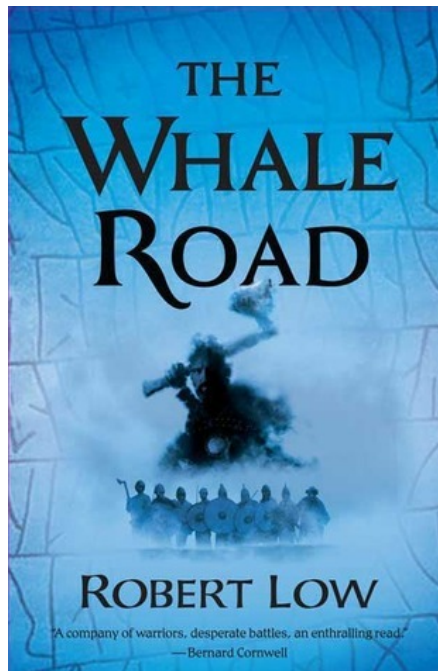




The Whale Road

Robert Low

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The Whale Road

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The Whale Road Robert Low

DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW WITH THIS LIMITED-TIME DISCOUNT ON BOOK ONE OF THE SERIES.

The first in the Oathsworn series, charting the adventures of a band of Vikings on the chase for the secret hoard of Attila the Hun.

In time with the magnificent British Museum Viking exhibition, comes the Oathsworn series, called 'enthraling' by fiction legend Bernard Cornwell, and known for its blockbuster battles and powerful suspense.

Life is savage aboard a Viking raider. Young Orm Rurikson is plucked from the snows of Norway to join his estranged father on the Fjord Elk, and becomes a member of the notorious crew – the Oathsworn. Hired as relic-hunters by the merchant rulers, and sent in search of a legendary sword of untold value to the new religion – their mission is treacherous. With only a young girl as guide, their quest will lead them on to the deep waters of the 'whale road', toward the cursed treasure of Attila the Hun. And to a challenge that will test the very bond that holds them together.

The Whale Road Details

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Author : Robert Low

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From Reader Review The Whale Road for online ebook

Wanda says

"Life is savage aboard a Viking raiding ship. When Orm Rurikson is plucked from the snows of Norway to brave the seas on the Fjord Elk, he becomes an unlikely member of the notorious crew. Although young, Orm must quickly become a warrior if he is to survive.

His fellow crew are the Oathsworn---named after the spoken bond that ties them in brotherhood. They fight hard, they drink hard, and they always defend their own.

But times are changing. Loyalty to the old Norse Gods is fading, and the followers of the mysterious "White Christ" are gaining power across Europe. Hired as relic hunters, the Oathsworn are sent in search of a sword believed to have killed the White Christ. Their quest will lead them onto the deep and treacherous waters of the whale road, toward the cursed treasure of Attila the Hun and to a challenge that presents the ultimate threat."

By Loki's hairy arse, this book is best read with a shot or two of Akvavit to get one in the mood for death and destruction. Because there's lots of both to go around.

Apparently the Oathsworn are like a cross between an urban street gang and the Mafia—once you're in, it's next to impossible to get out and your many acquired enemies will remember you forever and show up when you least expect them. Forget the whole "band of brothers" idea—these guys are held together more by an oath to Odin than to any personal loyalties.

Orm is no hero, but he keeps getting through situations that he realizes should have killed him, starting with being attacked by a formerly-captive polar bear, the accidental survival of which gives him his nickname, Bear Slayer. Unfortunately, Orm knows that the epithet isn't deserved and yet it places a target on his back—many men will want the glory of being the one to defeat the Bear Slayer.

This is very firmly a man's world—women feature only as wives (not seen very often), as witches (there are a couple of those), but mostly as thralls (slaves) suitable for housework and humping in the otherwise all-male camps. It is also a very violent world, filled with blood, guts, and shit—not a very glorious depiction of the battlefield. I appreciated the outlook that Low gives to Orm, that real battle is nothing like the glorious sagas of Norse culture. Other authors have explored the idea that heroes are actually people who have blundered through the danger of battle and survived only by luck (if you consider the survivors to be the lucky ones), like Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse Five*, for example. Low is no Vonnegut, but he certainly takes the glamour out of the battlefield.

I was interested to note that the author participates in Viking re-enactments during the summer season. Perhaps this helps with the depictions of the parry and thrust of his battle scenes in the book, which were very realistic. Nothing like actually being part of a shield wall to give him the language to describe it.

I will definitely be reading book two, *The Wolf Sea*, to see where Odin leads young Orm next.

