



The Dating of Beowulf (Toronto Old English Studies)

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The date of *Beowulf*, debated for almost a century, is a small question with large consequences. Does the poem provide us with an accurate if idealized view of early Germanic culture? Or is it rather a creature of nostalgia and imagination, born of the desire of a later age to create for itself a glorious past? If we cannot decide when, between the 5th and 11th centuries, the poem was composed, we cannot distinguish what elements in *Beowulf* belong properly to the history of material culture, to the history of myth and legend, to political history, or to the development of the English literary imagination.

This book represents both individual and concerted attempts to deal with this important question, and presents one of the most important inconclusions in the study of Old English. The contributors raise so many doubts, turn up so much new and disturbing information, dismantle so many long-accepted scholarly constructs that *Beowulf* studies will never be the same: henceforth every discussion of the poem and its period will begin with reference to this volume.

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