



Eric Brighteyes

H. Rider Haggard

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The Saga of Eric Brighteyes is the title of an epic Viking novel by H. Rider Haggard, and concerns the adventures of its eponymous principal character in 10th century Iceland. Eric Thorgrimursson (nicknamed "Brighteyes" for his most notable trait), strives to win the hand of his beloved, Gudruda the Fair. Her father Asmund, a priest of the old Norse gods, opposes the match, thinking Eric a man without prospects. But deadlier by far are the intrigues of Swanhild, Gudruda's half-sister and a sorceress who desires Eric for herself. She persuades the chieftain Ospakar Blacktooth to woo Gudrida, making the two men enemies. Battles, intrigues, and treachery follow.

Excerpt from Eric Brighteyes

Madam,

You have graciously conveyed to me the intelligence that during the weary weeks spent far from his home - in alternate hope and fear, in suffering and mortal trial - a Prince whose memory all men must reverence, the Emperor Frederick, found pleasure in the reading of my stories: that "they interested and fascinated him." While the world was watching daily at the bedside of your Majesty's Imperial husband, while many were endeavouring to learn courage in our supremest need from the spectacle of that heroic patience, a distant writer little knew that it had been his fortune to bring to such a sufferer an hour's forgetfulness of sorrow and pain.

The knowledge, to an author, is far dearer than any praise, and it is in gratitude that, with your Majesty's permission, I venture to dedicate to you the tale of "Eric Brighteyes."

Eric Brighteyes Details

Date : Published January 1st 1974 by Zebra Historic Fantasy (first published 1891)

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Author : H. Rider Haggard

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From Reader Review Eric Brighteyes for online ebook

Qelilah says

I should probably read the book. The audiobook was bothersome, uneven, and some mumbling. I see others liked the book, so, I'll probably break down and read the book after I retire and have time to stay still.

Denton Holland says

My first encounter with Haggard's work will not be my last. A contemporary of Dickens and inspiration for Burroughs' creation of Tarzan, Haggard wrote similar epic tales well enough and long enough to earn a knighthood for his work. Anyone who enjoys the aforementioned Dickens and Burroughs, or Tolkien, will enjoy Haggard also.

Bettie? says

Gutenberg link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2721>

DEDICATION

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The late Emperor, at heart a lover of peace, though by duty a soldier of soldiers, might perhaps have cared to interest himself in a warrior of long ago, a hero of our Northern stock, whose days were spent in strife, and whose latest desire was Rest. But it may not be; like the Golden Eric of this Saga, and after a nobler fashion, he has passed through the Hundred Gates into the Valhalla of Renown.

To you, then, Madam, I dedicate this book, a token, however slight and unworthy, of profound respect and sympathy.

I am, Madam,

Your Majesty's most obedient servant,

H. Rider Haggard.

November 17, 1889.

To H.I.M. Victoria, Empress Frederick of Germany.

INTRODUCTION

"Eric Brighteyes" is a romance founded on the Icelandic Sagas. "What is a saga?" "Is it a fable or a true story?" The answer is not altogether simple. For such sagas as those of Burnt Njal and Grettir the Strong partake both of truth and fiction: historians dispute as to the proportions. This was the manner of the saga's growth: In the early days of the Iceland community—that republic of aristocrats—say, between the dates 900 and 1100 of our era, a quarrel would arise between two great families. As in the case of the Njal Saga, its cause, probably, was the ill doings of some noble woman. This quarrel would lead to manslaughter.

Jon Johnson says

While I enjoyed this book greatly it could be difficult to read at points because it was written to mimic the style of the Icelandic oral tradition of storytelling. But it is well worth the effort.