Djordje says

UKUPNA OCENA (*overall rating*) - 6/10

Radnja (*story*) - 6/10

Likovi (*characters*) - 6/10

Pripovedanje (*writing style*) - 6/10

Okruženje (*setting*) - 7/10

Graham says

A good, solid, historical adventure. THE WHALE ROAD is the first in a series by Robert Low concerning the adventures of Orm and the Oathsworn, a band of vicious Vikings whose journeys take them all around the world.

The first thing you notice about this story is the level of violence. It makes Bernard Cornwell's writing look positively tame in comparison. There's death, destruction and hand-to-hand combat on every page, with an emphasis on the visual and visceral. There's also an incredibly high body count, the highest I've ever encountered in a book, and you start wondering whether anybody will make it out alive come the end.

The plotting and backstory isn't as important to Low as living in the moment, detailing a life set in miserable, cold surroundings punctuated by moments of extreme violence. The essence of the adventure is a hunt for the treasure of Attila the Hun, but at times it feels like a Macguffin, designed to keep the characters ever-moving.

There are flaws, particularly early on. The opening chapter is muddled, introducing a large cast while at the same time portraying some back story involving a fight with a polar bear. This makes for very confusing reading, but thankfully the rest of the story takes place in the present. The supporting cast is filled with larger than life characters, although the best is Hild, the sole female in the book who casts a long shadow over all the rest.

At its best, the story reminded me of Herzog's AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD, depicting a dwindling group of survivors seeking out their doom, with the presence of death ever near. Low's writing is excellent when it comes to describing action, and a rooftop chase is a particular highlight. Now my appetite has been whetted, I'll be on the lookout for the follow up, THE WOLF SEA.

Reggie Kray says

4.5*. Right on par with Cornwell and Kristian. Engaging plot. Complex characters. Loved it!

Tamara Agha-Jaffar says

Robert Low's The Whale Road takes us back to over a thousand years ago to experience life as a Viking raider through the voice of young Orm Rurikson. Orm becomes a member of the Oathsworn, the crew of a Viking raiding ship. The Oathsworn derive their name from an oath to Odin that binds them together in

brotherhood. They are hired as relic-hunters. Through the many twists and turns of the plot, they eventually end up seeking the buried treasure of Attila the Hun.

Low firmly thrusts the reader in a man's world. With one notable exception, women are treated as incidentals, there for the taking. The novel is replete with crashing shields, slashing swords, clanging metal, whizzing arrows, dismembered body parts, obscenities, foul smells, graphic descriptions of bodily functions, breast-thumping machismo, swinging axes, gushing blood, and fierce hand-to-hand combat.

The writing is fast-paced and vigorous—sometimes a little too fast because it was difficult at times to know what was happening and who was fighting whom. The confusion is compounded by the plethora of Nordic characters, some of whom are mentioned in a few lines or a few pages only to disappear entirely from the novel. The first few chapters are especially bewildering with their convoluted story line and flashbacks. The writing is a little choppy, but one eventually gets caught up in the rhythm of the book and gallops along with the events.

References to Norse mythology and the conflict with the “White Christ” abound. And punctuated throughout the blood and gore are moments of surprising humor. The Oathsworn tease each other mercilessly, engaging in friendly put-downs and snappy barbs that are funny.

As the narrator of events, Orm Rurikson is unflinchingly honest. He describes the battlefield as a grim and bloody killing fest, one that bears no relationship to the heroic battle descriptions in the sagas of Norse culture. Brotherhood oaths and shield walls notwithstanding, Orm recognizes survival on the battlefield may have as much to do with luck as skill.

With its vivid, gritty, and visceral descriptions, this is not a novel for the faint-hearted or for those seeking novels about polite society. But if you're looking for an action-packed, entertaining story, a compelling page-turner that grips you into the grisly warp and weft of a Viking raider's life, then this is a book for you.

Recommended.

Dawn says

At the beginning of the book I thought it was going to be 2 stars but it turned out to be a solid 4 star despite the first 100 pages.

Orm is a young man who has been fostered by his uncle since the age of 5. Incidents with his uncle and a white bear set him on a path with the Oathsworn, a group of Vikings traveling the known world as mercenaries. From reliquary hunters to besiegers of a fortress to treasure hunters, they travel where money and the whale road takes them and we follow Orm from untried youth to tested leader.

The beginning of the book was slow despite all the action; it was a bit convoluted with flashbacks and a large amount of character introductions. Once the book has launched into the travels it improves significantly. I admired the gritty realism of the battles, with terrible wounds and agonizing deaths, to the people of the era, from greedy rulers to thralls with nothing, it is what made this such a great book.

