



Maxims in Old English Poetry

Paul Cavill

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Maxims abound in Old English literature, but have rarely been studied extensively, and many questions remain about their use: what kind of expression is a maxim? Why and when were they used? Do they offer evidence for popular, pagan folklore? This book aims to offer answers through a detailed investigation of various issues, texts and formulas, leading to a better understanding of Old English literature in general. It takes account of comparable material in other Old Germanic languages and the Bible, and shows that maxims had recognisable functions in literary and social discourse, recording knowledge and according value. Dr Cavill also applies new developments in current scholarship on formulaic theory, proverb performance theory and sociology of knowledge; sheds new light on popular poems like *The Battle of Maldon* and *Beowulf*; and suggests a place and purpose for the Maxims poems in an oral society. Dr PAUL CAVILL teaches at the University of Nottingham.

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