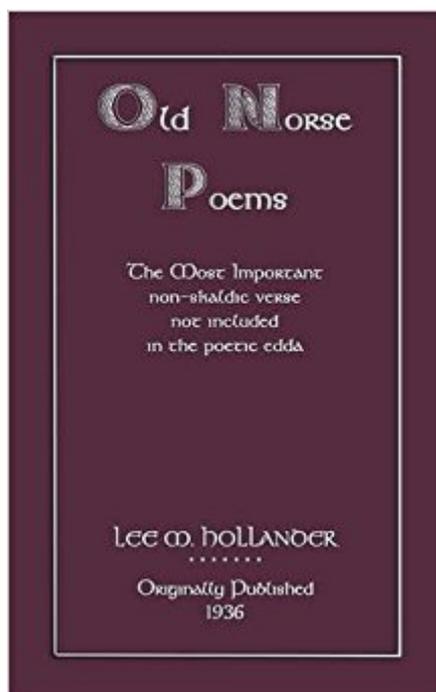


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Old Norse Poems



Synopsis

THE GROUP of poems offered in this volume comprises practically all the more considerable (non-Skaldic) verse material not in the Edda. Indeed, it has been subtitled "the most important non-skaldic verse not included in the poetic edda". It is a supplement to the Edda and it shows, even better than that remarkable collection, the wealth of independent poetic inventions and forms that flourished in the Scandinavian North before and immediately after the introduction of Christianity, especially when we bear in mind that much has been irretrievably lost. As to the contents of these poems, with respect to the first group of nine, range from the genuinely "heroic," realistic, dialogic-dramatic, earlier lays (such as the Biarkamǫl) to the more "romantic," legendary, monologic-elegiac, retrospective, later lays (like Hiǫlmar's Death Song); though the lines of demarcation are by no means sharp and, in fact, nearly every poem represents an individual combination of these traits. A very different type of lay is seen in the three contemporary encomiastic poems which celebrate the life and deeds of the (historic) rulers of Norway-the only non-Skaldic efforts of this genre so exceedingly numerous in Old Norse literature. There is no common denominator for the four poems at the end of the volume, except possibly their arch-heathen character. As a finale the Song of the Sun marks the transition from heathen to Christian spheres of thought. Common to all of this material is its unliterary, that is, unbookish, character which is in marked contrast to virtually all of Anglo-Saxon epic literature, influenced as it is, to a greater or lesser degree, by Christian or classical models. That is to say, we deal here with the genuinely native expression of the North. 33% of the net profit will be donated to charities for educational purposes. Yesterday's Books for Tomorrow's Educations

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Customer Reviews

This collection is a must-read for anyone interested in Old Norse poetry. It is an excellent complement to The Poetic (Elder) Edda. In these violent, vengeance-driven poems, Lee Hollander does an excellent job of maintaining a meter/alliteration scheme that closely approximates the original Norse. The poems themselves are fragmentary, but provide a dramatic look into the brutal Norse "heroic age." The only downside to this book is its formatting. Parts were obviously scanned from some other format (probably something web-based) with very few formatting corrections. The poetry itself is printed in a tacky faux-Celtic/Nordic font that borders on the unreadable in some passages. Avoid this edition (2010 Abela Publishing) if you can possibly find this book in some other edition/format.

For those who love Norse mythology, here is some buried treasure of lesser known lays. It can be seen as a companion to the better known eddic lays found in the Poetic Edda. The stories here tell of battles, heroes, Valhalla, Odin and valkyries. I would have given it a higher rating, but for those who are familiar with the archaic (albeit scholarly), hard to understand style of the translator, this little book can be a chore to read. Also, the kindle version is better than the print version, which uses a strange font that is hard to read. (I have both).

This is a nice little book; and unlike another reviewer I do not find fault with the "printing" itself. The font is as said Celtic type style, which I agree is annoying and wish it wasn't like that but, it doesn't make it unreadable. Again, this is a nice and clean little book. Nothing low-quality about it that I can tell. The poetry is in full-strength Hollander style: for those of you familiar with his translation of the Poetic Edda, these non-Skaldic poems in this book are translated in the same manner (seeing that they were written in "eddic" metres, this seems appropriate either way). I'd probably call this "advanced" studies; it is mostly more akin to the heroic-style we are familiar with in OE; except it is in a more genuine expression here. If you like poetry about battle and praising the hero, it is a good book on that note as well. If you are a medievalist poet, this book should be had for not only its translation of medieval poetry but the eddic-metres which Hollander uses. Besides the font, I like this book -- as pertains to both physical form and content.

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