4.3 Bilbo meets Smaug – *Beowulf,* ll. 2207-2311 (*TH*, 'Inside Information')

4.3.1 Plot summary

The company of Dwarves led by Thorin and their 'burglar' Bilbo Baggins arrive at the Lonely Mountain in order to win from the dragon Smaug the treasure of their ancestors and to re-establish the Kingdom under the Mountain. Bilbo goes inside the Mountain through a secret passage and steals a cup from the hoard guarded by Smaug. He later returns and talks to Smaug who has discovered the theft.

4.3.2 Medieval Text: *Beowulf,* ll. 2231-2311

Beowulf is the longest poem written in Old English (it is 3,182 lines long), and is widely considered to be one of the great works of all time. It survives in a single manuscript London, British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv. The part of the manuscript which contains *Beowulf* is known as Nowell Codex and is believed to have been copied in the late tenth or early eleventh century. In the manuscript *Beowulf* is preceded by three Old English prose texts, all translations from Latin (*The Passion of St. Christopher*, *The Wonders of the East*, and *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*), and followed by a poem based on the Old Testament Book of Judith. The manuscript is sometimes described as 'the book of monsters' because scholars have argued that these texts were collected together because they share an interest in unusual and monstrous creatures.

The Nowell Codex is the work of two scribes: the first copied the prose and *Beowulf* up to l. 1939; the second scribe was responsible for the rest of *Beowulf* and for *Judith*. The manuscript was badly damaged in 1731 in a fire at Ashburnham House where the Cotton library was kept: the edges of folios were scorched and subsequently crumbled, causing the loss of text. Fortunately two transcripts were made before the fire by an Icelandic scholar Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin: one by Thorkelin himself (known as Thorkelin B) and another by a copyist who worked for him (known as Thorkelin A). These transcripts and collations of Thorkelin's 1815 edition of *Beowulf* with the manuscript, made by scholars in the 19th century before the manuscript deteriorated further, are of particular value for establishing letters and words lost as a result of the fire.

Nothing is known about the author of the poem, its provenance or date. Historical events described in *Beowulf* belong to the Migration Age as is characteristic of the early Germanic poetry as a whole. For example, Hygelac, Beowulf's king and uncle, was

identified as Chochilaicus, mentioned by Gregory of Tours in the *History of the Franks* as the king killed during a raid on Frisian territory between 515 and 530 AD. *Beowulf* in the form we have it, however, reflects a much later perspective on the heroic age: it is a Christian poem, addressed to an audience familiar with Christian teaching. Attempts to date *Beowulf* using archeological, historical, linguistic, metrical and stylistic evidence, literary parallels, and the evidence of its manuscript have proved inconclusive, raising the question of whether such dating is appropriate. Dates proposed by scholars for the composition of the poem range from the 7th to the early 11th century, with most scholars who believe that the composition of the poem can be dated now favouring the 8th or the 9th century.

Beowulf is set in southern Scandinavia, along the coasts of the Baltic and North seas, and describes various historical and legendary events, though such distinction is not made in the poem where all events are described as part of the distant idealized heroic past. Historical events concern the fortunes of the ruling dynasties of the Danes, Geats and Swedes, while the legendary part of the story concerns Beowulf's life and adventures. In short it tells the story of one man – Beowulf – who in the first part of the poem is a young man of the Geatish nation (southern Sweden). Beowulf journeys to the court of the Danish King, Hrothgar, to help him kill the monster Grendel who has been attacking Hrothgar's hall, Heorot. Beowulf beats Grendel in combat and then is forced to confront Grendel's mother in the lair of the monsters which he does successfully.

Ll. 2207-2311 of *Beowulf* contain the beginning of the last narrative part of the poem known as the dragon episode. It tells that after returning from Hrothgar's court Beowulf became the king of the Geats and ruled successfully for fifty years, until a dragon started to devastate his country. A large part of the kingdom, including Beowulf's royal hall is burned down. The dragon's attacks were provoked by the theft of a precious cup from the treasure-hoard he was guarding. The man who stole the cup is said to have been a fugitive who did it out of desperate need. Beowulf fights against the dragon assisted by his kinsman Wiglaf, and kills it, but is mortally wounded and dies. The poem ends with the description of his funeral. The history of the treasure-hoard guarded by the dragon is also revealed: it was buried in a barrow by the last survivor of an ancient race and many years later discovered by the creature. The treasure-hoard bore a curse which prohibited anyone to touch it unless granted to do so by God himself.

