'. Instead, their condition improves steadily from then on.

Given this contextual disparity, it seems wiser to focus on the words
themselves. Both Mermedonians and Danes are recipients of whatever *scerwen* is.
Both compounds have this element in common; both are subjects of *wearð*; and one
prefix may vary another in 'mead' and 'ale' for *meodu* and *ealu*. It is around the last
of these three resemblances that most theories on 'ealuscerwen' have been
fashioned.

Dispensation and deprivation in 'ealuscerwen'

Ealu would at first seem to be an alternative prefix to *meodu*, though it might also be the reflex of *alu*, a noun taken from names and runic inscriptions which appears to mean 'good fortune'.[9] Scholarly attention has shifted, however, to the more difficult *-scerwen*, which is not found in simplex form, but which seems to mean either 'dispensation' or 'deprivation'.[10]

Klaeber's first theory was that 'ealuscerwen' means 'dispensation of ale': while *neotan* and *rædan* mean 'use' and 'own' respectively, *beneotan* and *berædan* mean 'deprive of the use of' and 'rob'; thus *-scerwen*, in contrast with *bescerwan* [deprive], would mean 'dispensation'.[11] The *Andreas* context requires a strongly negative sense for 'meoduscerwen'. As the Mermedonians suffered massive death and destruction in 'meoduscerwen', so it seems that the Danes were not likely to have enjoyed their 'ealuscerwen' either. The notion of a bitter drink for both of them has persisted to this day, probably because of the phrase apposite to 'meoduscerwen', 'biter beorþegu' [a bitter receiving of beer] (*And* 1533).[12] In this way, the return of Grendel to Heorot had figuratively become a 'bitter drink of ale' for the Danes. Having found parallels for 'bitter drink' in the homiletic topos *poculum mortis*, Brown and then Smithers suggest that this motif was used in in 'meoduscerwen'.[13] However, their interpretation of *poculum mortis* in 'ealuscerwen' is less plausible, for if disaster befalls anyone at this moment in *Beowulf*, it befalls Grendel and not the Danes. Other scholars have followed the 'bitter drink' interpretation of 'ealuscerwen'.[14] Jenny Rowland has found parallels in mèdieval Welsh poetry, adapting the 'bitter drink' theory to warriors paying for their mead with death in battle.[15] This is an heroic figure, yet in *Beowulf* it is still not clear why the Danes, inactive at the moment they receive 'ealuscerwen', should be bitterly paying for the drink that was served to them before Beowulf arrived.

Two forms apparently related to *-scerwen* are *scirian* [dispense] and *bescerwan* [deprive]. *Bescerwan* is found once in David's prayer to the Lord in Cotton Vespasian D. vi:

> ne ðane godan fram me   gast haligne
> aferre, domine,   frea ælmeahtig,
> þinra arna me   eal ne bescerwe.   (*Ps* 50, 95-97)[16]
> [Nor take from me, Dominus, that good holy spirit, almighty
> Lord, do not deprive me of all your favours.]

The Latin text on which these lines are based may have resembled 'Ne proicias me a facie tua Et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me' (*Ps* 50 (51). 13).[17] *Bescerwan* governs the accusative of thing and accusative or dative of person deprived. The stem is made transitive with the *be-* prefix. Accordingly, *bescerwan* implied a sense 'deprivation' in both 'ealuscerwen' and 'meoduscerwen'.[18]

Opposing Klaeber in the same article, Hoops argued 'deprivation' as the meaning of *-scerwen* by showing that in at least twelve verbs with a *be-* prefix the meaning is not antithetical to that of the stem form: for example, *(be-)reafian*, 'rob'.[19] Hoops found what he thought to be a parallel to *Beo* 767-69 in line 5: Scyld in his piratical days 'meodusetla ofteah' [deprived [men of their] meadbenches]; thus destroyed their halls. Similarly, in the strange etymon postulated by Hoops, 'ealu-heal-scerwen' [deprivation of the ale-hall], the Danes could be said to contemplate a deprivation of ale if the hall in which the ale was served should crash to the ground through the violence of the fight inside it. For the poet says in *Beo* 771-75 that it was a miracle that the hall never fell; and 'ealuscerwen', Hoops argued, looking further into the poem, was not only a repetition of 'meodusetla ofteah' at *Beo* 5, but also the poet's reference to it even after more than 750 lines.[20] Contextually, however, it is still likely that 'to all the Danes dwelling in the fortress, to each brave man, to men', 'ealuscerwen' shows the reverse: the end of Grendel's happiness and the renewal of theirs.

