

# *Old English Minor Heroic Poems*

Third edition

Edited with an introduction, notes,  
and a glossary of proper names by

**JOYCE HILL**

The four heroic poems edited here give tantalising insights into the world of Old English heroic poetry: its ideals of behaviour, the role of the poet in establishing heroic reputation, and the rich array of legends which made up a powerful world of the imagination set in the creative ethnicity of a Germanic past. *Widsið* and *Deor*, with their focus on the role of the poet and his command of Germanic legend-cycles, and the two fragmentary survivals of *Waldere* and the *Finnsburh Fragment*, with their focus on heroic behaviour, complement the more famous *Beowulf*, the only Old English heroic epic to survive complete. Together, as this edition makes clear, these unique survivals have the distinction of providing a small window onto a very large world.



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DURHAM MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE TEXTS 2

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*Heroic Poems*

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Edited with an introduction, notes,  
and a glossary of proper names by

JOYCE HILL  
*University of Leeds*



Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Durham University

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## PREFACE

### Preface to the First Edition

This is the fourth volume in the series Durham Medieval Texts, which presents cheap editions of medieval literary works for the use of students. The series concentrates on texts which are not readily available in English language editions at prices which undergraduates can afford. In this case, the aim is to make available the four short poems or fragments that, together with *Beowulf*, form the corpus of extant Old English heroic poetry, and to introduce the student to the historical and legendary material which lies behind their frequently tantalizing allusions.

The texts presented here are fairly conservative. They are supported by an introduction which discusses the manuscripts, the traditions of heroic poetry as a whole, and the major issues raised by each poem. There are also some limited textual notes, a full analytical glossary and a glossary of proper names. Most entries in the glossary of proper names are necessarily short, though the major theories are reviewed, and an attempt is made to suggest the broader Germanic contexts in which Old English heroic poetry needs to be seen. To support this, the Bibliography includes a list of translations into English of those texts, literary and historical, that are most valuable in the study of Germanic heroic legend, and references are usually to these translations, so that students can read for themselves the relevant portions in context. The Middle High German texts remain a problem, since few have been translated into English. However, since they often present the legends in radically different forms from those known earlier to the Anglo-Saxons, most students will find it sufficient in the first instance to consult Gillespie's *Catalogue of Persons Named in German Heroic Literature*.

Thanks are due to those students who, by showing what they find difficult, and what explanations they look for, have contributed to this book. I hope it will meet at least some of their needs.

Joyce Hill  
Leeds 1983

### Preface to the Second Edition

The preparation of a second edition of *Old English Minor Heroic Poems* has provided the opportunity not only to update the content, but also to improve the presentation. I should like to record my thanks to John McKinnell, Liz Paget, and Pam and Michael Armitage for their technical assistance, good advice, and great patience.

Joyce Hill  
Leeds 1994

### Preface to the Third Edition

The publication of the third edition of *Old English Minor Heroic Poems* in the new series 'Durham Medieval and Renaissance Texts' has allowed for some further updating in the introduction, textual notes, bibliography, and glossary of proper names. In recognition of the fact that this book has come to be used for reference purposes, particularly in relation to the Glossary of Proper Names, primary references have been added alongside references to translated texts and secondary material. It has proved to be a popular edition over the years, and it is our hope that it continues to be as student-friendly as it was originally designed to be in 1983. I am grateful to John McKinnell, of Durham Medieval and Renaissance Texts, and Fred Unwalla, of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, for agreeing to issue the edition in the new series. John has patiently acted as general editor of every version including the present one. On this occasion, thanks are also due to Dr Walter Kick for creating modern electronic files with which we could work, and to Dr Donata Kick for her careful revision of those files.

Joyce Hill  
Leeds 2008

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ASPR</i>	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</i> , ed. G.P. Krapp and E. van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York, 1931-42)
<i>Beo.</i>	<i>Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg</i> , ed. with introduction, commentary, appendices, glossary and bibliography by R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, John D. Niles; foreword by Helen Damico, 4th ed. (Toronto, 2008)
<i>Finn.</i>	<i>Finnsburh Fragment</i> (this edition)
ME	Middle English
MHG	Middle High German
mod.	modern
MS (MSS)	manuscript(s)
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
<i>Wald.</i>	<i>Waldere</i> (this edition)
<i>Wids.</i>	<i>Widsið</i> (this edition)
WS	West Saxon
<	derives from
*	hypothetical form

Grammatical abbreviations are listed on pp. 68–9. The customary abbreviations are employed in the bibliography and elsewhere as appropriate.