Some of the text at the beginning of the dragon episode is unreadable because folio 182 of the manuscript is badly damaged. The reasons for this damage are unclear. Some scholars believe that the folio is a palimpsest, where the original text was removed and replaced by a new text, possibly by the second scribe of the *Beowulf* manuscript. This, if true, may mean that the new text represents a revision (Kiernan, 1996). Other scholars believe that the text on the damaged folio was simply traced over in fresh ink, not by one of the original scribes, but at some later stage in its history, in order to restore what was damaged accidentally (Zupitza, 1959, pp. vi-vii, xii-xiii, Boyle, 1981, pp. 31-2, Gerristen, 1988, pp. 294-5). The question of what happened to folio 182 is particularly important because textual and codicological problems in the manuscript at this point coincide with a narrative boundary in the poem. There is evidence, though some of it is disputed, that

parts of the manuscript were planned and executed separately and not in a consecutive order, and that these parts are again related to the narrative parts of the poem (Kiernan, 1996). The correspondence between textual and codicological units in the *Beowulf* manuscript, if accepted, is a striking feature which raises questions about the poem's underlying exemplar or exemplars, the reasons for the scribes' practice, and its bearing on the present form of the poem.

The text printed here describes the theft of the cup followed by the prehistory of the treasure buried by the 'last survivor'. This includes the 'lament' of the survivor reminiscent of Old English elegies where recollections of happiness in the past are contrasted to the misery of the present (see 4.5, 4.10 and 4.13). The passage ends with the description of the dragon's rage at the discovery of the theft.

At this point it is worth noting one of Tolkien's main contributions to the study of Old English. Tolkien was clearly impressed with *Beowulf* from an early age, and admired it throughout his career. He worked on translations and commentaries (never published) but did eventually provide the foreword for Clark Hall's translation in 1950. A measure of his admiration can be seen in his repost to the accusation that *Beowulf* was 'small beer' in literary terms. He replied that 'if beer at all, it is a drink dark and bitter: a solemn funeral-ale with the taste of death.' (Tolkien A 17/1, f. 2r).

On the 25th November 1936, Tolkien, by then the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, delivered his seminal lecture to the British Academy '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics' (being the Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture of that year). This was later published in the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, and is probably one of the most anthologized studies of *Beowulf* (see Faraci, 2003). The lecture, and subsequent publication have been discussed at length ever since. Present-day scholarship does not accept everything Tolkien outlined in his argument, but it undeniably had a major effect on *Beowulfian* studies, moving the discussion forward to considering the poem as a work of literature, rather than just as a linguistic and archaeological record. As has been noted elsewhere (Faraci, 2003, pp. 58-9) we can clearly see links between Tolkien's lecture and his later treatment of monsters, notably dragons, in his fiction.

4.3.3 Discussion

Commenting on the sources of *TH* Tolkien mentioned *Beowulf* as one of the most important influences:

> '*Beowulf* is among my most valued sources; though it was not consciously present to the mind in the process of writing, in which the episode of the theft arose naturally (and almost inevitably) from the circumstances. It is difficult to think of any other way of conducting the story at that point. I fancy the author of *Beowulf* would say much the same' (*Letters*, 25, p. 31).

There are several important similarities between the plots of *TH* and *Beowulf*: the dragon's rage is provoked by the theft of a cup, he wakes up to discover the theft and

flies out at night to burn the nearby town, at the end he is opposed and slain by a human hero. In order to use these elements of the plot Tolkien had to create his own interpretation of how they fit with the rest of the story, and of the motivation behind the actions of all the main characters. In this he may have been inspired by a somewhat enigmatic quality of the story in the last part of *Beowulf*. Though the general outline of events in *Beowulf* is sufficiently clear, the narrative describing the treasure, its history, the dragon and the theft is cursory, and leaves much to imagination. The last survivor, for example, is a mysterious figure, and we know little about the dragon and even less about the fugitive who stole the cup. This is only partly due to textual problems outlined above. The narrative in the later part of *Beowulf* is generally not straightforward and is frequently interrupted by the changes of narrative time and digressions. It is also very tragic in tone. The end of the story is disastrous for the hero and the Geats, whereas numerous digressions describe murders, revenge and the death of whole nations. Perhaps the incomplete account of events preceding the dragon's discovery of the theft has a function and contributes to their portrayal as dark, little known and confused. It is impossible to deny, however, that the gaps in the story caused by textual problems, as well as possibly by the requirements of the narrative, appeal to the imagination, and may have inspired Tolkien to approach as a writer what puzzled him as a scholar. Tolkien's own narrative in *THobbitHH HHjjjk* is focused on the 'burglar', the figure which could have been only marginal in the world of *Beowulf*, at the centre of which are the deeds of heroes and kings.