In a variety of exegetical interpretations, Klaeber's original 'dispensation of ale' for *ealuscerwen* has endured alongside his revised idea. Lumiansky translates *Beo* 767-69: 'to [the minds of] all the Danes – the castle-dwellers, each of the brave men, the earls – came [the thought of] ale-serving'.[21] Thereby he means 'the impossibility of "ale-serving" if the hall crashes'. Splitter finds religious solemnity in 'ale-serving', rendering 'ealuscerwen': 'simply "ale-serving" received by the Danes with suitable awe, tempered with resignation toward whatever the fates might have in store for them'.[22] Trahern reads into the Danes' hearts a wide emotional range: 'For the Danes, like the Israelites in the wilderness, the 'ealuscerwen' is a thirst begotten of despair which turns to terror, and finally, through the successful intervention of the agent of God, to a flowing of the waters of grace'.[23] Irving even suggests an ironic 'ale-serving', with Grendel portrayed as an unwelcome guest at a party; 'ealuscerwen' being a witty reference to the drunken brawl that follows.[24] 'Dispensation', at any rate, is contextually required in 'meoduscerwen weard' [there came about a dispensation of mead] *(Andreas* 1526). Even though the poet of *Andreas* may have modelled this phrase on 'ealuscerwen weard', his understanding

of *Beo* 769 may have differed from that of the *Beowulf*-poet, whose metaphor probably had nothing to do with drinking at all.

'Wearð ealuscerwen': 'good fortune was cut'

In antithesis to the use of 'meoduscerwen' in *Andreas*, the context of 'ealuscerwen' implies a positive change of circumstance for the Danes, for then on Grendel never regains his advantage. This implication is confirmed by the general sense of runic *alu*, which Holthausen took to be the etymon of *ealu-*.[25] A study by Pieper includes a catalogue of 22 surviving *alu* inscriptions dated *c*.200-700: five on stone surfaces, twelve on bracteates and five on personal adornments.[26] Pieper also shows that *alu*, drawn in three self-reflecting letters, can be read from a combination of runic symbols stamped on three urns in the fifth-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Spong Hill.[27] Pieper turns over all interpretations of *alu* so far and concludes that this was a word associated with festive and religious drinking by the homophone 'ale'. *Alu* appears to mean something positive, for it is associated with runic *laukaR* [leeks] suggestive of fertile growth, in the Skydstrup, Schönen and Börringe bracteates. Holthausen, furthermore, links the stem with Lat *alere*, OIce *ala* [nourish]. 'Prosperity', therefore, would seem the safest meaning to be deduced from *alu*: a positive implication that has not yet been tried out in *ealuscerwen*.[28] The second element of *meoduscerwen* would probably mean a 'share', but in *Beo* 769 might also be related to *sceran* [cut]. Thus *ealuscerwen* would denote an incision of the symbols for *alu*, those marking good fortune, on a surface of some kind.

No runic inscriptions have appeared outside Scandinavia with reflexes of Prim Gmc **skeran* [cut] in any form. Against this must be balanced two Norwegian inscriptions. One is from the church portal of Vang in Uppland, in younger Futhark and probably dating from the end of the twelfth century. According to Olsen, it reads 'æintriþi skar mia finkr sonr Ólafs' [Eindriði Lean-finger cut this, the son of Óláfr].[29] The other text can be excerpted from the first inscription on the Eggjum stone, in older Futhark of *c*.700. According to Krause, the normalised excerpt reads 'Ni's sólo sótt ok ni saxe stæinn skorinn' [neither sought with sun nor cut is the stone with a knife].[30] 'Alu' is written on the third inscription of the same stone; and on this evidence it is possible that if *alu* and *skorin* could be carved on one stone in *c*.700 in Norway, the same elements of a common antecedent tradition could appear in an English poem *Beowulf*, compounded together as *ealu-scerwen*. Pieper's

reading of a fifth-century English *alu* from Spong Hill lends some support to this interpretation.

