



*A review of*  
**Beowulf: A Translation  
and Commentary,  
together with  
Sellic Spell**

Tom Shippey

**T**he three ancient texts in which Tolkien found most inspiration were undoubtedly: the Old Norse poems of the *Poetic Edda*, most of them preserved in the single manuscript now known as the Codex Regius; the Finnish *Kalevala*; and the Old English epic *Beowulf*. He knew and worked on many more, of course, with particular interest in the Middle English works of the West Midlands, such as *Ancrene Wisse* and *Sir Gawain*, especially if they contained relics of older tradition, as did Layamon's *Brut*. But the three above held his interest almost life-long, all of them in their different ways sparking some element of his own fiction and mythology.

Thus, the influence of the Eddic poems shows up in *The Hobbit* in the names of Gandalf, Thorin and Company, as well as in the Misty Mountains and the conversation with Smaug; but Tolkien also rewrote and even completed the Eddic sequence of poems about Sigurð the dragon-slayer (defective in the Codex Regius) in his *Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*, eventually published in 2009. He turned a section of the *Kalevala* into his 'Tale of Kullervo' as early as 1914, but it also underlay the 'Tale of Túrin' in its many versions and reworkings right through to *The Children of Húrin* (2007). *Beowulf* made its presence felt in *The Hobbit* in the figure of Beorn the were-bear, as also in Bilbo's theft of the cup from the hoard of Smaug, but it further animates the whole image of the Riders and 'The King of the Golden Hall' in *The Two Towers*; and Tolkien's interest in it is once again confirmed by a late publication, *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary, together with Sellic Spell*, edited by Christopher Tolkien, as were the two late works mentioned just above.

Tolkien's interest in *Beowulf* was, however, arguably deeper and more persistent even than his attachment to the Edda and *Kalevala*. For many years it was his professional duty to teach the poem, during his long tenure first of the Oxford Chair of Anglo-Saxon and then of the Merton Chair which followed; and his teaching method (still the normal way to teach this exceptionally difficult poem) was line-by-line commentary, looking at problems with the single manuscript, problems with words and grammar, as well as the much greater issues of point and meaning. Quite how successful his method was has **Gramarye: The Journal of the Sussex Centre for Folklore, Fairy Tales and Fantasy**, Summer 2015, Issue 7

been doubted. There are some, like Roger Lancelyn Green and W.H. Auden, who have seen Tolkien as the bard enchanting listeners in the mead-hall. By contrast (and I have heard this from other sources) Diana Wynne Jones, the well-known fantasy author, has commented recently that Tolkien's lecturing style was so bad – inaudible, disorganised, haphazard – that she wondered whether he was doing it on purpose: for in those days (and quite possibly still) the Oxford custom was that if you had driven your audience away by, say, week three of a seven-week course, you could then cancel the remaining lectures and, as Ms Jones remarks, 'still get paid'. It's only fair to add that she also said a lot could be learned from Tolkien, if you were determined enough, and she noted the surely non-coincidental number of his pupils who went on, as she did, to have successful careers of their own as authors of fantasy.<sup>1</sup>

Tolkien's capacity to enchant listeners, under some circumstances, was meanwhile proven beyond doubt by his most successful academic work, the British Academy lecture of 1936 on 'Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics',<sup>2</sup> which is said sometimes to be the single most-cited academic article on English literature of all time. It is the more remarkable because Tolkien gave critical opinions so rarely. In his academic career he worked almost entirely as an editor, translator, or glossator, doing what is often now considered to be mere spade-work. As far as we know, he never had any intention of writing the traditional academic monograph, such as a history of the medieval literature of the West Midlands, a job for which he would seem to have been ideally suited. Nevertheless, what he wrote about *Beowulf* in 1936 entirely changed the current of *Beowulf* studies. Only very recently, some seventy years later, have murmurs of dissent come to be heard. To explain both the immediate effect and the much-later restiveness, one has to say something about the poem itself and the way in which it was for many years read.