El Templo says

Eric Ojos Brillantes narra la historia de Eric, un vikingo islandés que se enamora de Gudruga la Hermosa, hija de Asmund el patriarca local. La historia del héroe nórdico, se nos presenta al más puro estilo de las sagas de aventuras islandesas y es un compendio de luchas con espada, magia negra y largos viajes. Durante todo el libro, Eric, que desde joven ha sido marcado por el destino y por los dioses, se ve envuelto en una vorágine de fatalidades que parecen conducirle irremediablemente hacia un final trágico. El elenco de personajes que lo acompañan a lo largo de su periplo, unos ayudándole y otros entorpeciendo sus tareas o ensombreciendo sus logros son igual de fascinantes o más que el propio protagonista. Así, podemos leer acerca de Skallagrim Lambstail, el berserker al que todos consideran un loco y amante de la sangre o de la propia Swanhild, la hermana bruja de Gudruda, de la que se diferencia como la noche se le diferencia al día y a la que envidia por su compromiso con Eric. El libro, editado por Miraguano Ediciones dentro de su colección "La cuna de Ulises" en 1991, nunca alcanzó una reimpresión y se encuentra en estos momentos descatalogado y fuera de colección en la editorial. => Sigue leyendo la reseña en <http://www.eltemplodelasmilpuertas.com>

Tomek Piorkowski says

"Eric Brighteyes" is a fantasy tragedy set mostly in Iceland and its surroundings. The story revolves around a

star-crossed love triangle between Eric, Gudrud, and Swanhild.

The language is written in what I like to call Epic English, with a lot of thees and thous, and it's done quiet well. If you ever read *The Worm Ouroboros* by ER Erikson, you'll feel that this is somewhat similar.

Despite the ending being revealed already in the beginning of the book with a prophecy, yet the way these characters struggle against their destinies is easy to relate to. Anyone who has felt trapped in their job or situation, or anyone who is overwhelmed by the thought that one day they too will die, can relate to these characters as they struggle to grasp and hold on to their happiness despite the fact that they are hurtling towards destruction. Inbetween there are plenty of prophecies, witcheries and ghosts to add to the atmosphere.

Although bleak, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and the struggle to find meaning in a world filled with death is one that resonates with me. I recommend it.

Tosh says

There lived a man in the south...He was named Eric Brighteyes, Thorgrimur's son, and in those days there was no man like him for strength, beauty, and daring, for in all these things he was the first. But he was not the first in good luck.

I enjoyed reading this. It was my first time getting a taste of an Icelandic saga, although I guess it's important to mention that H.R. Haggard was not himself Icelandic, but English. He wrote this book shortly after returning from a trip to Iceland, wanting to recreate the ancient storytelling style. So basically, this is not an "authentic" saga. But from what I've read, it seems he didn't do too bad a job by comparison.

Of woman, as of men...there is this to be said, that some are good and some are evil.

On the surface this is an epic Viking novel, but at its heart it's a tragic love triangle, and a fight between good and evil. From the first pages we're shown the path predetermined for the characters, only to watch as each decision is a potential foot in the direction of that destiny. I enjoyed the adventure, the mythology, the magic and superstition, but boy was it frustrating to follow the path these characters were going down. It was hard to watch the characters fall into obvious traps, and continue to make similar mistakes. Eric isn't so much a man of ill-luck, he's more often than not, gullible. Like Thor to Loki, he falls for all the lies and tricks, when he already knows the nature of his antagonist.

Also worth mentioning - there are a lot of "thees" and "thous." If you've read the KJV Bible this shouldn't be an issue, but might take some getting used to otherwise. There does seem to be some repetition in the story, which slows the pace a little. I know I felt like it would never end sometimes. And interestingly enough Tolkien read this as a child and commented positively about it - his recommendation might mean more than mine.

I'm so happy I came across this book. It was entertaining and worth the time I put into it. I would recommend this to anyone who loves classic literature, fantasy and adventure. If you're interested this is a public domain book, so you should be able to find it free for download online.