So 'ealuscerwen' could mean a 'cutting of good fortune'. As this noun is the subject of *weorðan* in its context, in 'wearð eorlum ealuscerwen', I suggest that 'wearð' is linked with the agent the poet imagined for the activity of carving good fortune and that this agent is a personified *wyrd*. This motif is close to 'scáro á scíði' in *Vsp* 20: 'they were cutting on a piece of wood [. . .] they established laws, they elected lives for the sons of people, chose the destiny of men'. In both cases there is a similar gravity in presenting the recipients of Urðr and 'ealuscerwen wearð': 'alda bǫrn', 'seggir', on one hand, and 'Dene ealle', 'ceasterbuend', 'eorlas', on the other. The Danes in Heorot, as the men in the world of *Vǫluspá*, stand to receive no more than their incised decree of fortune, but for them it is favourable. As the carving of 'alu' in 'ealuscerwen' would never be a Christian activity, furthermore, I suggest that the poet of *Beowulf* preferred this metaphor of fate to others because it illustrates the paganism of its Danish beneficiaries.

OE *endestæf* and *wyrd gescraf*

In a fragment attributed to the penitentials of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, excommunication is threatened for those who look for prophecy: 'Auguria, vel sortes, quae dicuntur false sanctorum, vel divinationes, qui eas observaverit, vel quarumcunque Scripturarum' [auguries, or the casting of lots (said to be the frauds of saints), or divinations, whoever observes these, or [texts?] of any kind of writings].[31]

'Endestæf [final stave] occurs ten times in the extant records as a word for the end of life, in particular glossing 'exitus' [going out] twice and 'exterum' [beyond] once.[32] The cannibals' list in *Andreas* 134-35 is a 'wera endestæf writen on rune and on rimcræfte' [final stave of men written in runes and numbers]. 'Endestæf' is used in combination with 'gelimpan' [happen] in *The Fortunes of Men* 11 and when Hroðgar reminds us of mortality in *Beowulf* 1753: 'Hit on endestæf eft gelimpeð' [It finally comes to the stave which marks the end]. In a conceit unfounded in the probable Latin source, St Juliana knows that she is to be executed when she hears her pagan judge 'eahtian inwitrune, þæt hyre endestæf of gewindagum geweorþan sceolde' [consider runes of hatred in such a way that a stave should make an end of days of strife happen for her] (*Juliana* 610-11).[33] As 'gelimpan' is related

conceptually and 'weorðan' formally to 'wyrd', 'endestæf' appears to be a popular metaphor connecting fate with writing.[34]

In three other passages an agent 'wyrd' is empowered to assign good or bad fortune to passive men. Of Beowulf's last fight, it is said that on that day 'him wyrd ne gescraf hreð æt hilde' [fate did not assign him glory in battle] *(Beo* 2574-75). Secondly, after much torture in *Elene*, Judas accepts Christianity and is ordained bishop of Jerusalem: 'wyrd gescreaf þæt he swa geleaffull ond swa leof gode in woruldrice weorðan sceolde' [fate assigned that he should turn out so full of faith and so beloved of God in His worldly kingdom] *(Elene* 1046-8). In this instance Cynewulf's use of 'weorðan' seems to depend on the agency of 'wyrd gescreaf'. Thirdly, in the Alfredian metrical prologue to the *De Consolatione*, Italy was in turmoil for many winters 'oðþæt wyrd gescraf' [until fate assigned] that Theoderic should become its Gothic emperor *(The Meters of Boethius* 1. 29). In all cases I translate *gescrifan* as 'assign' to capture some of the force of writing in *scribere*, its Latin etymon.[35] Though there is nothing to show an animation of the *scribere* etymon in the common *gescrifan*, 'wyrd gescraf' probably owes its ancient coinage to a metaphor also underlying the more common 'endestæf'. Involved in all cases would be the image of the future as either a phenomenon (being written) or a personification (writing men's fate).