Marko Vasi? says

Onaj, koga Bernard Cornwell hvali, ne može da bude loš. Štaviše, od Roberta Lowa sam dobio upravo ono što sam i o?ekivao. Za razliku od Cornwella, u ?ijem se pisanju ose?a aristokratski duh, i koji piše o kraljevima i visokom plemstvu, te je, stoga, i re?nik koji koristi probran, Robert Low je odabrao arhetipske vikinge - zemljoradnike i seljake, te je u tom pogledu, negde, bliskiji Timu Severinu. Ovaj prvi deo sage ne vrvi od krvavih bitaka i otimanja zemlje (što je, po mom mišljenju, odli?no i van klišea), ali je izuzetno dinami?an i proavanturisti?ki (nešto sli?no kao Hagardovi Rudnici cara Solomona). Dakako, ne izostaju ni bitke, po kojima su vikinzi poznati, ali one su, za razliku od onih organizovanih i utreniranih kod Cornwella vrlo randomizovane i vo?ene po principu fight or flight, jer su i situacije u kojima su se junaci nalazili takve. Takav je i re?nik - prost i prosta?ki, ali to daje posebnu draž svemu. Znoj, krv i balega su mirisi koji su sve vreme prisutni. Robert Low je u svoje pripovedanje daleko više upleo i nordijsku mitologiju, nego što to Cornwell ?ini u svojim delima. Štaviše - osim nordijske mitologije, bavio se i slovenskom, budu?i da je kao novinar-istraživa? proputovao i Rusiju, ali i Bosnu i Kosovo za vreme proteklih ratova. Originalan i vrlo interesantan po?etak sage, i o?ekujem u slede?im delovima, da se utisci poja?avaju gradacijski.

Krista Baetiong Tungol says

A sweeping saga of Viking voyage and adventure, *The Whale Road* goes across places in Europe and the Middle East to tell the story of the *Oathsworn*, a band of brothers sworn to loyalty and solidarity, as they search for an ancient relic believed to have killed the White Christ. At the heart of it is a young man named Orm Rurikson, and through him he provides us a view of the thrill as well as the menace of prowling and seafaring, the palpable changes from the old ways to the new with the propagation of the White Christ religion, and their perilous chase towards the legendary treasures of Attila the Hun.

Its gritty portrayal of history and adventure is what keeps the story interesting; I admit I find it dragging in some chapters, and I also didn't care much about the characters in this book except for Orm (view spoiler), but Robert Low is such an enterprising writer I couldn't help but appreciate how he makes his narrative alive with his vivid depiction of characters and historical events. Low does not amaze me like Bernard Cornwell does, and I think his Orm of Bjornshafen seems lackluster next to Cornwell's Uthred of Bebbanburg, too, but overall this book is a satisfying read.

My favorite passage from this book:

"We ... travel the whale road, where the sea is black or grass-green and can rear over you like a fighting stallion ... No bird flies here. Land is a memory." (p.21)

Lance Greenfield says

Disappointing

The story is fairly good: the sort of plot that you would expect from the likes of Conn Iggulden. However, *The Whale Road* doesn't come close to the class of Iggulden, or any other of my favourite historical fiction writers.

I really struggled my way through from beginning to end. There is plenty of action, and most of it is very gory, but the style is tedious. One feels that the author is the proud owner of a book of tenth century Norse

names, and is trying to break the record for how many of them he can cram into 340 pages. He also seems to be continually trying to invent new ways for the vicious Vikings to slice up their enemies, and even some of their brothers.

The second book in the series is called The Wolf Sea. I may get around to reading it someday, but, for the moment I have had enough of Orm's adventures. Although the storyline is good, I wouldn't go so far as to recommend it to any of my friends.

Terri says

Well, The Whale Road caught me quite by surprise. I had never heard of Robert Low when I came across this book, but I am glad that I found him.

I loved The Whale Road. Not only for the authors ability to tell a good yarn, but because it made me laugh and shocked me all at once.

It would not do to get too attached to any characters in this story (barring the main character) because Robert Low will keep you on your toes, keep you guessing, keep the cast rolling over.

Most of all the things I liked about this book, it is definitely the humour. I rarely laugh out loud when I read (and I don't mean, 'burst at the seams' laughter, I mean short, amused snorts and guffaws). In fact I don't think any other book has made me laugh out loud, other than maybe Bernard Cornwell's Saxon series. But this book is filled with small humour that some people may miss due to it's dry, subtlety. This dry humour made the book for me. I love that the Oathsworn's dynamic involved much mocking and jollity towards each other. And there are many terrific 'put downs' that tickled my fancy.

