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Warrior Lore: Scandinavian Ballads



Synopsis

Thor resorts to cross-dressing in a bid to recover his stolen hammer. The hero Widrick Waylandsson comes face to face with a troll in the forest. A king's daughter is seized from a convent in rural Sweden. A young fighter has to show off his skill in skiing and shooting for King Harald Hardrada. And more... The medieval Scandinavian ballads in this collection take the reader back in time into the fells and forests of the far north. They tell stories of champions and fighters, vikings, and trolls, drawing on Norse mythology and heroic legend. There are riddles, and there are appearances from Thor, Loki, Sigurd, and other figures from the myths of the Edda and from history. Narrative ballads were part of an oral folk music tradition in Scandinavia, and were first written down around 1600, although the ballads themselves are older. These new English verse translations are mainly based on Swedish tradition. All the ballads included are: Widrick Waylandsson's Fight with Long-Ben Reyser; Twelve Strong Fighters; Hilla-Lill; Sir Hjalmar; The Hammer Hunt; The Stablemates; Sven Swan-White; The Cloister Raid; Heming and the Mountain Troll; Heming and King Harald. "A charming introduction to Scandinavian Lore." -- Sam Smith, in The Journal (once 'of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry')

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Customer Reviews

“Warrior Lore” by Ian Cumpstey, is a collection of translated Scandinavian folk songs first written in the 1600s. This particular review concerns the ebook version, and as such I can’t comment on how the paperback version is (though I plan on purchasing it soon to see how it is). The folk songs detail various stories of Scandinavian lore and folklore; numbering ten in total, and are presented in the form of ballads in lyrical format of varying lengths. The enjoyment one can derive from this title relates directly to one’s enjoyment of this particular genre, mainly that involving folklore and mythology. As a fan of it, when being asked to review “Warrior Lore”, I couldn’t help but say yes. The stories themselves are entertaining, and include a wide range of plots. From a quest to improve one’s fighting ability to the famous Norse mythology story involving Thor cross-dressing to retrieve Mjolnir. Some are funny and others much sadder, but overall they are wonderful and really enjoyable. As they are presented in lyrical format I took the time to first read them for myself and then aloud, and they didn’t disappoint at all. It is always a pleasure to get to know more about the folklore of various countries. Though I’m not that familiar with Scandinavian mythos aside from those involving Norse mythology, this book wasn’t hard to read at all. Instead it being informative and easy to get into. Additionally they also flowed well, something very welcome to see in a translation of a lyrical nature. It isn’t easy to translate a work and remain loyal to the source in its entirety, and much more if the translation doesn’t involve prose.

What a thoroughly delightful book this is. Ian Cumpstey, a chemist and litterateur from the Northwest of England who spent a number of years living in Sweden, set himself the challenge in this and his earlier volume, “Lord Peter and Little Kerstin: Medieval Ballads from Sweden,” of conveying the energy and entertainment of medieval Scandinavian ballad poetry in vigorous, accessible, popular language. He has thoroughly succeeded in this goal. In his Preface, Cumpstey situates these ballads at the intersection of poetry, song, storytelling, and legend. “Warrior Lore” focuses on fighting heroes and their memorable deeds, some of which end well, some tragically, some comically. The ballad form was (still is, to the extent that anyone wishes to exploit it) highly flexible in tone. Therefore, within an 81-page volume containing ten poems about great warriors, there is nonetheless considerable variety. “Widrick Waylandsson’s Fight with Long-Ben Reyser” and “Twelve Strong Fighters” are a twinned pair of fighting ballads with a vein of

high-spirited comedy, which together comprise a single story. Two ballads about the young sportsman Heming find him showing off his skiing skills, thwarting a troll, getting the girl, even besting a king.â œHilla-Lill,â • â œSir Hjalmar,â • and â œThe Cloister Raidâ • look at womenâ ™s tragedies within the context of a warrior culture; â œThe Stablematesâ • has a more positive romantic outcome. Confirmed medievalists and Scandinavian enthusiasts will eat all this up. Who else? Well, this material, and the Poetic Edda that came before it, has a lineage that extends into modern pop culture on several fronts.

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