Very briefly indeed, as soon as it was published in 1815, its importance was recognised: the only poem from the Germanic Dark Age, or Heroic Age, or Age of Conversion, which could be called an epic, just what the scholarly world desperately desired. The trouble was, it did not offer *enough* of what was desired. Jacob Grimm and his successors, anxious to fit all the fragments of Germanic pre-Christian belief together into one comprehensive whole, lamented what they saw as the overlaying of really interesting heathen and mythic material by Christian learning and sentiment. Others noted the many hints of knowledge about the heroic legends of the northern world, but wished that the poet had expanded on the hints instead of telling a story about monsters. Why did he not say more also about the historical events of which he seemed to know a great deal? He could have illuminated the darkest era of the Dark Ages! Meanwhile it seemed for a century as if everyone in their different ways was trying to appropriate the poem – prove it was really Danish, really Low German, really a collection of older ballads badly stuck together, really the echo of a nature-myth. By 1936 the proliferation of such incompatible ideas had become close to ridiculous. And Tolkien made them unforgettably ridiculous, with his (very accurate)

rendering of the 'Babel of conflicting voices' and his (very apt) allegory of the tower – everyone so busy rummaging in it for antiquities or digging beneath it for lost treasures that they forgot to ask what the tower, or the poem, were for.

Tolkien certainly achieved his main, and we can now see highly personal, goal, which was to demand autonomy for authors of fantasy and appreciation of fantasy as a worthwhile literary form. But his success had unexpected and for him probably unwelcome side effects. The main one was this: if one goes back to his sub-title, 'the monsters and the critics', it's clear Tolkien was speaking up for the monsters and speaking out against the critics; but by insisting that the poem could and should be read for itself, without the giant apparatus of scholarship which had grown up round it, he was in fact taking it away from the linguistic scholars, the philologists, of whom he was one, and handing it over to the literary critics, many of whom were in his opinion, as stated in his Oxford Valedictory Lecture, 'misologists', people who hated everything he himself stood for (like studying Old English properly at university).<sup>3</sup> Woody Allen famously said, 'Never take a course where they make you read *Beowulf*', and it would have been good advice if he had added, 'if it's taught by someone who's never read *Beowulf*'.<sup>4</sup> In many university departments that would be a necessary warning. The poem is regularly taught by people who haven't read it, haven't read all of it, haven't read it in its original language, and certainly have never read it with close line-by-line attention, but are nonetheless happy to force their interpretations on it.

Tolkien also, we can now see, did not mean all that he said in 1936. He had a point to make and an established consensus to overturn and it was not the moment for nuances. Thus, one of his major destructive thrusts was to insist that scholars must stop treating the poem (only) as history. He admitted that it projected a strong 'illusion of historical truth and perspective', but insisted that this was a 'product of art' and of 'the glamour of Poesis'.<sup>5</sup> The idea that the poem – for all its apparent detailed and consistent knowledge of events in the old northern world – is nevertheless entirely without value as history (not quite what Tolkien said) has since become something like an article of faith. The most recent edition of the poem repeats both parts of Tolkien's view, saying at once that it does not offer 'reliable historical fact', while conceding that it does, oddly, 'present an air of reality and truth'.<sup>6</sup> Ignoring, however, the fact that Tolkien never explained what he meant by 'art' or indeed 'glamour', it's now clear that he did not at all think that the poem was historically valueless. On the contrary, he thought it shone invaluable light on events in the North and on the very origins of England itself. His work on *Finn and Hengest*, edited by Alan Bliss in 1982, gives an entirely new view of the 'Fight at Finnsburg', seen as a critical moment in nation-formation (for the Danes), and a major stimulus for the settlement of England (by the Jutes, and their Anglian or English neighbours). By the end of Tolkien's life his views on this, expressed in *Finn and Hengest* as translation and line-by-line, name-by-name commentary, were hard to see clearly, but were picked up and fictionalised, as

*Hengest's Tale*, by one of the Oxford fantasists listed by Diana Wynne Jones, Jill Paton Walsh (née Bliss): a book well worth reading.

Tolkien's 1982 work has, however, been ignored by scholarship, while 'critical interpretations' of *Beowulf* have become ever more fashionably uninformed – a situation which accounts for the two critical pieces in 2010 by two of Tolkien's greatest admirers, namely this reviewer and Michael Drout.<sup>7</sup> (I can confirm that there was absolutely no collusion between the two writers, who came to much the same conclusion for largely different reasons.) And now, in 2014, we have a third expression of Tolkien's views on the poem, to which this review now turns.