So, what else can I say about The Whale Road?

No, it is not Bernard Cornwell, but that is not a bad thing. I think Robert Low is doing his own thing and doing it well.

If Asterix and the Vikings, and, Indiana Jones had a baby this would be it.

I kid you not.

I must not forget to mention that it felt like it had two endings, which was a tad bizarre, and the first 40 pages were a little bit of a struggle to comprehend. I think for the first 5 I didn't even know what was going on.

I don't know whether it got better or I just evolved to understanding Low's writing style, but something cleared the murky waters for me at around 40 to 50 pages. It may have even been a few more than that. By page 100, I was completely hooked and didn't want to put it down.

If you like Asterix and the Vikings, and you like it mixed up with some white entrails, f\$#k words and dry humping on bar tables, then this is the book for you. God knows it's the book for me! Go figure.

If I didn't already have my next book lined up to read, I would be straight on to the next book in this series, because as soon as I got halfway through The Whale Road, I bought the next three books.

Bobby says

What a terrific read. Enjoyed everything about it...especially the end. Had some trouble keeping up with all the characters early on but they were continuously reinforced throughout the tale so you got a lot more familiar as the story proceeds. I hope there is more to this saga as I will certainly follow it. Thanks Mr. Low for the journey!!

Mr. Matt says

I am not sure why I did not enjoy this book more. It had a good back bone - a saga-worthy quest for an ancient relic that had ties to both Atilla the Hun and Christ. It had the tension between the decline of the old Gods and the rise of the new White Christ. It had great shield-wall fights. It had dark, ancient tombs where women were sacrificed in terrible pagan rites.

Unfortunately, somehow, it just didn't grab me. I really wanted to like this book and I just can't put my finger on what it was that put me off. Looking back on it after a couple of days mulling it over I think it ultimately felt soulless to me. The characters lacked enough development feeling more like cardboard props than living, breathing people with hopes, dreams and ambitions. Maybe harsh, but that's how it felt to me. I just couldn't engage with the characters. I didn't love any of them and I didn't hate any of them. That's problematic.

All of this being said, I will probably read the next book at some point. Many people seem to like these books and I may just have caught this one at the wrong moment.

Two and a half stars rounded down to two.

Ace says

It's bloody, it's raw, it's stinky, gruesome and a bit f*cking rude. I love a good viking story and even better, I love a good battle.

I had 2 issues with this book, one was that Orm was well educated, clever, smart and also a bit of a smart arse. I think I missed the bits where we got to learn how he became so wise at such a young age. The other was that I'm not certain that in 945ad "f*ck, f*ck, f*ck" was an expression used as commonly as they do in the Oathsworn gang.

Having said that, for the entertainment value, it was top notch! They should make a movie...

Beorn says

Dull, unimaginative and a little disjointed. I went into this novel hoping for an immersive read, evocative in historic detail and rich plot. You don't get any of that with this book.

Rather than the epic re-telling of a vivid legend, it feels far more like the semi-coherent shamblings of the village elder meandering his way around things he remembers from his past.

The writing style, if you can call it that, is disjointed at times and doesn't do anything to endear you to any of the characters or even any of the action that occurs.

Disappointing and a waste of time.

Lee Broderick says

Describing a historical novel based around Vikings as being a saga almost seems like a cop-out. A clichéd

non-review that damns with faint praise. This really is though: the tale of a legend (I'm assuming, without having yet read the subsequent books) taking his first steps through the making of his story; not only studded with humour but in beautiful, occasionally lyrical, language that is as easy to read as it is a pleasure.

Through the all too brief 350 pages, Orm narrates his own tale with constant self-deprecation, self-awareness and honesty. He never really (view spoiler), it just seemed like the most logical explanation for those who found him. He rescues one enemy through a combination of teenaged foolishness and accident when his blow misses its intended target, but that too contributes to his legend.

Such episodes are entertaining but do not, in themselves, carry enough material to keep a reader's interest across the course of a whole novel: bigger story arcs are called for. Here they come in the relationships between Orm and his two fathers ((view spoiler)?), with the infernal Hild and with Einar - the Vito Corleone of Vikings.

Einar, you see, believes in oaths, in brotherhood. When it suits him. Orm first encounters him sitting on the throne of his recently slain foster-father and he quickly makes him an offer he can't refuse: to join his band. Slowly though, Einar makes Orm into his worst enemy - all the while keeping him closer and closer.
