



## Speculative Fiction Book Review

Book Title	<b>Paternus: War of Gods</b>
Author	<b>Dyrk Ashton</b>
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Stars	

As Epic Fantasy goes, you can't get more epic than Dyrk Ashton's finale to his trilogy. It's impossible. It is a vast, sprawling drama which covers worlds, Time and dimensions. It incorporates every god, monster, mythology character and fantasy creature that has ever existed. As if that isn't enough, the story builds to an epic climax which cannot get any bigger - but I won't disclose how to avoid spoilers. But it's huge.

All the way through this story I've found myself asking, "How does he do it?" How do you tell a story of such epic proportions? In a recent Twitter discussion, the definition of 'epic fantasy' was established as a story which would be recorded in historical chronicles by that society. If you apply that theory, War of Gods has to be Mega-Epic Fantasy.

But my question, "How does he do it?" refers to Dyrk Ashton's ability to retain the small details that make this story so human (despite the gods and monsters), so easy to engage in and so enthralling. My answer is that he tells the story like that of a documentary maker, a Louise Theroux. With cameras on drones, he visits and records the key moments of the narrative and the people enacting it.

He hovers above them to film in macro-vision, capturing huge events such as battles and the vast panoramas of the worlds we visit. Such as Asgard and the majesty of Yggdrasil, the World Tree. Then he zooms in to the specific events of each character's development; such as Fi becoming a Valkyrie or Zeke as he struggles to cope with his transformation into an Elemental. But the thing is, these are his protagonists, of course they get 'airtime'. But he applies the same discipline to his minor characters too. His drone camera zooms in to The Twins so we see the joy of their sibling relationship, we experience the transcendent calm and wisdom of Ganesh and the ferocity of Pruor, Fi's Valkyrie trainer, the love of Mrs Mirskaya, the canine fun of Mol and the ever-present fear of Tanuki. No one gets overlooked even though this film has a cast numbering in their hundreds.

You'll notice I haven't mentioned the story. I can't. It's too complex and would contain too many spoilers because it is full of twists and turns. Its planning must have been as epic as the story itself. So much happens yet with such amazing economy, it's an editor's delight. I revert to my mantra, "How did he do it?"

The very best books, the ones that stay with you long after the final page, are those that affect you emotionally. You engage with so many characters that you're sucked deeper and deeper into the story, another skill of the documentary-maker. At the same time the excitement level ramps up so you cannot put the book down. I read the last 25% in one afternoon. And I read the final pages with tears in my eyes. That's the sign of brilliance.