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Introduction: Hwæt!	1
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This section provides an overview of some of the most important critical debates surrounding the poem. Critics mentioned here include James Earle, R.D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain, J.R.R. Tolkien, William Witherle Lawrence and Andrew Prescott.

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'Rude Beginning': 1705–1899

This chapter begins by exploring the significance of 1705 to the history of the reception of *Beowulf*, and the significance of the librarian and antiquary Humphrey Wanley's Catalogue. Other topics include early editions and translations of the poem and critics' attempts to find possible analogues to it.

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'Conflicting Babel': 1900–1931

This chapter examines the types of interpretative approaches that began to replace the musings of the early philologists and editors of *Beowulf*. A great deal of the scholarship produced in the three decades covered here focuses on the possible sources of the Old English poem (both Classical and Scandinavian). During this period there were also ongoing discussions of the genre of *Beowulf* and attempts to establish the exact relationship between the text's Christian and pagan elements.

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The Monsters Meet the Critics: the 1930s and 1940s

This chapter focuses on J.R.R. Tolkien's groundbreaking essay 'The Monsters and the Critics' and early attempts to read *Beowulf* as a *poem*. Critical approaches to the 'monsters' are also discussed, along with the question of whether *Beowulf* is divided into two or three sections.

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The Debates Continue: the 1950s and 1960s

The two decades under consideration in this chapter were important years for *Beowulf* criticism. A wide variety of new approaches to the poem emerged and

familiar themes and subjects were revisited in fresh and interesting ways. In the light of Tolkien's earlier study, more criticism on the 'monsters' in *Beowulf* was being produced and the historicity of *Beowulf* himself was debated. The composition and role of the poem's original audience also came under the critical spotlight. And, by the mid-1960s, the New Criticism even began to assert its influence in the field.

CHAPTER FIVE 66

Stock-taking: the 1970s

This chapter covers a time when the landscape of *Beowulf* scholarship was rapidly changing. Feminist criticism of the poem began to emerge, and there were ongoing attempts to define what, exactly, *Beowulf* was about. Critical approaches to the Christian-pagan tension in the poem are also examined, as well as opinions concerning the poet's attitude towards his hero.

CHAPTER SIX 84

Critics on the Crest of a Wave: the 1980s

This chapter foregrounds approaches to the poem drawn from deconstruction, semiotics, cultural studies, feminism, masculinity studies and psychoanalysis in an attempt, as Seth Lerer puts it, 'to relocate *Beowulf* in the shifting canons of contemporary academic debate'.

CHAPTER SEVEN 97

An Embarrassment of Critical Riches: the 1990s to the present

Scholars during this period were especially prolific, as this chapter sets out to show. Historicist, anthropological, sociological and post-colonial readings of *Beowulf* are examined here. Also included are discussions of humour in the poem and its relationship to orality and the genre of *Beowulf*.

CHAPTER EIGHT 115

Beowulf in Popular Culture

This chapter provides a brief survey of some of the novels, films, animations, musical pieces, retellings for children, comic books and graphic novels based (faithfully or otherwise) on *Beowulf*.

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