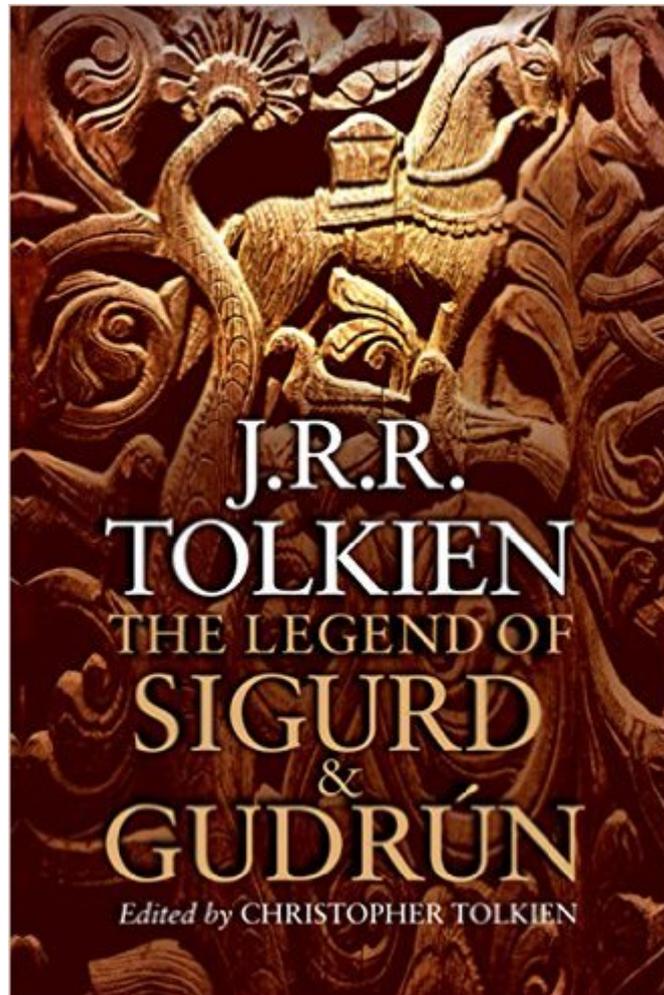


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The Legend Of Sigurd And Gudrún



Synopsis

The Legend of Sigurd and Gudr n is a previously unpublished work by J.R.R. Tolkien, written while Tolkien was Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford during the 1920s and  30s, before he wrote The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. It makes available for the first time Tolkien's extensive retelling in English narrative verse of the epic Norse tales of Sigurd the V lsung and The Fall of the Niflungs. It includes an introduction by J.R.R. Tolkien, drawn from one of his own lectures on Norse literature, with commentary and notes on the poems by Christopher Tolkien.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A few corrections need to be made to the reviews already here. First: This book is NOT a translation. It is a set of two original poems by Tolkien, with supplemental materials. The poems retell one of the most famous stories in Norse legend--the sources are the two Eddas, the Volsunga Saga, and others--but Tolkien gives here his own version. The poem is in the medieval Norse meter and style, but it is a new version, again, not a translation. Second: These poems are not epics. I have already read a couple of reviews complaining that for epic poetry it isn't "epic" enough. But they aren't intended to be epic. As the introduction makes clear, Norse poetry had no epic mode (although Old English did). What epic verse does for some cultures the Saga did for the Norsemen. These poems are lays, which have a different intended effect, which is discussed in the introduction. Who needs to read this book? Certainly people who like The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings but hated The Children of Hurin when it came out recently, and who never got through the Silmarillion, will most

likely not want this. If, when you read *The Lord of the Rings*, you skip the poems and songs, you should definitely skip this. On the other hand, if the Tolkien's poetry is especially attractive to you this may interest you. If you're interested in Tolkien's other writings, though, you probably will want this. For instance, if you've read vol. 3 of *The History of Middle Earth*, *The Lays of Beleriand*, you will know the sort of thing you're in for. On the other hand, if you don't care or don't know much about Tolkien's own invented mythology, this book will still fascinate you if you have an interest in Old English or medieval Icelandic literature.

When J.R.R. Tolkien wasn't teaching philology at Oxford or penning classic fantasy novels, he did some retellings of old poetry. VERY old poetry. "The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun" is one such work: a verse working of the Norse legend of the hero Sigurd and his adventures, as well as the two doomed women who loved him. The wording is a bit awkward in places, and a good chunk of the book's content is commentary by his son Christopher Tolkien -- but the deep-rooted mythic story and Tolkien's vivid prose are gorgeous. After exploring the gods and their glittering Valholl, Tolkien introduces the bitter dwarf Andvari and his magic ring, the greedy dragon Fafnir, and the tragic tale of Sigmund, Sigurd's daddy. Sigurd was tricked into slaying Fafnir for his treacherous foster father, and gained a hoard of cursed gold and a roasted dragon heart. Then he learns of the beautiful Valkyrie Brynhild, who is doomed to "wed the World's chosen" only, and sleeps in a fortress of flames. Though he wakes Brynhild, Sigurd claims that he isn't going to marry her until he has a kingdom of his own -- and he gets one too. But in the process, he falls in love with the beautiful Gudrun and marries her. When his brother-in-law Gunnar wants the finest woman in the world, Sigurd tricks Brynhild into marrying Gunnar instead. This betrayal -- and a cursed ring given to both Gudrun and Brynhild -- leads to lies, hatred, death, and a devastating tragedy that destroys more than one person's life. "The Lay of Gudrun" is a sort of sequel to the Sigurd legend: after Sigurd dies, Gudrun goes a little nuts in her woodland house and ends up being wed against her own wishes (courtesy of her witchy mom) to the king of the Huns, Atli.

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