



## The Age of Odin

*James Lovegrove*

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Gideon Dixon was a good soldier but bad at everything else. Now the British Army doesn't want him any more. So when he hears about the Valhalla Project it seems like a dream come true. They're recruiting from service personnel for excellent pay with no questions asked to take part in unspecified combat operations. The last thing Gideon expects is to find himself fighting alongside the gods of the ancient Norse pantheon. The world is in the grip of one of the worst winters it has ever known, and Ragnarok-the fabled final conflict of the Sagas-is looming.

## The Age of Odin Details

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Author : James Lovegrove

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## From Reader Review The Age of Odin for online ebook

### Cris says

Meh. That's the best I can say about this book. No one aspect is truly terrible, but almost every aspect is--at best--okay. And all together they proved an exercise in patience.

Lovegrove seems to be attempting to create a mindless action-adventure/blow-everything-up story. However, for a successful mindless action-adventure story my book group decided you need: enjoyable action/explosions/chases/etc, likable characters, and a clear and laudable goal. *The Age of Odin* lacked these characteristics.

There are a lot of fight scenes (and I admit the level of detail of the damage inflicted on the combatants was more than I was comfortable with), but they didn't impress anyone in my group. The narrator (Gid) is an unlikable character who never developed as a character. And I became increasingly annoyed that even though Gid is a loser in pretty much every way he somehow ends up with a lot of influence that he shouldn't have.

As for the goal. . .there's a lot of fighting between Gid's side and the other side. And I couldn't decide which side I wanted to win. Well before the end, I decided I didn't care. I was just looking forward to the end of the book.

And I felt the end was a cop-out. It seemed to negate the entire story.

I had intended to read the other books in this series, but I will NOT read anything further by this author.

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### Hamish Patterson says

I wanted to like this book. I've got an avid interest in Norse mythology, I enjoy fantasy and military fiction. I haven't read any of the authors' other works and chose this one specifically because I thought it'd be right up my alley - the concept sounded like it'd make for a good story.

Unfortunately, all that said, it didn't deliver. I'll be honest and admit I didn't even finish it - bear this in mind when reading the following review. The biggest problem is the protagonist - he's a Gary Stu. Sometimes this can be forgivable or even enjoyable in an escapist way, but not here. His story (written in first-person) reads like the wish-fulfilment of your typical British 'ardman. I get what the author was going for - that sort of macho, movie action anti-hero loner archetype who's also a bit snarky, unfortunately he just doesn't quite balance this out with enough humanity or depth to make him likeable (or even believable). If you're a fan of the action genre, you can see what's going to happen long before it does, which may explain why I didn't bother reading on.

The story itself is a bit problematic and that is another reason why the main character's Gary Stu qualities are all the more overbearing. Simply put, there isn't a strong enough narrative, with a goal or quest or conflict driving the story forward. Instead (spoiler alert), the protagonist simply bounces from heroic deed to heroic deed, beating up Thor, having sex with Freya, etc. with little in the way of motivation. I feel that the author might have had more luck making the story a bit less 'personal' to the central character - perhaps working in

third person might have helped make it read less like a daydream diary, but I'm not sure.

I wouldn't write this author off entirely on the basis of this one work - he can obviously string his sentences together and I wouldn't be surprised if perhaps he's done other work of a higher standard of quality. I simply wouldn't recommend this book.

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### **Flint says**

The Norse gods have apparently lost most of their powers over the generations as less and less people remember and worship them. Now in the present, they are doing battle against Loki who has become president of the United States and is using futuristic weapons developed by the military to take out Odin and his family. To combat Loki, Odin has hired several hundred ex military personnel to make up his own personal army against Loki. Despite what I just wrote, this book is really about one ex soldier and how handles his new life in this army.

The part of all this that I find most puzzling is how uninteresting this premise is considering the unique opportunity Lovegrove gave himself when he decided to use the Norse gods in his story. It would seem to me that a wiser choice would have been to feature the gods in all their glory and in their world. I didn't see any point in neutering them and then sticking them with a bunch of drunk, divorced and washed out military types in our crappy realistic world. I almost got to page 300 when I finally gave up.

