Dating

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GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN IN PUBLICA COMMODA
SEIT 1737

External Dating 1/2

- ▶ 657x680 (abbacy of Hilda of Whitby): *Cædmon's Hymn*
- ▶ 735 (death of Bede): *Bede's Death Song*
- ▶ *Metres of Boethius* postdate Boethius translation, ? in turn associated with the reign of Alfred, 871x899
- ▶ 937 (Battle of Brunanburh): terminus post quem for *Battle of Brunanburh*
- ▶ 973 (coronation of Edgar the Peaceful on Whitsun): *Coronation of Edgar*
- ▶ 975 (death of Edgar the Peaceful on 8 July): *Death of Edgar*

External Dating 2/2

▶ 991 (Battle of Maldon): terminus post quem for *Battle of Maldon*

▶ 1066 (death of Edward the Confessor on 5 Jan): terminus post quem for *Death of Edward*

▶ Late tenth century (Vercelli Book): terminus ante quem for *Dream of the Rood*, *Andreas*, *Fates of the Apostles*, *Soul and Body*, *Elene*, *Homiletic Fragment*

▶ Late tenth century (Exeter Book): terminus ante quem for the poems of the Exeter Book

▶ c. 1000 (Nowell Codex): terminus ante quem for *Beowulf*, *Judith*

▶ c. 1000 (Junius Manuscript): terminus ante quem for *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, *Christ and Satan*

Non-Metrical, Non-Linguistic Approaches to the Dating of *Beowulf*

- ▶ Its Danish focus makes composition after c. 835, or between 835x886 and 980x1013, unlikely (esp. Whitelock)

- ▶ Its "succession" of Beowulf by Wiglaf suggests a composition about 827, when a Wiglaf succeeded a Beornwulf in Mercia (esp. North)

- ▶ Manuscript evidence, the awkwardness of "Beowulf's Homecoming," and the irregular fitt numbers suggest the poem reached its current state in the surviving manuscript (Kiernan)

Etc.; see esp. the Chase volume.

Traditional Chronology

Table 1: Chronology offered as traditional in Cable 1981

Date	Poem	Date	Poem
657–680	*Cædmon's Hymn*	9th c.	*Andreas*
735	*Bede's Death Song*	890–899	*Pastoral Care* preface, epilogue
8th c.	*Leiden Riddle*	897	*Metres of Boethius*
8th c.	*Genesis A*	937	*The Battle of Brunanburh*
8th c.	*Daniel*	942	*The Capture of the Five Boroughs*
8th–9th c.	*Beowulf*	10th c.	*Judith*
8th–9th c.	*Exodus*	973	*The Coronation of Edgar*
9th c.	*Elene*	991	*The Battle of Maldon*
9th c.	*Fates of the Apostles*	1066	*The Death of Edward*
9th c.	*Juliana*	1110	*Durham*

Fulk's 1992 Relative Dating

Parasiting

Group 1

- ▶ *Beowulf*
- ▶ *Genesis A*
- ▶ *Daniel*
- ▶ *Exodus*

Group 2

- ▶ *Andreas*
- ▶ Cynewulf

Group 3

- ▶ *Metres of Boethius*
- ▶ *Judith*
- ▶ Late poems

Fulk's 1992 Relative Dating

Parasiting

Group 1

- *Beowulf*
- *Genesis A*
- *Daniel*
- *Exodus*

Group 2

- *Andreas*
- Cynewulf

Group 3

- *Metres of Boethius*
- *Judith*
- Late poems

Contraction After Loss of *h*

Group 1

- *Genesis A*
- *Daniel*
- *Beowulf*

Group 2

- *Exodus*
- Cynewulf and *Andreas*
- *Metres of Boethius*

Group 3

- *Judith*
- Late poems

Fulk's 1992 Relative Dating

Parasiting

Group 1

- ▶ *Beowulf*
- ▶ *Genesis A*
- ▶ *Daniel*
- ▶ *Exodus*

Group 2

- ▶ *Andreas*
- ▶ Cynewulf

Group 3

- ▶ *Metres of Boethius*
- ▶ *Judith*
- ▶ Late poems

Contraction After Loss of *h*

Group 1

- ▶ *Genesis A*
- ▶ *Daniel*
- ▶ *Beowulf*

Group 2

- ▶ *Exodus*
- ▶ Cynewulf and *Andreas*
- ▶ *Metres of Boethius*

Group 3

- ▶ *Judith*
- ▶ Late poems

Contraction of Negation/Pronouns

- ▶ *Genesis A*
- ▶ *Beowulf*
- ▶ *Daniel*
- ▶ Cynewulf
- ▶ *Metres of Boethius*
- ▶ *The Battle of Maldon*

Additional Findings of Fulk 1992

▶ Analogical shortening of vowels lengthened by the loss of consonantal *h* suggests *Beowulf* precedes *Andreas*

▶ Analogical lengthening of stem vowels in inflected forms of diphthongal stems suggests *Judith* and the *Metres* come last

▶ Kaluza's Law suggests *Beowulf* may have preceded *Genesis A*, with all the rest ignoring the law to various degrees

