



Old English Shorter Poems, Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library)

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The twenty-five poems and eleven metrical charms in this Old English volume offer tantalizing insights into the mental landscape of the Anglo-Saxons. *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* famously combine philosophical consolation with introspection to achieve a spiritual understanding of life as a journey. *The Wife's Lament*, *The Husband's Message*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer* direct a subjective lyrical intensity on the perennial themes of love, separation, and the passion for vengeance. From suffering comes wisdom, and these poems find meaning in the loss of fortune and reputation, exile, and alienation. "Woe is wondrously clinging; clouds glide," reads a stoic, matter-of-fact observation in *Maxims II* on nature's indifference to human suffering. Another form of wisdom emerges in the form of folk remedies, such as charms to treat stabbing pain, cysts, childbirth, and nightmares of witch-riding caused by a dwarf. The enigmatic dialogues of *Solomon and Saturn* combine scholarly erudition and proverbial wisdom. Learning of all kinds is celebrated, including the meaning of individual runes in *The Rune Poem* and the catalog of legendary heroes in *Widsith*. This book is a welcome complement to the previously published DOML volume *Old English Shorter Poems, Volume I: Religious and Didactic*.

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