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### **Tarl says**

Wow. Just... wow.

I'd read Lovegrove's *The Age of Ra* not too long ago, and had enjoyed aspects of his storytelling enough that I decided to pick up this book. Where I enjoyed *The Age of Ra*, *The Age of Odin* was by far a better book in pretty much all aspects and has left me feeling oddly exhilarated, empowered, and interestingly enough, spiritually uplifted.

Lovegrove's primary strength within this novel is his characters. From the protagonist Gid, to the Norse gods themselves, and even the antagonists, each one is given a level of characterization that creates a very real person in the mind's eye of the reader. Each carries with them their own backgrounds, motivations, personality traits, and you start to care for them fairly early in the tale. Gid is a flawed man, and his flaws are very realistic and easy to relate to. The issues in his life aren't over the top, they haven't honed him to a perfect killing machine, but they are something that the reader can get behind. You want to see Gid succeed, more so as the novel progresses from one point to another. The Norse pantheon is handled with a shockingly good level of detail and Lovegrove manages to make each one more than simply a myth. Through Gid's interactions with them, it is extremely easy to get attached to each of the characters. (so much so you almost start to care for them as much as you did Gid, especially Odin)

The mixing of modern military actions and mythological combat is handled really well in this book. Lovegrove combines modern weaponry with mythological creatures with an expert's pen. There are a couple points with some of the modernized myth creature/machines where they seem a bit like they are pushing the envelope, but Lovegrove does such a good job incorporating and explaining them that they are easy to accept within the bounds of the story.

I could easily go on in this review commenting on things like how well the tension was done, or the romantic interest, or the politics, and such. But that would lead to a very boring and drawn out review that no one would want to read. There are points where some of the brutality may get to some of the readers, but compared to other books I am reading at the moment, they seemed actually toned down and far more pleasurable.

All in all, there's very little I can complain about in this book, and if there was anything I had noticed was bad during reading, it got swept away with everything that happens and all the greatness of the tale that Lovegrove told. To anyone who enjoys mythology, especially Norse, military fiction, or are simply looking for something different, I recommend picking this novel up. I really enjoyed it.

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### **Sue McGarvie says**

still pulling aces from up the sleeve. So I finally finished reading this book, the author did a great job keeping me on edge until the last page. I never saw what was coming and it was perfectly amazing. The descriptions used were so vivid I could see the different places and characters as if they were standing in front of me, the narration of all actions was almost painfully perfect, you'll know what I mean by painfully when you reach 97% of the book and read what happens there. Gideon Coxall is my newest friend, even though his best friend in the book is nicknamed... Abortion!!!

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### **Paul says**

Gideon Coxall was a good soldier but bad at everything else, until a roadside explosive device leaves him with one deaf ear and a British Army half-pension. So when he hears about the Valhalla Project, it's like a dream come true. They are recruiting former service personnel for excellent pay, no questions asked, to take part in unspecified combat missions.

The last thing Gid expects is to find himself fighting alongside ancient Viking gods. The world is in the grip of the worst winter ever known, and Ragnarok – the fabled final conflict of the sagas – is looming.

I knew nothing about The Pantheon Trilogy before I stumbled across The Age of Zeus in my local bookshop. The cover boasted an angry looking Anthony Hopkins look-a-like and a group of tooled up military types, I was intrigued. When I learned the story detailed the return of the ancient gods of Greece in the modern era I was sold. Fortunately my gamble paid off and I was treated to a fantastic read. The Age of Ra, which is in fact the first in this trilogy, soon followed and once again I was not disappointed. I should point out here that though this is a trilogy, each novel is standalone in nature but thematically similar.

The Age of Odin by James Lovegrove is released a week today, on the 6th January 2011, and completes the trilogy. This novel charts the return of the ancient Norse gods and their preparations for Ragnarok – the final destiny of the gods.