▶ The metrical treatment of syllables associated with tertiary stress suggests *Beowulf* and the Junius 11 poems are earliest, Cynewulf likely following

▶ Resolution conditioned by syllable weight in internal position suggests *Beowulf* and the Junius 11 poems are earliest, followed by Cynewulf, followed by *Andreas* and the rest

Timeline

Table 2: The development of thought on the dating of *Beowulf*

Date	Development
1930s	Parry develops his theory of oral-formulaic composition
1960	Lord furthers Parry's theory and applies it to *Beowulf*
1980	Amos denies the value of linguistic tests for dating Old English texts
1980	The Toronto symposium breaks the ban on the late dating of *Beowulf*
1981	The proceedings of the Toronto symposium are published
1992	Fulk argues an early date for *Beowulf* on metrical and linguistic grounds
1997	The Toronto volume is reissued with a new afterword by Nicholas Howe
2007	Frank presents and publishes a retrospective challenging early daters
2011	Neidorf organizes a reassessment conference, inviting early daters only
2014	The proceedings of the Harvard/Neidorf conference are published

Howe's 1997 Afterword

"[T]he more closely one works with the language and metre, the more likely one is to date the poem early. Conversely, the more closely one works with the manuscript, the more likely one is to date the poem late. [... T]he evidence one chooses will shape, even predetemine, one's findings."

Some Practical Dating Criteria

Table 3: Selected dating criteria

Feature	Tendency
Alliteration of palatal with velar *g*	Earlier
Proportion of Sievers types DE	Decreases
Parasiting	Later
Contraction of *h*	Later
Contraction of negation/pronouns	Increases
Poetic diction	Decreases
Use of rhyme	Late
Alliteration on final lift of b-verse	Late

Earlier or Later?

                         Ne seleð þē wæstmas eorðe
wlitiġe tō woruldnytte,   ac hēo wældrēore swealh
hālġe of handum þīnum;   forþon hēo þē hrōðra oftīhð,
glǣmes grēne folde.   Þū scealt ġeomor hweorfan,
ārleas of earde þīnum,   swā þū Ābele wurde
tō feorhbanan;   forþon þū flēma scealt
wīdlāst wrecan,   winemagum lāð.

Earlier!

>   Ne seleð þē wæstmas eorðe
> wlitiġe tō woruldnytte,   ac hēo wældrēore swealh
> hālġe of handum þīnum;   forþon hēo þē hrōðra oftīhð,
> glǣmes grēne folde.   Þū scealt ġeomor hweorfan,
> ārleas of earde þīnum,   swā þū Ābele wurde
> tō feorhbanan;   forþon þū flēma scealt
> wīdlāst wrecan,   winemagum lāð.   (*Genesis A* 1015b–1021)

- ▶ Alliteration of velar with palatal *g*
- ▶ Sievers type E (but we need a larger sample)

Earlier or Later?

Mē þæt wyrd ġewæf,   ond gewyrht forġēaf,
þæt iċ grōfe græf,   ond þæt grimme græf
flēan flæsce ne mæġ,   þonne flānhred dæġ
nȳdgrāpum nimeþ,   þonne sēo neaht becymeð
sēo mē ēðles ofonn   ond meċ hēr eardes onconn.

Later!

Mē þæt wyrd ġewæf,   ond gewyrht forġēaf,
þæt iċ grōfe græf,   ond þæt grimme græf
flēan flæsce ne mæġ,   þonne flānhred dæġ
nȳdgrāpum nimeþ,   þonne sēo neaht becymeð
sēo mē ēðles ofonn   ond meċ hēr eardes onconn.   (*Riming Poem* 70–74)

▶ Rhyme
▶ Alliteration on the final lift (71b; but is *græf* authorial?)
▶ *Seems* to avoid alliterating between velar and palatal *g* (best to have the other in final position)
▶ Misleading sample for metrical types: the poem is mostly A and B, but here we have D2 (72a) and E (73a)

Earlier or Later?

Mē sendon tō þē   sǣmen snelle,
hēton ðē secgan   þæt þū mōst sendan raðe
bēagas wið ġebeorge;   and ēow betere is
þæt ġē þisne gārrǣs   mid gafole forġyldon,
þon wē swā hearde   hilde dǣlon.
Ne þurfe wē ūs spillan,   ġif gē spēdaþ tō þām;
wē willað wið þām golde   grið fæstnian.

Later!

Mē sendon tō þē   sǣmen snelle,
hēton ðē secgan   þæt þū mōst sendan raðe
bēagas wið ġebeorge;   and ēow betere is
þæt ġē þisne gārrǣs   mid gafole forġyldon,
þon wē swā hearde   hilde dǣlon.
Ne þurfe wē ūs spillan,   ġif gē spēdaþ tō þām;
wē willað wið þām golde   grið fæstnian.   (*Battle of Maldon* 29–35)

▶ Palatal *g* in the final lift of a line alliterating on velar *g* (32)
▶ 1x D1 (35b), otherwise AB

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