Sarah Sammis says

I love the illustrations and the story might be interesting but I'm going to have to accept that I don't like Haggard's writing style. He tried too hard to make the story read like a classic Norse epic and the language comes off both repetitive and forced. If you want to read a good Norse epic, read Beowulf.

I do have to give the book a 5 out of 5 for Lancelot Speed's illustrations. I would love to see one of the original editions. Take for example: Publisher: London: Longmans, Green, and Co., Date Published: 1891 Description: Octavo, pp. [1-2] [i-v] vi [vii] viii-x [xi] xii [xiii] xiv [1] 2-319 [320: blank] [note: blank leaf precedes half title leaf] + 16-page publisher's catalogue dated "12/90" on page 16 inserted at rear, sixteen inserted plates plus other illustrations in the text by Lancelot Speed, original blue cloth over bevel-edged boards, front and spine panels stamped in gold, black coated endpapers. First edition. 10, 000 copies printed. Barron (ed), Fantasy Literature 2-72.

Unfortunately these retail at \$75 and up. Oh well. :)

Chris says

Haggard is unrivalled in describing thrilling adventure whether it be man against unforgiving nature, or armed combat, however his use of an artificial archaic language detracts from the power of a principled Icelander caught between the loves of two half-sisters, naturally one being good and the other being evil. Another weakness is a repetition of plot, in which otherwise smart men, after declaring that a woman has always been proven to be untrustworthy, decide to trust that woman, only to be betrayed. One last difference from an authentic saga is a reliance on supernatural elements. This is not a drawback, like the aforementioned language and plot weaknesses, but changes this from a traditional saga to a supernatural story of one man's unavoidable doom. And yes, this is one story where evil does win!

Sylvester says

Lots of prophesying going on in "Eric Brighteyes" - it seems almost any character is up to it - bad or good, dead or alive. So we know what's going to happen, and so do the protagonists (although they don't seem to make much effort to escape their fate). We may know what's going to happen, but not how, and this is what really matters. There's a lot of fighting and killing - the tragedy is right up there with Hamlet - hardly anyone left alive. I loved the part where Eric gets back from exile and only his old dog is there to greet him - shades of Odysseus all over.

Things I learned:

Don't go to an Icelandic wedding. (There will be blood.)

Don't make promises not to change your hairstyle.
Definitely get a baresarker for a buddy, but keep him away from booze!!
It's not so great to be gorgeous.

I sometimes found the style tedious (more my mood than a criticism, by the way), but the end - the end! So stirring and worthwhile - loved it! A parade of all the people he has killed, and then a last battle. For saga-lovers, I recommend.

Joe Minichino says

fantastic saga pastiching set in Iceland

Richard says

Not for me. The writing is archaic and could be hard to follow. Too much dialogue and not much exciting action. Don't get me wrong, there is plenty of fighting but reading all those pages of Eric vanquishing his foes almost effortlessly becomes tedious. The plot was linear and oh so transparent. Mostly though, it was the poor choices all the characters made over and over; especially Eric that just ruined the book for me. This book came highly recommended, I just couldn't enjoy it. The only positive thing I have to say about the book is the price: free.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

Apparently this was one of two books that Tolkien claimed as influencing *The Lord of the Rings*--and I can easily see that, as Haggard tries to create a work in the spirit, and somewhat in the style, of the old Norse legends. I'm not going to claim that Haggard even at his best is the same order of classic as the best by Charles Dickens, the Brontes, George Eliot or Thomas Hardy. But like fellow Victorians Arthur Conan Doyle or Robert Louis Stevenson or Rudyard Kipling, Haggard really could spin a good yarn, and the fantasy genre in general owes him a great debt. Ten of his books are on my bookshelves. I gobbled those up in my teens and most I remember very, very well even decades later. My favorite of his novels involve Ayesha, known as She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, especially the book *Wisdom's Daughter*. But, with perhaps the exception of *The World's Desire*, Haggard's tale of Odysseus, this is my second favorite of the Haggard books I've read and if Ayesha is the most formidable and unforgettable of Haggard heroines, Eric for me is his most memorable hero, even over the more famous Allan Quartermain of *King Solomon's Mines*.