All the familiar names from Norse mythology appear – Odin, Thor, Loki, Freya, Frigga, The Valkyries and Heimdall are all present in one form or another. There are also wolves, witches, frost giants, trolls and gnomes in the mix.

Like The Age of Ra, and the Age of Zeus before it, Lovegrove has taken the key elements from the appropriate mythology, in this instance Norse, and re-imagined it with a 21st century slant. For those familiar with Norse mythology this is a real treat. For example both the Midgard Serpent and Fenrir appear in the novel but not in quite the same manner as in the ancient tales.

The character of Gideon Coxall is just an average man who is initially drawn to the Valhalla Project with thoughts of cash but as the story develops he realises that war is his true calling. The novel is written from the first person perspective so the reader gets direct insight into Gid's motivations. Gid has quite a bolshie attitude when dealing with others. It doesn't matter if they are friend or foe he deals with them all in the same way. He has a smart mouth on him and that leads to some nice comedic moments, usually when his pop culture references fall flat in front of the gods.

As with the other novels in the trilogy there are some fantastic action sequences throughout the book. In particular the final battle for Valhalla was very well done and had an almost cinematic quality to it.

If I had any complaint it would be that I wish the book were longer. Though the novel was nearly six hundred pages long I felt there could have been a bit more. The final epilogue seemed to be a little bit rushed and I could have happily read a few additional chapters.

Overall this novel is wonderful winter reading. It certainly helped set the scene for me that it was snowing outside while I read it. Based on the weather at the moment I could easily believe the Fimbulwinter is upon us.

Thanks to Solaris Books for the opportunity to read.

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### **Elizabeth says**

If you like books that use pages and pages to describe battles with no character development to speak of, this book is for you.

It wasn't for me, though.

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### **Kevin Alistair says**

Probably the best quotation from a book I have read in a long time - and on the topic of God no less. Gid asks Odin what the capital-G God is like. To which Odin replies, "...I don't believe in Him, and if He does exist, I don't like Him. His type of gods aren't gods who echo how mortals behave. They're gods who are held up as example of perfection to be emulated. They're not gods of the people. They're remote and inaccessible, they demand blind, unthinking obedience from their followers. They're dictators. We Aesir and Vanir, by contrast, are mirrors. Other gods rule. We reflect and magnify. We are you, only more so. We share your flaws and foibles. We are as humanlike as we are divine, and I think we are all the better for that

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## Aparajitabasu says

The last Pantheonic saga of *James Lovegrove, The Age of Odin* . If they say Ra was spiritual then what would you call Odin - I'd say on the level of faith and spiritual matter Age of Odin ranks higher.

Here is the summary:

*Gideon Dixon was a good solider but bad at everything else. Now the British Army doesn't want him any more. So when he hears about the Valhalla Project it seems like a dream come true. They're recruiting former service personnel for execellent pay, no questions asked, to take part in unspecified combat operations. The last thing Gideon expects is to finding himself fighting alongside the gods of the ancient Norse pantheon. The world is in the grip of one of the worst winters it has ever known, and Ragnarok-the fabled final conflict of the Sagas-is looming.*

To put it simply The Age of Odin may well be the most different of the three than you might think. At the heart of it all is the one old lore fashioned or modeled as new. It's a modern adaptation of Ragnarok, the fabled apocalypse of the Norse. The main character finds himself coming to terms with the idea that Gods are real, and he is destined to aid them. The "upgrades" in rolls of the likes of Loki, and several other big players in Ragnarok were an interesting and original take, the book itself kept me interested from the first page where I was asking "Hows this washed up old soldier supposed to be a hero" to the end where I was left with a big grin on my face.

Gideon Coxall, pensioned-off soldier, is having hard time fitting into the civilian world. His wife has left him, he can't see his son, he drinks too much and, much to his own disgust, the only job he can find involves him selling refurbished printer toners. When the chance comes up to do a little (probably dodgy) mercenary work, Gideon pounced. Ostensibly, he needs the cash. But deep inside, he knows that he belongs in combat.