When its publication was first announced, many supposed that we would be given *Beowulf* in verse. It was known that Tolkien had rendered some of the poem into his usual, metrically very accurate, modern English imitation of Old English verse lines, for he quoted some lines as illustrations of Old English metre in his 1940 'Foreword' to the translation of the poem by J.R. Clark Hall and C.L. Wrenn. This, we thought, is going to give Seamus Heaney a run for his money! And it would be interesting also to see where such a poem might stand on the rather steep learning curve which Tolkien went through as he experimented with alliterative poetry from *The Lays of Belegond* through to the poems of the Riders in *Lord of the Rings*. But it would seem this project was never completed, and what we have instead is a complete prose translation, made by Tolkien in 1926, and typed up for him some years later by his son Christopher. Its true parallel is not the many poetic versions made by Heaney, and before him Edwin Morgan, Michael Alexander, Burton Raffel and many others (recently and notably Craig Williamson and Richard Ringler). Rather, it competes with prose versions whose main aim was to translate the poem exactly, not aiming for a general impression but for scrupulous accuracy, and behind that, full understanding of what the poet meant to say. As Christopher says, 'the philological detail [in the commentary, which underlies the translation] exists to clarify the meaning and intention of [the] poet', though the result is a 'vivid personal evocation of a long-vanished world' (ix).

To be brief, it is the philological detail which is really interesting, not so much the translation, which – written in 1926 – comes over as dignified, but archaic. A single page chosen at random gives us, for instance, 'Wroth were they both ... Great wonder was it ... stout was it smithied ... Never aforetime ... In no wise ... They knew it not ...' (35). Tolkien would certainly have defended his choices by saying (as he did in a famous passage in his *Letters*)<sup>8</sup> that modernising words and syntax would simply create a discrepancy between style and subject, and maybe he would be right. But the decision risks triggering an automatic rejection: readers now are even less used to archaic speech than they were in Tolkien's time, and are likely to hear it as false. The translation does accordingly need to be read along with (where we have it) the philologically detailed commentary.

The latter is animated by one of Tolkien's leading convictions: that if we find ourselves, in a translation, writing something that does not make sense, then we have got the poet wrong and should think again. Lines 572-3, *wyrd oft nereð*..., are often quoted and translated as (Tolkien's own translation) 'Fate oft saveth a man not doomed to die, when his valour fails not'. Just the same, he noted in his commentary that on the face of it this is 'about as completely an "illogical" reference to Fate as could be devised' (256). Fate often saves from death the man who isn't fated to die? What does that tell us? But elsewhere Tolkien observed – here in opposition to the many who had tried to see a residue of pagan Germanic fatalism in the lines – that *wyrd* is sometimes just a substitute for the passive, and gave an alternative translation, 'a man will often be preserved if his courage does not fail', a much more sensible remark (244). Elsewhere he noted that the standard reading of lines 413-14, when Beowulf says that he has heard that Heorot ('Hart Hall') stands deserted 'once the light of evening is hidden *under heofones hador*, under the brightness of the sky', is nonsense. How can light be hidden under brightness? For *hador* read *h(e)aðor*, 'place of confinement', translate 'under heaven's pale', and note that this is a 'flat-earth' image, of the sun going down behind the 'fences' of Earth's rim (225-7). (The most recent editors of the poem have come to the same conclusion, without the visual explanation.)

In two further highly characteristic comments he observed that *syrca hrysedon* could not mean 'mail-shirts clashed', though that was the first thought he put in his translation, for *hrysia* is elsewhere always transitive. It must mean that Beowulf's companions disembarking 'shook out their mail-shirts', which any sensible heroes would have rolled up carefully in tarpaulins for passage across salt sea in an open boat, only to don them at once on landing on an alien and possibly hostile shore (194-5). With similar pragmatism (and attention to metre) he rejected the normal reading of the description of Grendel's clawed hand as repetitive and garbled: it wasn't the 'places of the nails' that were like steel, it was the nails themselves, standing up like spikes. The scribe, as often (followed as often by timid editors), had failed to recognise a compound word (298-301). Again and again Tolkien brushes aside accepted word-for-word translations to look for a better idea, one that makes sense. His slogan might be (not a popular one even now), 'Respect the poet, not the scribe', or as the great editor Erasmus might have put it: ignore the *facilior lectio*, the easier reading, and go for the *difficilior lectio* instead, even when (and this goes beyond Erasmus) the easier reading is the only one you happen to have. All you need is immense philological learning, and a great deal of self-confidence, both qualities now in short supply.