Reinterpreting the metaphor: 'meoduscerwen'

From verbal parallels *Andreas* is generally believed to have been composed later than *Beowulf* if not derivative of it. If we follow Brooks's interpretation of 'meoduscerwen' as 'dispensation of mead', it seems that the poet who coined 'meoduscerwen' reinterpreted 'ealuscerwen' [carving of good fortune] in *Beo* 767-69 into 'dispensation of ale'.[36] Such reinterpretation can be paralleled with an Old Icelandic example: OIce ǫl (from *alu*) expressed 'ale' and 'good fortune' in *ǫlrúnar'* [*alu*-runes] in the probably twelfth-century *Sigrdrífumál* 7, in which the valkyrie Sigrdrífa advises a man to know such runes and to cut them on a horn and on his nail, if he wishes not to be betrayed with another man's wife.[37] A sense of the runic *alu* [good fortune] is plain in this context, even while 'ale-runes' may have been understood from the mention of a horn and Sigrdrífa's offer of a drink of beer to the hero Sigurðr two stanzas earlier. Either sense could be interpreted in *ǫlrúnar*, though it is likely that in England as in Scandinavia 'ale' prevailed over *alu*, its runic

homophone.

This Icelandic parallel conveys the manner in which 'meoduscerwen' could have derived from an unwilled (or even wilful) misreading of 'ealuscerwen' in *Beo* 769. The Latin motif of *poculum mortis* may have been a catalyst for this development, reinforcing with the 'cup of death' the figure of 'dispensation of mead'.[38] If 'wearð ealuscerwen' means 'good fortune was cut', *Beowulf* contains an image of written fate that descends from a Germanic rather than Latinate tradition. 'Meoduscerwen wearð' seems to be partly formed on 'wearð ealuscerwen', but in the time after *Beowulf* and before *Andreas*, for this reason, circumstances had changed. By the end of the ninth century, 'wyrd' is useful only to the extent that it helps to translate the deterministic arguments of Boethius; whereas in *Beowulf*, probably before Alfred in this case and probably by contemporary loan rather than native example, I suggest that 'wearð ealuscerwen' refers to the personified agency of Danish Norns.

NOTES

1   For a general discussion of the uses of *wyrd*, see B. J. Timmer, *'Wyrd* in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry', *Neophilologus* 26 (1940-1), 24-33 and 213-28; reprinted in *Essential Articles for the Study of OE Poetry*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden Conn., 1968), pp. 124-58. The idea from which this study is developed, the use of runic *alu* and the connection between 'scáro á scíði' and 'ealu-*scerwen*', is Ursula Dronke's.

2   *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. R. Ehwald, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi 15 (Berlin, 1919), p. 101. *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Cambridge, 1979), p. 154: 'the ancients were accustomed falsely to call me Mistress'.

3   E. G. Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 92-94 and 95-121 (repr. with indices and corrections from 'The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism', *Notes and Queries* 209 (1964), 204-09, 242-50, 282-87, 324-31 and 455-63; 210 (1965), 9-17, 203-07, 285-93 and 322-27). Gerd Wolfgang Weber, *Wyrd: Studien zum Schicksalsbegriff der altenglischen und altnordischen Literatur*, Frankfurter Beiträge zur Germanistik 8 (Frankfurt, 1969), pp. 155-58 (at 53, 115-25 and 149-54).

4   *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. and trans. Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols. (Copenhagen and Christiania, 1912-15), B I 69.

5   *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, B I 144.

6   *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius*, ed. Gustav Neckel and rev. Hans Kuhn, 5th edition, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 1983), I (Text), 5.