Rod says

★★★★½

This isn't the best modern pastiche of the Viking saga style that I've read (that would be Frans Gunnar Bengtsson's *The Long Ships*), but it's a very, very good one. Not being overly familiar with the original sagas, I can't speak to its accuracy, but it certainly *feels* authentic enough. You'll need to have a high tolerance for archaisms (thankfully, I do), as "thee"s and "thou"s abound. For some that may be a deal-breaker, but for me it just adds to the flavor. Haggard's intention was to emulate the style and setting of the sagas while stripping it down and removing much of the emphasis on family ancestry and legal matters, and instead focusing on heroism, action and drama in order to deliver a ripping good yarn—and that he did.

Haggard could certainly write exciting, visceral action scenes, and he knew how to create compelling heroes, villains and situations that draw one into a story. Seriously, this sumbitch *moves*. That said, I did have some problems with Haggard's writing choices. He would, on more than a few occasions (usually during intense action scenes), switch from past tense to present tense. I don't know if this was a general quirk in Haggard's writing style or if he was intentionally doing this to mimic the style of a particular saga, but I found it somewhat jarring. However, it does lend a certain immediacy to the scenes that were written in this fashion, so perhaps that was what Haggard was going for, but I still didn't care for that aspect of his writing. Not that it detracted from the enjoyment in any way, but it just triggered that instinctive reaction of "Hey, you're not supposed to *do* that!" in me that I had to fight to suppress.

Also, Haggard occasionally introduces key story elements late in the game that would have worked much better if they had been introduced earlier. For instance, if two star-crossed lovers, when they were children, had each taken the half of a gold coin as a symbol of their devotion to each other (and that could later be used by a messenger as a crucial token of identification), don't you think that would have been better, from a narrative standpoint, if it were introduced in the opening chapters, when they were still children, rather than two-thirds of the way through the book? That was certainly how I felt, and when I find myself editing an author's work and thinking of ways in which it could have been done better *as I'm reading it*, that usually isn't a good sign.

However, in the case of *Eric Brighteyes*, any complaints fell by the wayside as the enjoyment of reading Haggard's thrilling saga pastiche almost completely negated my minor qualms. It's a blast to read, a rousing derring-do adventure with engaging heroes and villains and an enthralling story. Haggard was trying to make an updated version of Icelandic sagas, but because of the heavy emphasis on magic and the supernatural in addition to the feats of sword-wielding badassery, the result is basically a proto-sword-and-sorcery novel, not unlike something Fritz Leiber would have written fifty years later. Good, fun stuff.

Terry says

Let me admit at the start that I've been on an Old Norse and Anglo Saxon kick lately. I picked up this book because it was mentioned in a recorded lecture by the Anglo Saxonist Dr. Drout. (This is not an easy book to find. I had to request it through interlibrary loan.) Apparently J.R.R. Tolkein - who was a professor of Anglo Saxon studies at Oxford - referred to this book as one of two that most influenced his ideas for Lord of the Rings. In this novel Haggard attempts to take the flavor of Old Norse epic poetry and translate it into a modern novel. If you are interested in Vikings and Anglo Saxons, but find Beowulf hard to read, then you will enjoy this book. I did. Haggard captures the time and place of the vikings with a combination of old and modern language that is accessible but true to the spirit of the Vikings.

Eric Brighteyes is a handsome, strong and brave (and naive and dimwitted) young man in Iceland who falls in love with Gudruda the Fair, and she falls in love with him. The problem is that Gudruda's half sister,

Swanhild, who practices witchcraft for a good time, also falls in love with Eric. Love triangles being the rather precarious circumstances that they are - especially when they involve sorcery, invincible swords, and baresarks (look it up) - this leads to numerous magical and bloody conflicts as Eric tries to create a life with Gudruda. As any good Old Norse poem should, this story ends in bloody but heroic tragedy.

