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Byatt, A. S. Ragnarok: the End of the Gods

In Byatt's slender, slender, semi-autobiographical novella, an unnamed young girl who has fled to the countryside during the Blitz attempts to make sense of the war-torn world around her. Her father is a flier in the war so far away and the girl is convinced he will never return. The darkness and violence that the adults speak of in hushed tones does not match the brightly optimistic emptiness of the words mouthed at church each week. It isn't until a copy of "Asgard and the Gods" comes into the girl's possession that the world around her begins to make sense as seen through the lens of the much darker and more violent Norse mythology contained in her book.

Interspersing scenes from the daily life of the girl with retellings and reinterpretations of the mythology she is reading, "Ragnarok: the End of the Gods" serves as an able allegory for our times as well.

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