7   'Fatum; geuiif' glosses 'Furtunam' in *A Late Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary Preserved in the Library of the Leiden University*, ed. John Henry Hessels (Cambridge, 1906), p. 36 (xxxv 157). 'Wyrde' glosses 'Parce' in *An Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary Preserved in the Library of Corpus Christi College*, ed. John Henry Hessels (Cambridge, 1890), p. 87 (P16). 'Fatum, gewyf wyrd' glosses 'Furtunum' in *The Harley Latin-Old English Glossary Edited from British Museum MS Harley 3376*, by Robert T. Oliphant, Janua Linguarum, series practica 20 (The Hague and Paris, 1966), p. 206 (l. 988). 'Gewife' glosses both 'Fato' and 'Fortune' twice in the eleventh-century Cotton Cleopatra A.iii., in *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, ed. T. Wright and R. P. Wülcker, 2 vols. (London, 1884), I 406.6, 496.19 and 500.9, 10. Also in the eleventh-century Brussels manuscript of Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*: Louis Goossens, *The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library 1650* (Brussels, 1974), p. 488. Compare with 'me þæt wyrd gewæf [fate wove this for me] *(Rim* 70). As if fate worked with a loom, a servant alludes to Guthlac's death as 'seo þrag [. . .] wefen wyrdstafum' [that time . . . woven by fate's staves] *(Guth* 1350-51). Here Weber sees no more than 'eine blosse, figürliche Verwendung' (p.

119).

8 *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, ed. K. R. Brooks (Oxford, 1961), p. 114.

9 *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment*, ed. C. L. Wrenn (London, 1953), pp. 199 and 243. Friedrich Holthausen, 'Zum *Beowulf*', *Beiblatt zur Anglia* 54 (1943), 27-30 (at 28).

10 *Scerwen* would thus seem to be a verbal noun of the type *edwenden*, and as Willy Krogmann showed, it is probably derived from an Indo-European stem meaning 'cut': 'Altenglisches **scerwan*', *Englische Studien* 66 (1931-32), 346. Ernst A. Kock translated 'ealuscerwen' as 'blend of beer', linking *scerwen* with Old High German *scarbôn*, Modern Swedish *skarva*, 'to mix, blend': 'Interpretations and Emendations of Early English Texts. X', *Anglia* 46 (1922), 173-90. However *scerwen*, in its *i*-mutation from **scarwian*, seems to show an infix which Kock's analogues do not have. Ferdinand Holthausen disproved its connection with these forms: 'Zu altenglischen Dichtungen', *Beiblatt zur Anglia* 34 (1923), 89-91 (at 90). See *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, ed. Julius Pokorny, 2 vols. (Bern and Munich, 1959), *s.v. *(s)qer*.

11 Klaeber connects *-scerwen* with *scerian*, 'dispense', by a complex morphological route: **skarjan > scerian*; but **skarjan* also > **skarwjan*, on analogy with **garwjan* (OIce *gera*), and **skarwjan > -scerwan*. *Scerwen*'s *w*-infix would thus be taken as a relatively late addition to *scerian*'s stem. However, Hoops countered Klaeber with six pairs of examples of the type *searu-*sierwan* (< **searwian*): these parallel *scearu-*sc(i)erwan* in revealing the *w*-infix to be older than the *i*-infix in **skarwjan*, the etymon Klaeber presumed for *scerwan*. See Johannes Hoops and Frederick Klaeber, 'Altenglisches "Ealuscerwen" und kein Ende', *Englische Studien* 66 (1931-2), 1-5. Krogmann supported Hoops with **walwjan > wielwan* (p. 346). Rudolf Imelmann, however, pointed out the variants *herian / herwan*, *gerian / gerwan*, to confirm Klaeber's theory that *-scerwen* could be derived from an early form of *scerian* [dispense]: '*Beowulf* 489f., 600, 769', *Englische Studien* 66 (1931-2), 321-45 (at 340-5). His note shows the lack of certainty in this area. Probably there was some confusion in the development of *scerian*, *-scerwen* and *sceran* [cut], which all seem to be derived from an Indo-European stem with the sense 'cut'.

12 Sedgefield read *ealuscerpen* and *meoduscerpen*, linked the second element with *sceorp* [sharp] and rendered *ealuscerpen* as 'indigestion': *Beowulf*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield, 3rd edition (Manchester, 1935), p. 24. Hoops had already dismissed the reading 'p' for 'w' in these words: 'Altenglische *ealuscerwen*, *meoduscerwen*', *Englische Studien* 65 (1930-1), 177-80.

