



A Critical Companion to Beowulf

Andy Orchard

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Beowulf is the best known and most closely studied literary work surviving from Anglo-Saxon England, and the modern reader is faced with a bewildering number and variety of interpretations about such basic matters as the date, provenance, and significance of the poem. *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* addresses these and other issues, reviewing and synthesising previous scholarship, as well as offering fresh perspectives. After an initial introduction to the poem, attention is focused on such matters as the manuscript context and approaches to dating the poem; the particular style, diction, and structure of this most idiosyncratic of Old English texts; the background to the poem (considered not simply with respect to historical and legendary material, but also in the context of myth and fable); the specific roles of selected individual characters, both major and minor; and the original intended audience and perceived purpose of the poem. A final chapter describes the range of critical approaches which have been applied to the poem in the past, and points towards directions for future study. ANDY ORCHARD is Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon, University of Oxford

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