



The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatism in Early Medieval Poetry

Brian Murdoch

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In *The Germanic Hero* Brian Murdoch looks at the role the warrior-hero plays within a set of predetermined political and social constraints. The hero is not a sword-wielding barbarian, bent only upon establishing his own fame; such fame-seekers (including some famous medieval literary figures) might even fall outside the definition of the Germanic hero, the real value of whose deeds are given meaning only within the political construct. Individual prowess is not enough. The hero must conquer the blows of fate because he is committed to the conquest of chaos, and over all to the need for social stability. Brian Murdoch discusses works in Old English, Old and Middle High German, Old Norse, Latin and Old French, deliberately going beyond what is normally thought of as 'heroic poetry' to include the German so-called 'minstrel epic', and a work by a writer who is normally classified as a late medieval chivalric poet, Konrad von Wurzburg, the comparison of which with Beowulf allows us to span half a millennium.

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