



Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army

Edoardo Albert

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'If I was being invaded by raping, massacring Vikings, Conrad would be the perfect companion to lighten the mood.' - Stephen Clarke, author of *1000 Years of Annoying the French* and *The French Revolution & What Went Wrong*

'An engrossing plot, powered by a realistic measure of laughs – imagine Cadfael, if Ellis Peters had just had a long lunch with Terry Pratchett.' - Jem Roberts, author of *Tales of Britain*

Conrad is a monk, but he has become a monk through trickery and against his will. So, it is fair to say that his heart isn't really in it.

Conrad is also clever, charming, entirely self-serving, self-absorbed and almost completely without scruple — but in Anglo-Saxon England, when the Danish invaders come calling, those are very helpful attributes to have.

And so it comes to pass that Conrad finds himself constantly dodging death by various means, some reasonable, some... less so. His tricks include selling his brother monks into slavery, witnessing the death of a king, juggling his loyalties between his own people and the Danes, robbing corpses and impersonating a bishop.

By his side throughout is the gentle and honourable Brother Odo, a man so naturally and completely good that even animals sense it. He is no match of wits for the cunning Conrad but can he, perhaps, at least encourage the wayward monk to behave a little better?

Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army takes the reader on a hugely entertaining and highly informative trip through the Anglo-Saxon world, in the company of a persuasive and likeable — if frequently despicable — tour guide. It is a story that combines painstakingly accurate depictions of history with a fast-moving and often hilarious plot, and as such is bound to appeal to lovers of history, historical fiction and character-driven fiction alike.

Edoardo Albert is a writer of Sri Lankan and Italian descent based in London. He has written a number of full length novels, as well as shorter stories for publications ranging from *Daily Science Fiction* to *Ancient Paths*. He has written features for papers and magazines including *Time Out*, *Sunday Times* and *History Today*.

'I loved this book as a total immersion historical adventure. Conrad – the hero - is selfish, opportunistic, amoral, and he made me laugh over and over again.' - John Drake, bestselling author of the *Fletcher* series

'The pagans are coming...but Conrad is one shameless con man who will keep one step ahead of them, and charm you while he does it. He lies—he cheats—and I loved every minute of it.' - Wendy Bertsch, author of *Once More, from the Beginning*

Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army Details

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From Reader Review Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army for online ebook

Aviar Savijon says

While this was historical fiction not one of my usual or regular genre's that I do enjoy reading more often this was a great read. Well written and easy to follow from page to page. In simple terms it was written and could be a must read for those above the 6th grade and beyond. Battles and adventure swing hand in hand in this interesting and battling times. I loved it!!

Stephanie Jane (Literary Flits) says

See more of my book reviews on my blog, Literary Flits

I thoroughly enjoyed this humorous romp through Saxon England! I have previously read Edoardo Albert's serious historical novel, *Edwin*, so already knew of his impeccable research and great ability to evoke historic period in his writing. I wasn't prepared for his deft comedic touch and enthusiastic sense of fun though. Our hero (who is anything but heroic) is a dastardly character. Always out for himself and with a keen eye for personal profit, Conrad Monk is the type of person I shouldn't approve of at all. However, in following his journey across the country, I found myself willing him to escape each life-threatening situation.

Having recently watched the TV adaptation of *The Last Kingdom* which is set in the same period of Viking invasion, I was familiar with the main real characters and the general historic narrative. I think even if I hadn't been though, Albert gives enough detail to easily understand what is going on in the wider country. I recognised genuine people such as Ivarr and Ubba, King Aethelred and his younger brother Alfred. Conrad and his much put-upon companion, Brother Odo, are of course completely fictional, but the places they visit on their travels are real so I was interested to read Albert's brief essay explaining some of his inspirations. This novel is an entertaining mix of laugh-out-loud slapstick and deviously clever plotting. A delight to read!

Stefanie Rls says

‘Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army’ is the first book I’ve read written by Edoardo Albert and I’ve found it quite an interesting and amusing read. I think the reason for this is that it’s not just a ‘dry’ historical read, but it’s full with wit and humor. Conrad is after all not your average monk and that makes it fun! He’s really a hero you should hate for everything he does, but instead you’ll find yourself sympathizing with him. Together with his fellow companion, brother Odo, he makes you chuckle. Furthermore they give the story a good pace in between the fairly accurate telling of the history of Vikings invading England. (What’s exactly true you’ll learn by the way at the end of the book in a note written by the author.)

So to conclude I think it’s fair to say I found it a fine read, which I recommend to everyone who likes history, but not the rather boring side of it!

However I do also like to point out one minor point in my eyes : the rather shameless way the author lets us

know this book is part of a series. I find this ain't the way to do that. I rather have a better open ending which piques my interest in a next book than the way it was now said. But hey,

Adam Lofthouse says

Immersive, brilliant and comical; I've never read historical fiction quite like it.

Conrad is a monk, but not from choice. Slung atop a pack horse and sent off to a monastery for allegedly doing no more than 'tutting his wife', he seeks to make the most of what life throws his way. Ever the opportunist, he finds a way to improve his life and enrich himself as every corner. So when his monastery is attacked by Heathens, he simply tells them he is a slave trader and sells the lot of them for a pretty penny. Well, all except poor Brother Odo.