Tolkien wrote that the description of Smaug's personality and conversation is more indebted to the Eddic poem *Fáfnismál* ('The Lay of Fáfnir'), than to *Beowulf* (*Letters*, 122, p. 134). The similarities between Bilbo's encounter with Smaug (and subsequent events) and Sigurðr's encounter with Fáfnir in *Fáfnismál* are discussed by Shippey (2000, pp. 36-7), who notes the following parallels:

1) Sigurðr stabs Fáfnir in the underbelly, which reminds one of the weak spot which Bilbo sees in Smaug and Bard uses to their advantage later on.
2) When Sigurðr and Fáfnir converse, the former refuses to give his name but answers riddlingly that he is motherless and fatherless.
3) Fáfnir tries to turn Sigurðr against his foster-father Reginn (successfully), and Smaug tells Bilbo not to trust the Dwarves (unsuccessfully).
4) When Sigurðr accidentally tastes the blood of Fáfnir, he can suddenly understand bird-speech, which in *TH* manifests itself in the episodes with the thrush and the ravens (wise birds who converse with humans appear in other poems of the *Poetic Edda* as well).

The passage presented here will hopefully demonstrate that *Beowulf* too has a memorable image of a dragon, many features of which will be familiar to the readers of *TH*. Tolkien wrote that the dragon in *Beowulf* could be blamed 'for not being dragon enough', for being a personification of 'malice, greed, destruction', rather than a 'plain, pure fairy-story dragon'. This certainly can not be said about his Smaug, who he endowed with emotions, a voice to express them, and nuances and idiosyncrasies. Tolkien believed, however, that in *Beowulf* the balance is achieved between symbolism and the portrayal of

a ‘real worm, with a bestial life and thought of his own’ (*Essays*, p. 17). Dragons were symbols of evil in the Christian tradition, and figured in folk beliefs as part of the natural world (references to dragons are found in the *Finnsburg Fragment,* ll. 3-4, and in *Maxims II*, ll. 26-7, see 4.6 and 4.9). In traditional poetry dragons were part of the heroic world, and a narrative theme with its own vocabulary and phraseology. Words used to describe the dragon show how it was perceived and include: *draca* ‘dragon’, *wyrm* ‘worm’, *uhtsceaða* ‘night-ravager’, *þeodsceaða* ‘great ravager’ or ‘ravager of people’, *hordweard* ‘guardian of treasure’, *beorges hyrde* ‘herdsman of the barrow’, *se laða* ‘hateful’. These words form part of a network of associations and ideas supported by their alliteration with such words as ‘dark’ and ‘night’ (*deorcum nihtum draca* (l. 2211), *nacod niðdraca, niht(es) fleogeð* (l. 2273)); ‘old’ (*eald uh(t)sceaða* (l. 2271)); ‘wrath’ and ‘enraged’ (*Þa se wyrm onwoc, wroht wæs geniwad* (l. 2287), *wæs ða gebolgen beorges hyrde* (l. 2304)); ‘hot’ and ‘fire’ (*Hat ond hreohmod hlæ[w] oft ymbehwearf* (l. 2296), *wolde [s]e laða lige forgyldan* (l. 2305)); ‘secret, stealthy’ (*dyrnan cræfte dracan heafde neah* (l. 2290)) and ‘grave’ (*hlæw* (l. 2296)).

All these ideas are present in Tolkien’s description and characterisation of Smaug. Direct links between the poem and the novel are also discernible, for example:

> Þa se wyrm onwoc, wroht wæs geniwad;
> stonc ða æfter stane (Beo 2287-8)
>
> ‘then the worm awoke, strife was renewed;
> he took up the scent quickly along the stone’.

in *TH* becomes ‘He stirred and stretched forth his neck to sniff’ (see Faraci, 2003. pp. 58-9, for a longer discussion of the debate surrounding the Old English word *stonc*). The description of the dragon’s barrow may have influenced the description of Smaug’s layer in *TH*. In *Beowulf* it is a stone barrow situated on a high place which can be accessed by a secret path, whereas in *TH* it is an abandoned palace under a mountain which can be accessed through a secret passage.

