Fred Putnam

The Lament of Eorl the Young and the Ubi Sunt: Reading Beyond the Text

The “Lament of Eorl the Young”, chanted by Aragorn as the three companions approach Meduseld for the first time (as described in The Two Towers), is closely and commonly linked to the Anglo-Saxon poem The Wanderer, as an example of the poetic genre called “ubi sunt” after the title of a famous thirteenth-century poem entitled “Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt?” (“Where are they who have gone before us?”). What human question/problem/issue does this genre address, and what does it say about this question (Hildebidle n.d.). The further question is: What might Eorl the Young's chanting this ubi sunt when he came down from the Northand imply about the origins of the Rohirrim?

Fred is Associate Professor (biblical studies) at Templeton Honors College at Eastern University. He has read The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings nearly every year since 1970, to celebrate the end of the academic year. His interest in the Inklings' writings includes both delight and enjoyment, as well as the relationships between myth, history, truth, and metaphor. He has taught Classical (Biblical) Hebrew, Koine Greek, and the reading (interpretation) of biblical texts on the graduate and undergrad levels since 1984.