Odo quickly becomes a fixture in the story; slow witted where Conrad is sharp of mind, pious and devout where Conrad is blasphemous and selfish. Conrad does his best to rid himself of the lumbering monk and his donkey on numerous occasions, but it is no surprise that in the end he is more than grateful to have him at his side.

It is the dialogue that makes this book. Conrad's sharp tongue and devious mind are vividly brought to life, as are the various Saxons and Danes that he encounters along the way. His unholy and sinful behaviour gets him into trouble on more than one occasion, including what Conrad thought would be a joyous rendezvous with a serving girl in a darkened outbuilding (a scene that had me chuckling into my tea cup!)

I have read many books set in this period, this has a very different feel and even the descriptions of Alfred's 'England' are unique to what I have read before. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and recommend you go and do the same!

Fran says

The Great Heathen Army has been ransacking Saxon England. The Vikings, led by Ivarr, Ubba, and Halfdan, the sons of Ragnar Lothbrok, lust for gold and other hidden treasures. This tale begins with the marauding Danes pillaging a monastery. The monks have a designated place to hide themselves and the church's wealth. Of greatest importance is the "Gospel Book of Life". This three hundred page tome, bound with gold clasps and covered in garnets and emeralds, must be protected no matter the cost to life or limb.

Two unlucky monks have been unable to get to the hiding place. They are hiding in a pig sty. A drunk Dane falls into the sty hitting his head. The perfect cover, the garb of this Dane, will enable Conrad to execute his plan of escape from the Danes. Conrad is a self-serving, wayward monk installed in the monastery through his twin brother's trickery. Conrad's every word is taken to heart by his devoted, selfless companion, Brother Odo, not the "brightest bulb". Now disguised as a Dane, Conrad presents himself as a slave trader explaining that he will sell the captured, chained monks at the slave market for the best price ever. The Danes agree to let Conrad broker the deals. Meanwhile, the "sold" monks are led to believe that Conrad has a "plan" to get them released after the sale. With docility, they leave with their new masters. According to Brother Odo, Conrad can do no wrong. But, where is the "Book"? Oh, no! Abbot Flory, before being sold at market, had sent the "Book" with a three courier guard to Edmund, King of the East Angles.

In comedic style, Conrad and Odo must quickly journey to East Angles before the onslaught of the Danes. When Conrad's horse shows signs of distress, he tells Brother Odo to carry him on his back. Before long, Odo is a beast of burden first trotting, next cantering and finally galloping. Seeing Odo gallop, the horse gallops alongside him. Odo is not as tired as the horse so Conrad stays on Odo's back!

"Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army" by Edoardo Albert is a well researched, very enjoyable book about Saxon England and the Viking Invasion as seen through the eyes and actions of despicable, entertaining Conrad and hilarious, bumbling Brother Odo. A fun read of historical fiction.

Thank you Endeavor Media and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army".

David Paget says

The author is not a Bernard Cornwell, nevertheless he has written a rollicking good yarn which makes for enjoyable reading.

Paul Bennett says

A delightful tale of a rather unusual monk and his attempts to get rich while avoiding the Danish horde that is running roughshod over Britain. Conrad is a schemer, always ready with a plan; which is a good thing as his plans have a way of not going according to plan. His companion, Brother Odo, a very devout monk, unwavering in his faith in God and in Conrad's plan(s), provides much of the mirth while also provoking sympathy from the reader. The author has crafted an entertaining version of the Danes - the sons of Ragnar; Ivarr, Ubba, and Halfdan - and the eventual clash with Aethelred and Alfred. I particularly enjoy historical-fiction when the historical events are written in such a way that the fictional aspect; the interaction of the fictional characters with the historical, the way that the story is tweaked to allow the reader to think, "Yeah, it could have happened that way." Conrad Monk and The Great Heathen Army did just that while also sparking periodic chuckles and chortles from this amused reader. 4 stars

Annarella says

I would define this book as picaresque. It's a fun to read and engaging book with an interesting anti-hero. The historical background is well researched, the book is well written, and Conrad's antics will surely make you laugh.

Highly recommended!

Many thanks to Endeavour Quill and Netgalley for this ARC

Mimi says

I am not a big fan of historical fiction but this was a story I enjoyed reading. It was entertaining and fun to read. Very likeable characters, especially the smart and funny Conrad. You rarely see a main character in a

story to be such a likeable anti-hero. A very well-written plot too, well-researched. The historical facts (on Vikings invading England) and the adventurous events in the story are mingled well together and make up for a smooth and amusing read. An easy page-turner.

I had not read any books by Edoardo Albert before but this book has piqued my interest now to read more from him.

Many thanks to Endeavour Media for the opportunity to read *Conrad Monk and the Great Heathen Army* and write this review.

Robert Sullivan says

Conrad the monk could well be the great great great grandfather of Fraser's Harry Flashman, as both are scoundrels and cowards dropped into English history. The history of 9th century England seems fairly authentic, and Conrad's exploits are entertaining - his combination of greed and cowardice drives him into the path of great men and great historical events. I will read more of his adventures as they come along.