Cursed gold is another important motif shared by Tolkien’s narrative and *Beowulf*. In the final part of *Beowulf* treasure has sinister associations from the first moment it is mentioned, long before the audience is told about the curse laid by its ancient owners. It is described as ‘heathen gold’, ‘heathen hord’ and ‘worm-hord’. Though some critics see Christian influence in the theme of gold as a source of evil, the idea is also present in the story of Fáfnir and Sigurðr discussed above. In *Fáfnismál* Sigurðr wins from Fáfnir treasure which bears a curse and causes the deaths of Sigurðr and all its subsequent owners.

Tolkien wrote that the ‘Quest of the Dragon-gold’ was the central theme of *TH* (*Letters*, 131, p. 159). The moral conflict at its end focuses on ‘the bewilderment of the treasure’ – the greed and lust for gold to which Thorin Oakenshield and most other Dwarves fall victim. Ironically it is the ‘burglar’ Bilbo Baggins who is able to resist its power and is prepared to give up his part in the treasure for a peaceful outcome. In *Beowulf* the hero

fights against the dragon to defend his people, but he also fights for the gold. To see the gold is his final wish before he dies. His dying words about his joy at winning the gold for his people are in sharp contrast to what is probably already clear to the audience from how the story develops and how the gold is described, and what is explicitly stated in the passages that follow: the gold bears a curse, it must return to the earth, and Beowulf's people are doomed to destruction. What looks like blindness on the hero's part has been differently explained by critics, some of who see it as punishment for his pride, others view it as tragic imperfection of a pagan hero who falls short of the poet's Christian ideals. Whatever the interpretation, the theme is in agreement with a tragic world view present in the final part of *Beowulf*. Fascination with treasure and its effects are also analyzed in the final chapters of *TH*. In both works the theme is accentuated by a powerful image of a dragon.

4.3.4 *Beowulf,* ll. 2207-2311

…syððan Beowulfe br[a]de rice (2207)
on hand ge(hwearf). He geheold tela
fiftig wintr[a] - w(æs ða) frod cyning,
eald eþelweard -, oð ðæ(t) an ongan (2210)
deorcum nihtum draca (rics[i]an),
se ðe on hea[um] h[æþ]e hord beweot(ode),
stanbeorh stea[pn]e. Stig under l(æg)
eldum uncuð; þær on innan giong
nið(a) nathwylc […] gefeng (2215)
hæðnum ho(rde) hond […],
since fa[hne] ; (he þæt) syððan […],
þ[eah] ð[e] [he] slæpende (be)syre[d] [wur]de
þeofes cræfte. Þæt si(e) ðiod [onfand],
b[u]folc beorn[a], þæt he gebolge[n] wæs. (2220)

XXXII

Nealles [mid] geweoldum wyrmhord [abræc], (2221)
sylfes willum, se ðe him sare (ge)sceod,
ac for þreanedlan þe[ow] nathwylces
hæleða bearna hetesweng(eas) fleoh,
[ærnes] þea[rfa], ond ðær inne [f]eal[h], (2225)
secg synbysig. Sona mwatide
þæt […] ðam gyste [gry]rebr[o]g[a] stod;
hwæðre [earm]sceapen . . . . . .
. . . . . ……..sceapen
. . . . . ……þ[a hyne] se fær begeat (2230)
sincfæt […]. Þær wæs swylcra fela
in ðam eorð[sele] ærgestreona,
swa hy on gearda(gum) gumena nathwylc

***Beowulf,* ll. 2207-2311**

….then the broad kingdom (2205)
came into Beowulf's hand. He held it well
fifty winters – this was a wise king,
an old guardian of the land –, until a certain one began, (2210)
a dragon in the dark nights, to hold sway;
he who on the high heath watched over the hoard,
a steep stone-barrow. A path lay beneath
unknown to men; by this went inside
a certain man […] grasped (2215)
heathen hoard hand […]
adorned with jewels; he that since […]
though in his sleep he was tricked
by a thief's craft. This the people discovered,
the dwellers of the land, that he was swollen with rage. (2220)