Close attention to the words moreover made the poem a great deal subtler in its characterisation than critics (who often assume, stereotypically, that members of Anglo-Saxon warbands were not too bright) have been prepared to think. Tolkien was especially interested in the long, and some would say slow, build-up to Beowulf's combat with Grendel, in which the hero receives successive challenges from coastguard, doorward and

Unferth the king's counsellor – all rather closely mirrored by the approach of Gandalf, Aragorn and company to Meduseld in *The Two Towers*. Tolkien here agreed with his friend and mentor R.W. Chambers in thinking that the poem was stratified.<sup>9</sup> At its root there was an old fairy tale about a bear's son (and in 'Sellic Spell' Tolkien wrote the fairy tale as he imagined it might once have been, first in modern and then in Old English). The bear's son had been adopted, so to speak, turned by the poet into the young prince suitable to an epic. Yet the roots showed through, in the perceptible tension between Beowulf and his challengers, and also Beowulf and his host King Hrothgar. In Tolkien's words:

**Under the cover of the elaborate speech and courtesy there is heard the proud confidence of a strong young champion; and also further back and fainter the voice of the fairy-story: the 'unlikely lad', the lumpish and greedy bearboy ...**

Conversely, behind King Hrothgar's courteous response to his guest we ought to be able to hear a certain let's-wait-and-see attitude, as well as a slight sense of affront: here at last, it's about time, think what I did for his father ... Tolkien rubbed the point in by 'translating' one of Hrothgar's speeches into what he reckoned would be its modern equivalent, 'My dear Beowulf! How good of you to come ...' (246). Subtlety in speech is not a modern invention, as some think. But one has to adapt to different speech-conventions (a most valuable insight and demonstration).

Tolkien, however, went further than Chambers, or any other critic before or since, in absolutely denying his own 1936 professed disregard for the historical approach. The poet, he argued, was so well aware of the historical situation in the fifth and sixth centuries, and had such a firm grip on the chronology of events, that not only did he set events like the arrival of Beowulf at Heorot and the future destruction of that great hall in exactly the right time-frame, he expected his audience to understand what he was doing (as later ages have not).

First, he pointed out (not quite alone in this), it was surely the deposition of Heremod, twice referred to, which created the Danish interregnum filled in tradition by Scyld Sceafering and in reality by Scyld's alleged grandson Healfdene. But we also need to reflect on the hints we are given of Hrothgar's warlike career. What was the *herespæd*, the success in war which we are told he was granted? In later Scandinavian tradition the enemies of the Danes are the Swedes. But that, Tolkien argued, was coloured by later events, when the Danes and Swedes were the main survivors of a much more complex situation still alive at the time of Beowulf, Hrothgar, and Beowulf's historically well-recorded uncle Hygelac. At that time the Geats, Beowulf's people, formed a kind of buffer state. The poem is very clear about the wars between Geats and Swedes, but there is one indication that there had also been trouble between Geats and Danes. Hrothgar's great feat in war was in

Tolkien's view the defeat of the now-unknown Bards, in which – a suggestion entirely unique to Tolkien – the Danes wrested from the Bards the site of Heorot itself, once a holy site dedicated to the worship of the Vanir gods and goddesses, Ing, Frey and Freya. Hints in *Beowulf* leave no doubt that the Bards will come back, ruining Hrothgar's peace-policy based on arranged marriage. His peace-policy must also have extended to the Geats, his diplomatic approaches to them explained by nervousness at the coming to the throne of the notably aggressive Hygelac. Beowulf's arrival at Heorot should be seen as taking place during the reign of the shadowy Swedish King Ohthere, when the Swedes were temporarily in retreat and the Geats were the rising power (219-20).

The politics of it all fits together, as does the chronology, carefully set out on pp.252-3, with a note on the one apparent discrepancy, the duplication of 'only daughters' in the Geatish royal dynasty. The poet's true originality, Tolkien thought, was, first, to centre his poem not on the main Scylding legends, to do with the Bards and their own disastrous 'kin-strife', but on the Grendel story which had become attached to Heorot (like the famous 'hob' of Hart Hall in Yorkshire); and then to enrich the whole poem with carefully integrated allusions to many other known legends, not all of them brought into clear focus (a technique, of course, which Tolkien himself used more successfully than any other author all through his own fictions). But he thought the legends were based on fact. How he would have loved the recent archaeological discovery that the traditional home of the Scyldings or Skjöldungs, and so the site of Heorot, at the tiny hamlet of Gamle Lejre in Denmark, really *was* a power-centre for many centuries, where one great hall after another was built from the sixth century to the eleventh. The idea that the Skjöldung legend might after all contain some truth had long been pooh-poohed in irritating style, which makes the current spectacle of historians trying to find excuses *not* to eat their hats especially entertaining.

