



Speculative Fiction Book Review

Book Title	Why Odin Drinks
Author	Bjørn Larssen
Date	March 2022
Stars	★★★★★

Satire isn't easy to write. It demands an additional ingredient to the usual literary mix. Humour. And not just any humour either. We're not talking the occasional joke. Humour needs to make the reader *giggle throughout the story*. So we're talking sustainability here. It's like writing an entire set for a stand-up comedian. Plus, **the humour must target the topics being satirised**. It needs an acidic edge that makes the reader THINK!

I am fascinated by Norse mythology. It's why I used it for my latest novel, **The Valkyrie of Vanaheim** (*no plug intended. All, right, perhaps a bit of one. I need to eat once a month.*) Bjørn says on his [website](#) that the story developed out of the weird, unanswered questions such as: your wife sees the future but refuses to tell you any of it! You have to hang from a tree with a spear in his side. I mean, why?? Bjørn provides answers to these riddles.

My main reason for loving this story so much is its humour. I giggled a lot. Out loud. I don't do that very often. (I'm old and miserable.) Here's how this wannabe Viking managed it.

This creation story, told primarily from Odin's point of view, **exaggerates** the ridiculousness of starting a world from scratch. It's compounded by sibling rivalry where Odin and his two brothers (he has brothers??) compete to create the best things. If this part doesn't turn you vegan then you are heartless and I have nothing more to say to you.

There is also the **incongruity** of set pieces which draw attention to the ridiculousness of world-making and its consequences. Why would any god see fit to create mosquitoes, wasps and celery? Their drawbacks lead to silly outcomes that will set you off giggling. They will!

As the story progresses, the All-Father's power is subverted, **reversing** the conventions attached to godhood. There is an hilarious section between Odin and Heimdall, he of the muscles, perfect skin and huge double entendre. It grows (sorry!) to include Heimdall's fella, Daddy Mimir. (I'm giggling as I write this!) He offers a new take on wisdom – or wis-dom.

The cleverest parts are the **parodies**. The sections which mimic and mock our existence on this blue blob in the universe. The ending proved difficult to read. With events in the world as they are (eg. The invasion of Ukraine) the author's observations proved unnervingly accurate. There is philosophy here which hits the satire target repeatedly and with force. If it doesn't startle you and give you pause, well, no wonder you ain't vegan.

Why Odin Drinks is funny, heart-warmingly so at times. It makes you smile but it also makes you think. As Jonathan Swift, another literary satirist once said, "*Satire is a glass wherein beholders discover everybody's face but their own.*"

Bjørn Larsson is a modern-day Swift.