XXXII

Not of his own accord he broke into the worm's hoard,
not by his own desire, he who had sorely harmed him;
but out of dire need as someone's slave
fleeing hostile blows of the sons of men,
lacking a shelter, and therein the guilty man (2225)
made his way. Soon […]
[…] before the intruder the utmost horror arose;
yet the wretched one […]
[…] when a sudden attack befell him (2230)
precious vessel […] . There were many such
ancient treasures in this earth-hall;
for in the old days one of mankind

eormenlafe (æþe)lan cynnes,
þanchycgende þær ge(hy)dde, (2235)
deore maðmas. Ealle hie deað (fo)rnam
ærran mælum, ond si an ða gen
(leo)da duguðe, se ðær lengest hwearf,
(we)ard winegeomor, [w]ende þæs ylcan:
(þæt h)e lytel fæc longgestreona (2240)
brucan moste. Beorh eallgearo
wunode on wonge (wæ)teryðum neah,
niwe be næsse, nearo(c)ræftum fæst.
Þær on innan bær eorl(g)estreona
hringa hyrde h[o]rdwyrðne (d)æl (2245)
fættan goldes; fea worda cwæð:
`Heald þu nu, hruse, nu hæleð ne m[o]stan,
eorla æhte! Hwæt, hyt ær on ðe
gode begeaton. Guðdeað fornam,
feorhbeale frecne, fyr[a] gehwylcne (2250)
leoda minra, þa[r]a ðe þis [lif] ofgeaf,
gesawon seledream. Nah hwa sweord wege,
oððe f[orð bere] fæted wæge,
dryncfæt deore; dug[uð] ellor s[c]eoc.
Sceal se hearda helm [hyr]stedgolde, (2255)
fætum befeallen; feorm(ynd) swefað,
þa ðe beadogriman bywan sceoldon;
ge swylce seo herepad, s(io) æt hilde gebad
ofer borda gebræc bite irena,
brosnað æfter beorne. Ne mæg byrnan hring (2260)
æfter wig(fru)man wide feran,
hæleðum be healfe. Næs hearpan wyn,
gomen gleobeames, ne god hafoc
geond sæl swingeð, ne se swifta mearh

an immense legacy of a noble race
with purpose hid there, (2235)
priceless treasures. Death took them all
in earlier times, and the last
of the warriors of the nation, who there longest walked,
a guardian mourning his friends, expected the same for himself:
that he only for a short time the ancient treasure (2240)
might enjoy. The barrow full-ready
stood open near the sea-waves,
newly made on the headland, secured through hostile art.
There he, the keeper of rings, carried noblemen's treasures,
that part worthy of hoarding (2245)
of his ornate gold; he spoke few words:
'Hold now you, earth, now that the heroes can not,
the possession of the earls! See, from you earlier
the worthy men obtained it. Battle-death has taken,
evil life-destroyer, every one (2250)
of my people; each of those who had given up this life,
who had known the joys of the hall. I have no one to wear the sword,
or carry forth a decorated cup,
a precious drinking vessel; all warriors have passed away.
The hard helmet shall be stripped (2255)
of its precious gold, of its plating; burnishers are asleep,
who should polish the battle-mask;
and so the coat of mail, which in battle endured
amidst the crashing of shields the bite of swords,
decays like its warrior; nor may the ring-mail (2260)
with the war-leader widely travel,
by the heroes' side. There is no harp-joy,
delight of the singing wood, no good hawk
flies through the hall, no swift horse