Another theme which Tolkien repeats, this time more in agreement with his 1936 lecture, is what he regarded as the poet's careful placing of his characters between pagan and Christian – spoiled, in Tolkien's view, by a few lines which he concluded must have been added by some later and more blundering hand (possibly that of Cynewulf, a known author probably of the ninth century, p.311). He brooded also on the notion of ship-burial, which he returned to in *The Lost Road* and 'The Notion Papers' (150-3). And he took a special interest in the figure of Unferth, though he accepted what I think is no longer tenable, the quasi-allegorical translation of this as 'Unfriend' (252-4, 365 and note). Tolkien was not always right, and sometimes shied away from readings he regarded as cruel or indecorous, like the translation of *onhohsnode* as 'hamstrung' – he preferred to see it as an unrecorded verb *\*on-hoxnian*, 'to make light of' (317). But his 'Commentary' is full of flashes of insight, often on single words, often on the way they are or are not compounded, sometimes peering deeply into the background of legend as expressed in tribal names (like the *Geatas* as *Gotan* or Goths, as *Hreb-menn* like the *Hreið-gotar* of Old Norse).

The main defect is just that there is no more of it. Nearly all of what we have concentrates on the first thousand lines of the poem, with some sketchier coverage of the lines on the dragon-thief and some of the poem's later allusions. The central section, usually regarded as pivotal, is not covered – though *Finn and Hengest* does fill in a part of that gap. Tolkien always had difficulty in pacing himself. As he admitted, notably in 'Leaf by Niggle', his temptation was always to spend time filling in details, painting individual leaves very carefully, such that he rarely got round to giving his full impression of the Tree.<sup>10</sup>

One such 'leaf', so to speak, is 'Sellic Spell' – a phrase taken from the poem and taken to mean 'wonder-tale', 'fairy-story'. In this Tolkien recreated what he took to be the underlying story – slightly comic, slightly vulgar – on which the poet had built his much more aristocratically- and heroically-oriented epic. In doing so he was following a theory well established in *Beowulf* studies, and put forward by Tolkien's friend and early mentor R.W. Chambers in his *Beowulf: An Introduction* (first edition 1921). Chambers was among the critics Tolkien had criticised in 1936 (though in his case very respectfully), but when it came to 'the Bear's Son' story, Tolkien followed him in detail. The basic idea was that 'Beowulf' meant 'wolf or destroyer of the bees', and that must be the notoriously honey-loving bear. Signs of the hero's non-human ancestry had not quite been eliminated from the poem, notably his great strength, reluctance or inability to use civilised weapons (though Tolkien argued rather unconvincingly against extending this to his use of the 'bear-hug', p.236), and the hint that he had had an unpromising youth – *sleac*, i.e. 'slack', clumsy, lazy like the hibernating bear (191). The theory is given extra force by the strange appearance, in a much later and certainly unconnected saga, of a hero very like Beowulf, called *Böðvar Bjarki*. Since Böðvar's father was Björn, 'bear', and his mother Bera, 'lady-bear', while Bjarki means 'little-bear', there was not much doubt about Böðvar's nature, especially as in a climactic scene he becomes able, like Beorn in *The Hobbit*, to appear in bear-shape. And, vital point: the saga is 'The Saga of Hrolf Kraki', and Hrolf is certainly to be identified with the figure of Hrothulf in *Beowulf*, not yet a king, but present in the great hall of the Scylding kings, in the saga the also monster-haunted hall of the Skjöldungs. So the bear-tale became attached to the historical milieu early, and independently of *Beowulf*: a strange conclusion, but one hard to resist.

But what other traces of the fairy tale were there in the poem, and could the tale itself be 'reconstructed' in the characteristic philological way – creating what I have called 'asterisk-words', 'asterisk-poems', 'asterisk-realities' (like Middle-earth itself), and in this case an 'asterisk-tale'?<sup>11</sup> Tolkien's answer, of course, was 'yes'. And the result follows the conclusions reached by Chambers in some detail: the setting of Grendel's lair in a cave behind a waterfall, the false companion who does not fasten the rope (Chambers thought the epic poet had scrapped this, leaving a kind of logical



gap, as too unheroic even for a villain-figure),<sup>12</sup> the folktale rule of beheading the monsters to prevent their return, while the poem's curious uncertainty or embarrassment over use or non-use of swords (why does Beowulf carefully borrow and as carefully return a sword which proves totally useless?) is dealt with by patching in the sword Gildenhilt from *Hrólfs saga kraka*. The gruff image of the hero which Tolkien created in 'Sellic Spell', markedly different from the 'proud young champion' Tolkien saw in the poem, is clearly the model for Beorn, who as Gandalf says is 'kind enough when humoured' but 'appalling when he is angry', and 'I warn you he gets angry easily' (see *The Hobbit*, ch. 7). 'Sellic Spell' ends with a very fairy-tale ending, truncating the poem's account of Beowulf's long reign as successor to the undoubtedly historical King Hygelac, and saying only, as a fairy tale might, that he became a great lord 'and lived long in glory. As long as he lived he loved honey dearly, and the mead in his hall was ever of the best.' (385)