13 C. F. Brown, '*Poculum mortis* in Old English', *Speculum* 15 (1940), 389-99. G. V. Smithers, 'Five Notes on Old English Texts', *English and Germanic Studies* 4 (1951-52), 65-85 (at 67-75).

14 P. L. Henry suggests that Old Irish *seírbe* [bitter] may have been borrowed and transformed into OE *-scerwen*: '*Beowulf* Cruces', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 77 (1961), 140-59 (at 153-54). Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe translates 'ealuscerwen' as 'a bitter outpouring of ale':

'Beowulf, lines 702b-836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human', *Tennessee Studies in Literature and Language* 28 (1981), 484-89. S. A. J. Bradley, as 'the bitter dregs of the ale': *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 432. Fritz Heinemann connects 'ealuscerwen' with the mead brewer for Baldr in Hel in *Baldrs Draumar*: see '"Ealuscerwen" – "meoduscerwen" the cup of Death, and *Baldrs Draumar*', *Studia Neophilologica* 55 (1983), 3-10.

15   Jenny Rowland, 'OE *Ealuscerwen/Meoduscerwen* and the Concept of "Paying for Mead"', *Leeds Studies in English* ns 21 (1990), 1-12 (at 7): 'The "fear, distress" or perhaps "sorrow" of the Danes can be explained as a developed sense from the common bitter outcome of the contract implicit in the dispensing of drink in the hall'.

16   *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 6 (New York and London, 1942), pp. 91-92.

17   *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado, 7th edition (Madrid, 1985), p. 493 *(Ps* 50 (51), 13).

18   So 'ealuscerwen' in: *Beowulf*, ed. M. Heine, 7th edition (Paderborn, 1903), p. 167; *Beowulf*, ed. A. J. Wyatt and R. W. Chambers (Cambridge, 1933), p. 40. Taking 'deprivation' further, S. J. Crawford suggests that the Danes suffer from a torturing thirst: *'Ealuscerwen'*, *Modern Language Review* 21 (1926), 302-03.

19   Hoops and Klaeber, '"Ealuscerwen" und kein Ende', 1-5.

20   Hoops compared 'meoduscerwen wearð æfter symbeldæge' *(And* 1526-7) with 'þa wæs æfter wiste wop up ahafen' [then after the feast was raised a wail] *(Beo* 128); thus suggesting that 'meoduscerwen' and therefore 'ealuscerwen' are strongly negative terms: '"Ealuscerwen" und kein Ende', 1-5. Seven years later, Klaeber withdrew the base of his first interpretation of 'ealuscerwen' [dispensation], in favour of Hoops' 'deprivation of ale', though he still kept 'dispensation of mead' for 'meoduscerwen': *'Beowulf* 769 and *Andreas* 1526ff.', *Englische Studien* 73 (1938-9), 185-9. Holthausen followed suit, now rendering 'ealuscerwen' as 'deprivation of happiness' *(ealu-* from runic *alu*): 'Zum *Beowulf*, *Beiblatt zur Anglia* 54-5 (1943-4), 27-30 (at 28).

21   R. M. Lumiansky, 'The contexts of OE "ealuscerwen" and "meoduscerwen"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 48 (1949), 116-26 (at 119).

22   H. W. Splitter, 'The Relation of Germanic Folk Custom and Ritual to *Ealuscerwen*', *Modern Language Notes* 67 (1952), 25-58 (at 25-28).

23   J. B. Trahern, 'A *Defectione Potus sui*: A Sapiential Basis for *"ealuscerwen"* and *"meoduscerwen"'*, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70 (1969), 62-69 (at 66).