burhstede beateð. Bea(lo)cwealm hafað (2265)
fela feorhcynna fo(rð) onsended.'
Swa giomormod giohðo mænde,
an æfter eallum unbliðe hwea(rf)
dæges ond nihtes, oð ðæt deaðes wylm
hra(n) æt heortan. Hordwynne fond (2270)
eald uh(t)sceaða opene standan,
se ðe byrnend(e) biorgas seceð,
nacod niðdraca, niht(es) fleogeð
fyre befangen; hyne foldbuen(d)
[…] He gesecean sceall (2275)
h[ord on h]rusan, þær he hæðen gold
warað (win)trum frod; ne byð him wihte ðy sel.
(Sw)a se ðeodsceaða þreo hund wintra
(h)eold on hrusa[n] hordærna sum
eacen(c)ræftig, oð ðæt hyne an abealch (2280)
mon on mode; mandryhtne bær
fæted wæge, frioðowære bæd
hlaford sinne. (Ða w)æs hord rasod,
onboren beaga (h)ord, bene getiðad
feasceaftum men; frea sceawode (2285)
fira fyrngeweorc (f)orman siðe.
Þa se wyrm onwoc, wroht wæs geniwad;
stonc ða æfter stane, stearcheort onfand
feondes fot(l)ast, he to forð gestop
dyrnan cræfte dracan heafde neah. (2290)
Swa mæg unfæge eaðe gedigan
wean ond wræcsið, se ðe Waldendes
hyldo gehealdeþ. Hordweard sohte
georne æfter grunde, wolde guman findan
þone þe him on sweofote sare geteode. (2295)

stamps the courtyard. Evil death has (2265)
many living races sent away.'
So sad of mind he spoke of his grief,
alone of them all he walked joyless
days and nights, until the surge of death
touched his heart. The old night-ravager (2270)
found the hoard-joy standing open;
the burning one who seeks barrows,
the naked malicious dragon, who flies at night
enveloped in fire; him the dwellers in the land
[…] He will seek (2275)
treasure in the earth and, wise in years,
will guard the heathen gold; he is none the better for it.
So the ravager of people three hundred winters
held in the earth one of the treasure-houses,
incomparably powerful, until one man enraged (2280)
him in his heart. The man bore to his master
the decorated cup; asked his lord
for a compact of peace. Then the hoard was searched,
the store of rings diminished, and the request was granted
to the wretched man; his lord looked at (2285)
the ancient work of men for the first time.
Then the serpent awoke, the strife was renewed;
he took up the scent quickly along the stone; the hard-hearted one found
the foot-print of his enemy, who had stepped forth too close,
with stealthy skill, to the dragon's head. (2290)
Thus a man who is not doomed, may easily survive
misery and exile, if he from the Ruler
holds favour. The guardian of treasure sought
eagerly on the ground, wanted to find the man
who grievously offended him while he slept. (2295)

Hat ond hreohmod hlæ[w] oft ymbehwearf
ealn(e utan)weardne - ne ðær ænig mon
on þæ[m] westenne; hwæðre hilde gefeh,
bea[du]we weorces. Hwilum on beorh æthwea(rf),
sincfæt sohte; he þæt sona onf(and) (2300)
ðæt hæfde gumena sum goldes gefandod,
heahgestreona. Hordwea(rd) onbad
earfoðlice oð ðæt æfen c(wom);
wæs ða gebolgen beorges hyrde,
wolde [s]e laða lige forgyldan (2305)
drincfæt dyre. Þa wæs dæg sceacen
w(yr)me on willan; no on wealle læ[n]g
b(i)dan wolde, ac mid bæle for,
fyre gefysed. Wæs se fruma egeslic
leodum on lande, swa hyt lungre wearð (2310)
on hyra sincgifan sare geendod.

Hot and fierce-hearted he circled the barrow
all around the outside - no man at all was
in this wilderness; yet he rejoiced in the thought of battle,
in the work of fighting. At times he returned back into the barrow,
sought his precious cup; he soon discovered (2300)
that some one had searched the gold,
splendid treasure. The hoard-guard waited
with difficulty until the evening came;
then the barrow-keeper was enraged,
the hateful one wanted to repay with flame (2305)
the priceless drinking cup. The day went by
as the worm desired; he would not wait
long on the wall, but would set forth with flame,
ready with fire. The beginning was terrible
for the people on the land, as it was soon (2310)
to end sorely for their giver of treasure.

4.3.5 Notes

The extracts from *Beowulf* printed in this book follow the editorial tradition represented by Klaeber (1950), and take advantage of several recent editions of *Beowulf*, particularly Jack (1994), Mitchell and Robinson (1998), and the electronic facsimiles and the record of readings from Thorkelin transcripts in Kiernan (2004). All supplied readings and emendations appear in the text in square brackets and are commented upon in the notes, whereas words and letters which are now lost in the manuscript, but can be restored with reasonable certainty from Thorkelin transcripts, appear in round brackets. In the notes A designates readings derived from Thorkelin A, and B from Thorkelin B. A full account of the lost text in *Beowulf* and corresponding readings from Thorkelin transcripts can be found in Kiernan (1999).