As a parenthesis, one might note that the two poems which conclude the volume – both in eight-line stanzas, one of seven stanzas, the second expanded to fifteen – show Tolkien's lurking interest (there from his very first published poem in the *King Edward's School Chronicle* for 1911 to one of his last, 'Aotrou and Itroun' in 1945) in the idea of the 'lay', or short oral ballad from which, some thought, later epics like *Beowulf* were compiled. So they were an alternative presumed source for the poem as it exists, and Tolkien was once again 'reconstructing'.

But why, one might finally ask, did Tolkien go to the trouble of translating much of his own story, 'Sellic Spell', into Old English, which he must have known few people would or could read? (He did of course carry out similar Old English experiments with 'The Earliest Annals of Valinor' and 'of Beleriand', while in *Sigurd and Gudrún* he translated Old Norse poetry into Old English poetry, something even more unlikely to find a modern audience.) The answer, not very convenient to modern scholarship, must surely be that this is one way to get inside a language, to move from passive knowledge – look the words up in the back of the book and then try to fit them together, a practice terribly common even among teachers – to the kind of active knowledge that gets you nearer the heart of the ancient writers' meanings. Speaking finally, and personally, as one who is as *au fait* as anyone with issues Beowulfian and Tolkienian, reading Tolkien's commentary, and checking it against his translation – archaic in speech though the latter is – has been a real illuminator of the poem.

Less so, however, of Tolkien. It is interesting to read Tolkien's remark on the word *orcnéas* that 'I think that what is here meant is that terrible northern imagination to which I have ventured to give the name "barrow-wights"' (163), but one would have liked to read his comment on the word *yffe*, 'elves', in the same line: the *Beowulf*-poet clearly lumped them in with 'ettins' and 'orcs' as all from the seed of Cain, something Tolkien certainly did not agree with, though we do not have any comment

from him on the line. There is no doubt that *Beowulf* was a vital inspiration for Tolkien's fiction and (less directly) his mythology, while he himself would, I think, have been delighted to have it said that he was treading in the footsteps of the long-dead and anonymous poet, in whom he surely recognised a kindred spirit. But just the same, and on the whole, one has to confess, this is a book for Beowulfians, more than for Tolkienians.

Author: J.R.R. Tolkien; Editor: Christopher Tolkien.

HarperCollins (2014), 448pp.

.....

## Tom Shippey

### References

1. Diana Wynne Jones, *Reflections on the Magic of Writing* (London: David Fickling Books, 2012), 5, 100, 105.
2. J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), 245-95.
3. 'Valedictory Address', in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and other essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 225.
4. Woody Allen (dir.), 'Annie Hall' (Rollins-Joffe Productions, 1977).
5. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', 247-8.
6. *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th edn, ed. R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. li and note.
7. See respectively Shippey, 'Two Views of Beowulf, One Hailed, One Ignored: but did we get this right?' (<http://www.lotrpplaza.com/showthread.php?18484>), and Drout, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics: the brilliant essay that broke Beowulf studies' (as above, except last number is 17739).
8. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 225-6.
9. See R.W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction* (1921, cited here from the 3rd expanded edition, revised by C.L. Wrenn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959). In his Contents page Chambers separated consideration of the poem into 'The Historical Elements' and 'The Non-Historical Elements', the latter being a mix of fairy tale and myth.
10. There are many editions of 'Leaf by Niggle', as for instance *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1966), 100-20, but this description of Niggle is in para. 3, almost at the start. Tolkien described the story as 'part apologia, part confession'; see *Letters*, ed. Carpenter and Tolkien, 113.
11. I note philologists' use of \* to indicate a 'reconstructed' form, and the importance of the concept to them, in *The Road to Middle-earth* (4th expanded edition, London: HarperCollins, 2005), 22-6, extending the idea to Tolkien's works in much of what follows.
12. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction*, 63.