The story kicks off with a car crash. Gideon skids off the road on his way to meet his mysterious employer and, when the dust (or the snow) settles, he finds himself in an armoured encampment filled with lunatics pretending to be Norse gods. Odin is a crabby old man, Thor is a drunken brute and Freya is an Amazonian dream-girl. Gideon makes some token efforts to escape, but a few close encounters with frost giants and trolls make a believer of him.

Unfortunately for Gideon, he's signed up to a noble cause on the eve of Ragnarok: the ancient Viking myth of Armageddon. If first half of the book involves Gideon finding his place alongside the friendly (if feisty) Nordic gods, the second half is nigh-on continuous battle. For those familiar with Norse mythology, the sequence of events is a verse by verse, tongue in cheek translation: generally swapping enormous RoboTech-style tanks for mythical creatures. Why bother housing and feeding the actual Midgard Serpeant when you can kitbash together a burrowing Destructicon with a sonic cannon on its nose?

Gid has a hard time believing the big man in charge of the Valhalla project is actually the Allfather of Norse myth, Odin. Odin is preparing for the fated final battle, and as Gid joins Odin's forces, he brawls with and fights alongside Thor, becomes enamored with Freya, is healed by Odin's wife, Frigga, and learns of the treacherous deeds of Loki.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the novel is Lovegrove's ability to end each chapter on a hook that begs the next chapter. Lovegrove's narrative makes no apologies for the over-the-top concept of the story, he takes it as seriously as possible, and tells a story that is gripping. In totality, Lovegrove has written a book that is

difficult to put down. In some senses, the novel reads as a very high-octane masculine fantasy, but again, Lovegrove's storytelling ability helps to gloss over any shortcomings. The novel is told in the first person and works very well to convey the protagonist's thoughts and, of course, how Gid sees the Norse gods as real. Gid is not well-versed in Norse mythology so it takes a bit for him to fully guess at the gravity of his situation. Lovegrove injects humor into the story, mostly through Gid's snarky comments.

Here again we see a few similarity with Ra - its all about faith and belief in a higher power - whoever that may be the various pantheons of the world or if you choose to believe in the one power from which everything arises. The various pantheons may very well be real - all the old stories must have come from somewhere. But yes it is your belief that makes them real. The Age of Odin is a fiercely humanist text. The gods and monsters may have the advantage of height (and big hammers), but humans have true authority. The mythological creatures are stuck in their paths - they are controlled by fate and, ultimately, the power of storytelling. By contrast, we remain the authors of both our own destinies and those of our collectively appointed deities. Lovegrove is vigorously carving out a godpunk subgenre - rebellious underdog humans battling an outmoded belief system. Guns help a bit, but the real weapon is free will.

I would like to mention though probably the best quotation from a book I have read in a long time - and on the topic of God no less. Gid asks Odin what the capital-G God is like. To which Odin replies, "...I don't believe in Him, and if He does exist, I don't like Him. His type of gods aren't gods who echo how mortals behave. They're gods who are held up as example of perfection to be emulated. They're not gods of the people. They're remote and inaccessible, they demand blind, unthinking obedience from their followers. They're dictators. We Aesir and Vanir, by contrast, are mirrors. Other gods rule. We reflect and magnify. We are you, only more so. We share your flaws and foibles. We are as humanlike as we are divine, and I think we are all the better for that. And not to forget the Braggi's poems - a perfect comic relief.

Absolutely amazing work here, and a must read for any fan of Norse Myth, Heathenism and the like. All the three - Age of Ra, Zeus and Odin would make great movies or games if initiative be taken.

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### **Jeffrey Jelmeland says**

Honestly, I don't think I can say I read this book as I wasn't even able to get past the first chapter. What I read convinced me that the author was more interested in using profanity and colorful alliteration rather than doing any real story telling. So glad that I only checked it out from the library rather than wasting my money buying a copy.

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### **Timothy Urges says**

This would be better 300 pages shorter, and without the weird racist, homophobic, transphobic remarks. I did not enjoy this narrator.