Tolkien's unpublished academic papers contain extensive commentary and essays on *Beowulf*. Perhaps the most interesting are his attempts at a translation. Tolkien A29/1 contains several early drafts of a translation (some in alliterative verse), and Tolkien A29/2 has a typescript of a prose translation. Readers may also be interested in Tolkien A21/5, ff. 35v-36 (notebooks containing notes and commentary on Old English texts) and A31, ff. 43ff, which has a lengthy study of *Beowulf*.

L. 2207. *br[a]d.* MS: unclear, *brade* or possibly *bræde.*

L. 2209. *Wintra*. MS: *wintru.* Genitive plural *wintra* is required by grammar.

L. 2212. *hea[um]*. MS: possibly *heaum*, but very indistinct.
h[æþ]e. The second two letters are unreadable in the MS and various restorations have been suggested by editors.

L. 2213. *stea[pn]e*. The reading in the MS is uncertain, possibly *stearne*.

L. 2214. *nið(a)*. A: *mða;* B: *niða*. The word is usually interpreted as the genitive plural of *niððas* 'men' and sometimes emended to *niðða*.

L. 2215. *Gefeng*. This is very faded in the MS but seems reasonably certain. The word preceding *gefeng* is sometimes restored as *neah* 'near'. This is problematic because of the use of this word elsewhere in the poem. It appears almost exclusively in formulas in the second half-line where it does not alliterate, for example *sægrunde neah* (l. 563). Its use in the main alliterative position in a line is unlikely. Both *gefeng* and *onfeng* frequently occur at the end of the second half-line in verses of type E, such as *guðrinc gefong* (l. 1501), or *hond rond gefeng* (l. 2609). It is possible that the now unreadable word was a compound, such as *nið-gist*.

L. 2216. The text after *hond* is unreadable, and various emendations have been suggested by editors.

L. 2217. *fa[hne]*. MS *fac* corrected to *fah* followed by a space, followed by *ne*. After *syððan* the text is unreadable.

L. 2218. *þ[eah] ð[e] [he]*. Only *þ* and *ð* are certain in the MS.
(be)syre[d] [wur]de. Letters in square brackets are unreadable; the second word is restored differently by editors: *wurde* (Klaeber, 1950), *hæfde* (Kiernan, 1999).

L. 2219. *[onfand]*. MS: unreadable.

L. 2220. Letters in square brackets are uncertain in the MS.

L. 2221. *[mid]*. MS: unreadable.
geweoldum. The usual spelling of this word in the MS is *geweald* 'power, control'.
wyrmhord [abræc]. The reading in the MS is *wyrmhorda cræft,* but it does not seem to make sense here.

L. 2223. *þe[ow]*. The last two letters are unreadable in the MS, and are usually restored as *þe[ow] nathwylces* 'slave of someone', but the word can be also interpreted as *þeof* 'thief' in which case the meaning is 'thief of something' (Andersson, 1984).

L. 2224. *Fleoh*. This is the past tense of *fleon*, v. 'to flee', often emended to *fleah* to make it consistent with the spelling elsewhere in the MS.

L. . *[ærnes] þea[rfa]*. All apart from *þea-* is unreadable or uncertain in the MS.
[f]eal[h]. MS: *weal* on the damaged edge of the folio; *weall* AB.

L. 2226. The MS reads *mwatide*, or possibly *onwatide*; but the meaning is unclear.

L. 2227. The word after *þæt* is unreadable, and only some letters are certain in *[gry]rebr[o]g[a]*.

L. 2228. The word preceding *sceapen* is unreadable, as well as the rest of the text on the final line on f. 182r. The first line of the next f. 182v, is also unreadable apart from the word *sceapen* at its end. It is possible that what precedes the second *sceapen* is a repetition of ll. 2227b – 2228a (Kiernan, 1999). Unreadable is also the first half on the next l. 2230.