Haggard is masterful in his use of Old Norse traditions and words. His writing style in this book sounds like old English without being old English. It has the style of the King James Bible or Shakespeare, but is not so difficult to read. This is not an intellectual story, because Vikings weren't exactly intellectuals, but they knew how to cleave skulls using swords with cool names.

Mike says

H Rider Haggard -- best known for his adventure tales set in Africa, like "King Solomon's Mines" and "She" -- wrote one of, if not the first, modern English sagas in the Icelandic model. (William Morris' "House of the Wolfings" was published at about the same time, from I've read so far it also models itself on the Icelandic saga.)

Haggard wrote this shortly after a visit to Iceland, and he did his best to incorporate the best of the sagas -- poetic descriptions of landscapes, seascapes, and battle, clever word-play and dialogue, and above all the muscular paganism of the Viking world -- while leaving out the most tedious part (long catalogs of lineages and digressions about minor characters). So this is a lot more accessible than similar works like E.R. Eddison's "Styrbjorn the strong" or Poul Anderson's "Hrolf Krakis saga" -- both of which are excellent in their ways and worth reading too!

Haggard's hero is a fairly typical type of saga hero: brave and honorable, strong and handsome, and doomed by tragic character flaws and choices. The story has a fairly simple set-up: two half-sisters both love the hero, and his choice between them causes the scorned sister to wreak a drawn-out, perfidious revenge.

Along the way Eric fights a berserker, makes powerful enemies who have him outlawed, and sets sail on a viking expedition where he joins the court of an English king. His fights against warriors, witchcraft, and the deadly forces of nature at land and sea, and eventually returns to Iceland to face his destiny.

The pacing and action are excellent, and his slightly archaic language evoke the sagas well. The plot details all feel appropriate to the genre, but are also inventive and don't just copy the sources. The elements of magic and mysticism are also appropriate, and reminded me of the more fantastic sagas like "Grettir's Saga."

I listened to a dramatic reading of this via LibriVox, and the reader's enthusiasm for the story made it an especially good LibriVox recording, though some of the voicing, especially for the female characters, was unintentionally funny.

Joseph says

Second of Haggard's big historical epics (after Cleopatra). In this case, we have a viking story modeled very

consciously on the old Icelandic sagas [ASIDE: I hadn't really realized how much of a presence the vikings had in Iceland, nor that so many of the big stories we know are actually from there, not from up in Scandinavia.] Our hero, Eric Brighteyes is, of course, young, handsome, strong and brave (and possibly not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but let's never mind that for now). Naturally, there are women -- the fair Gudruda, daughter of the Priest Asmund and the equally fair, but witchy and evil and Finnish Swanhild. There are villains, most notably the unpleasant Ospakar Blacktooth. There are companions, most notably the "Baresark" Skallagrim Lambstail. And if you think this story is one of those that has a happy ending, you may not be overly familiar with the Icelandic sagas ... But it's a rousing tale of love and adventure and not a little bit of witchery, written in a lovely, slightly archaic, slightly elevated style that reads just as well now as it did when it was published 125+ years ago.

And there are also a couple of weddings that are not entirely unlike the sort favored by George R.R. Martin

• • •

Cindy says

Haggard's classic Viking romantic tragedy is one of the finest novels of its genre. It is a fast-paced story filled with all the great elements literature, including a hero often blind to those who betray him to his tragic end. Haggard's rich use of language makes the reader feel the frigid desperation of the a winter storm on the Northern Atlantic, the bloodlust of a desperate duel between two raging Viking warriors, as well as the fire of young love that leads the lovers to their doom. The most amazing fact is Haggard wrote this epic tale in a mere four months!

Trouinin says

(c) Trounin

Kami Li says

pami?taj m?oj z?oty... kobiety to tylko k?opoty...