24   Edward B. Irving Jr., *'Ealuscerwen*: Wild Party at Heorot', *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 11 (1966), 161-68 (at 164). Josef Klegraf reads 'hope of a dispensation of ale': *'Beowulf* 769: *ealuscer-wên'*, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 208 (1971), 108-12. R. W. Hanning reads 'a sharing out or dividing up of ale': 'Sharing, Dividing, Depriving: The

Verbal Ironies of Grendel's Last Visit to Heorot', *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 15 (1973), 203-12 (at 211-12). Two Old High German words probably derived from the IE *(s)qer-*, 'cut', would be evidence of contradictory meanings in the same word: *gaskerian* glosses 'providere' once and yet also 'privare', 'fraudare'; *biskerian* glosses 'deprivare', 'disponere' and yet also 'privare', 'fraudare'. E. G. Graff, *Althochdeutscher Sprachschatz*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1834-42), IV [Index] (1842), *s.v.v.* 'biskerian' and 'gaskerian'.

25 Holthausen, 'Zum *Beowulf*', 28. Holthausen lists reflexes of *alu* in Old English and Old Icelandic personal names such as *Ealuberht* and *Ǫlbjǫrn*, indicating the use of unfossilized senses for this word in northern and western Europe at least when these names were formed. Wrenn suggests the same meaning without reference to Holthausen: *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment*, ed. C. L. Wrenn, (London, 1953), p. 199.

26 P. Pieper, 'Die Runenstempel von Spong Hill: Pseudo-runen oder Runenformel?', *Neue Ausgräbungen und Forschungen in Niedersachsen* 17 (Hildesheim, 1986), pp. 181-200 (at 181-86). All are from Scandinavia and are catalogued by W. Krause and H. Jankuhn, in *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 69-72, 105-6, 108-9, 114-15, 129-32; (bracteates) 239-41, 247-48 and 255-59.

27 Pieper, 'Die Runenstempel von Spong Hill', pp. 194-96.

28 Krause and Jankuhn define *alu* as '"Raserei, Ekstase", daraus der in der Ekstase hervorgebracht Zauber', from its formal resemblance to Greek *alyein* [to be frantic]: *Die Runeninschriften*, p. 239 ('"Frenzy, ecstasy", hence magic induced from ecstasy').

29 Magnus Olsen and A. Liestøl, *Norges Innskrifter med de Yngrer Runer* (Oslo, 1924), I 225-32 (at 227).

30 Krause and Jankuhn, *Die Runeninschriften*, pp. 229-34 (transcribed): *nis solu sot uk ni sAkse stAin skorin.*

31 'De Auguriis vel Divinationibus', *Theodori Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis Poenitentiale: Fragmenta ex Collectoribus Canonum, Patrologia Latina* 99 (Paris, 1864), 973.

32 W. G. Stryker, 'The Latin-Old English Glossary in MS. Cleopatra A.III' (Unpublished dissertation, Stanford University, 1951), nos. 2062 (exito) and 2256 (exterum). *The Harley Latin-Old English Glossary*, ed. Oliphant (1966), no. 4231 (exitus i intestinis hostiarium finis effectus terminus egressus: utgong endestæf). *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. Richard Morris, Early English Text Society 58, 63 and 73 (London, 1874-80, repr. in one vol., 1967), pp. 83-97 (Easter Day Homily, l.45). *Christ and Satan* 539, *Andreas* 135, *Juliana* 610, *The Fortunes of Men* 11, *Beowulf* 1753, *Paris Psalter* 72.3.

33 *Acta Sanctorum, Februarius*, ed. Johannes Bollandus and Godefridus Henschenius (Antwerp, 1658), II 873-77 (p. 876; sect. 19).

34 Stanley, *The Search*, p. 93: 'As the abstract of *weorðan, wyrd* may mean no more than "that which happens or has happened, an event, occurrence, incident, fact"'.

35 Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934), *s.v.* 'scrifan'.

36 Perhaps because by his time the writing of the future by fate was a dead or dying metaphor. Brooks, *Andreas* (Oxford, 1961), pp. xxii-vi. L. J. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 66 (1951), 844-63. Edward B. Irving, Jr., 'A reading of "*Andreas*"', *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983), 215-37 (at 234-35).

37 *Edda*, ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, (1983), I 191.

38 Brown '*Poculum mortis*', 389-99. Smithers, 'Five Notes', 67-75.