L. 2230. *þ[a hyne]*. Nothing apart from *þ* is clear in the MS.

L. 2231. The text after *sincfæt* is unreadable.

L. 2232. *[sele]*. A: nothing, B: *se*..

L. 2234. *[æþe]lan*. The first three letters are completely or partially lost.

L. 2237. *si*. Usually emended to *se*, the spelling of the definite article elsewhere in the MS.

L. 2239. *[w]ende*. MS: *rende.*

L. 2243. *nearo(c)ræftum fæst* 'secure through hostile art'. The first element in *nearo(c)ræftum* is related to modern English 'narrow', and is used in poetic compound words with the meaning 'cruel, severe, oppressive, evil': *nearo-fah* 'cruelly hostile' (l. 2317), *nearo-þearf* 'severe distress' (l. 422).

L. 2245. *h[o]rd*. MS: *hard.*

L. 2247. *m[o]stan*. MS: *mæstan*, possibly corrected from *moste* (Kiernan, 1999).

L. 2250. *feorhbeale*. This is usually emended to *feorhbealo.*
fyr[a]. MS reading *fyrena* is usually emended to *fira,* genitive of *firas*, pl. 'men, mankind'. *fyrena* appears elsewhere in *Beowulf* as genitive plural of *fyren*, f. 'crime, sin, wicked deed'.

L. 2251. *þa[r]a*. MS: *þana.*
[lif] is usually supplied by editors because the line as it is in the MS does not make sense and lacks alliteration.

L. 2253. *f[orð bere]*. Lost in the MS; A: *f* followed by a space, B: *fe*. Usually restored to either *forð bere* 'carry forth' (Gerritsen, 1989), or *feormie* 'polish' (Klaeber, 1950). The former fits better paleographically, and is an excellent choice both metrically and stylistically.

L. 2254. *dug[uð]*. The last two letters are lost in the MS.
s[c]eoc. MS: *seoc*.

L. 2255. *[hyr]sted*. The first three letters lost in the MS.

L. 2257. *beadogrima* 'battle-mask, helmet'.

L. 2275. The first three lines on f. 180v containing ll. 2275-7 appear to have been deliberately erased. Letters preserved at the beginning of the first line are restored as *nan* by Kiernan (1999), and *da* by Zupitza (1959), who suggested that the missing text was *swiðe ondrædað* 'greatly fear'.

L. 2276. *h[ord on h]rusan*. This is partly unreadable in the MS, restored by editors. B reading for the first word is *bearn*.

L. 2279. *hrusa[n]*. MS: *hrusam.*

L. 2296. *hlæ[w]*. MS: *hlæwum.*

L. 2298. *þæ[m]*. The last letter is lost in the MS. The line fails to alliterate, and *hilde* is often emended to *wiges*, genitive case of *wig* 'war, fight, warfare'.

L. 2299. *bea[duwe]. O*nly the first three letters are preserved in the MS. The restored form is genitive singular of *beado*, f. 'battle'. Though genitive singular form *beadwe* (l. 1539), as well as numerous compound words with *beado-* as the first element are found in *Beowulf*, most editors prefer the restoration *bea[duwe*] over *bea[dwe]* and *beaduweorces,* because the first syllable of *beado* does not independently form a metrical lift in *Beowulf*. In all its occurrences in *Beowulf* as the first element of a compound word or as genitive singular, the two syllables of *beado/beadwe* are treated metrically as a single entity, an equivalent of a long syllable. Because of this *beado/beadwe* will not produce any of the expected metrical types in l. 2299 (see 2.3.4.1).

L. 2305. *[s]e*. MS: *fe.*

L. 2307. *læ[n]g*. MS: *læg.* The MS reading does not fit well with the syntax of adjoining lines, and is unlikely for metrical reasons.

L. 2311. *sincgifan*, i.e. Beowulf.

4.3.6 Further Reading

Numerous editions and translations of *Beowulf* exist, including: Klaeber (1950) (standard scholarly edition), Clark Hall and Wrenn (1950) (contains a lengthy preface by Tolkien), Wrenn and Bolton (1973), Jack (1994), Mitchell and Robinson (1998) and Kiernan (1999). Translations include Donaldson (1967), Crossley-Holland (1968), Alexander (1973), Bradley (1982), Osborn (1984), Heaney (1999) and others. Discussions of the poem and its background can be found in Niles (1983) and Orchard (2003). As described above Tolkien's own major work of *Beowulf* criticism is his lecture '*The Monsters and the Critics'*. Recently Michael D. C. Drout (2002) edited Tolkien's previously unpublished 1930's work, which became the basis for this famous lecture. See Rauer (2000) for the discussion of the dragon episode and its parallels in medieval literature.