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And (SPOILER ALERT) how did I know the only POC character would end up being the traitor.

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### **David Stringer says**

I bought this book as I liked the idea behind it, and it did seem to have a lot of good reviews, all about a down on his luck, out of work, injured ex-soldier stumbling into finding and joining the Norse gods battle a war. With Odin and Thor etc. all in the mix, so I thought yeah, this should be good.

Then disappointment sets in almost straight away. The main character Gid I can't stand. Too much of a 'Lad' with his drinking, fighting, leching and constant swearing. A conversation early on with his friend is littered with, I felt, unnecessary swearing! Don't believe I'm too sensitive, but it put me right off.

Then this out of work, already injured and to be fair loser becomes an overnight hero and tactical genius. Early on when he first meets and fights Thor for example, although already half deaf from previous injuries he has recently just survived a car crash, caught in a violent snow storm and being savagely attacked and wounded by a pack of wild wolves manages to best Thor, the mighty Thor!, with a stick. Mmmmmmmmm?

So no, I really didn't enjoy this book, skipped pages towards the end in a hurry to end the book.

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### **Cameron Ryan says**

I can't say I've ever put down a book this quickly before. I initially read it as part of my book club on the recommendation of one of the clubs members . He liked the sounds of it, and really wanted the club to check it out.

... Only a single member ended up finishing the book. We all felt the entire cast of characters, the setting, and just about every other detail of the book was absolutely horrid. Save yourself the trouble, and skip this book.

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### **Sarah Adams says**

This one I couldn't finish. It started strong with vivid imagery and a distinct protagonist's voice. But then it didn't go anywhere. The character doesn't develop and neither does the plot - it just wanders around waiting, literally, for Ragnarok to happen. It takes the protagonist more than half the book simply to accept the reality he's been handed, which might be realistic, but it's not entertaining and it doesn't move the plot forward enough. That's not enough conflict to keep me interested.

Also, I have a small and possibly unfair peeve against people who employ characters out of mythology. I don't object to it, but when it's done, I expect two things. 1. That the writer will have an in depth grasp of the material - enough to play with the myth's major components without violating them. And 2. that the characters taken out of myth will be as fully realized as people in the book's world as any other character. Neil Gaiman did it brilliantly in American Gods and Anansi Boys. Here that level of complexity just doesn't happen and so the gods aren't very interesting people. For example, Thor's good humor, which is a major feature of his character in the sagas, is missing here. If you're going to turn Thor into a lunkhead who can't do anything but fight and display his pride, there needs to be a reason within the story. Finally, scornful

blondes who won't let a man so much as look at them are old hat in this genre. Even if she is a goddess, she needs a better and more complex set of characteristics than that or she's nothing but another stuck up beauty.

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### **Chelsea says**

I was really hoping to like this book a lot better. It revolved around a loser named Gid, who is "Special." By the middle (I think?) of the book, he's got Odin deferring to him, he's doling out commands to the Aesir, he's beaten up Thor, had sex with Freya and the three sisters are calling him a Hero With A Capital H. This guy figures out everything before other people do, formulates brilliant military strategies (all revolving around a "pincer formation") and beats frost giants with their own weapons.

It just didn't add up. The main character is a loser. Total loser. He beat the crap out of a guy, apparently for not liking the look of him. He can't hold down a job cos he's a fighter. That's what he does, and he can't do anything else. The little bit that really rubbed me the wrong way was when the three oracles showed him the film of his life. In a way, it seemed to shift the blame for his fucked-up life to everyone else in his surroundings, and absolving him of responsibility because, well, he's a Hero.

I really wish this book would have done a better job of showing you the bigger picture, especially since there was all this talk about catastrophic weather changes in the beginning. It seemed like foreshadowing, or at the very least, slightly important information, but it didn't really matter. I honestly skimmed the last quarter of this pile of crap. I am disappointed because I wanted to read Age of Ra, but I won't waste my time.

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