



The Heir of Night

Helen Lowe

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“A richly told tale of strange magic, dark treachery, and conflicting loyalties, set in a well realized world.”

—Robin Hobb, author of *Dragon Keeper*

An award-winning poet and acclaimed author of Young Adult fiction, Helen Lowe now brings us *The Heir of Night*—the first book in her four-volume Wall of Night series, a brilliant new epic fantasy saga of war, prophecy, betrayal, history, and destiny. A thrilling excursion into a richly imagined realm of strife and sacrifice, where the fate of a dangerously divided world rests in the hands of one young woman, *The Heir of Night* is a fantasy classic in the making, sure to stand alongside the much beloved works of J.R.R. Tolkien, Robin McKinley, and Guy Gavriel Kay.

The Heir of Night Details

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From Reader Review The Heir of Night for online ebook

Anne Hamilton says

Four and a half stars.

It's kinda YA and kinda not. The main protagonists are barely out of their tweens and, while much of the story is told from their perspective, there's lots that isn't. Solid epic fantasy that has political complexity, integrity under the hammer, honour caught in a web of intrigue, ambiguous 'good guys' and dark malevolence aplenty.

Malian is the duty-bound daughter of the Earl of Night. She spends the days when her father is out hunting the Darkspawn investigating the mazes of the Old Keep, an ancient remnant of the fortress in which their ancestors lived. As the Heir of Night, she is the one who will inherit the great charge to keep the Darkspawn at bay and she practices physical skills in the difficult terrain of the crumbling fort.

Behind a dividing wall inside the New Keep lives Kalan, a young boy exiled from his home when he displayed skill in the old arts. That dividing wall separates the men and women of the Temple from those of the Keep. It's been there five hundred years, ever since a great betrayal which split Derai society.

Kalan is having a sulk in a cupboard when he hears a strange sound. It's a Darkswarm invasion, coming up through the Temple from the Old Keep. The cruel warriors have brought a Raptor - a psychic vampire-like creature which detects and sucks the life out of any being nearby. Kalan uses his own talent to hide himself, creating a shield which makes him seem like a natural extension of the cupboard. When the invaders pass, Kalan sets off to warn those in the Temple. He finds himself having to evade the invaders by entering the Old Keep.

The warriors of the Darkswarm penetrate the New Keep almost too easily and head for Malian's chambers, slaughtering all the way. She, however, has gone to the library and while there hears an insistent voice, telling her to flee. She makes her way to the Old Keep, finds Kalan - and, her own powers awakening, is able to waken the silenced alarms and rouse the defenders of Night.

But ... those awakened powers strike at the very heart of what it means to be a warrior of the Derai. For half a millennium the warriors and the priests of the Temple have been strictly forbidden to associate. And if a warrior is found to have a priestly power, exile is automatic.

Yet, that very exile may be what the Darkswarm wants. An old prophecy says, 'If Night falls, all fall.' No one has interpreted the foretelling literally before, but now there is the thought that, since Malian is the one and only Heir of Night, that killing or abducting her may bring victory to the Darkswarm.

Along with Kalan and a small retinue, Malian sets off across the world of Haarth, the warriors of the Darkswarm close at her heels.

Like Helen Lowe's Thornspell, the motif of dreamwalking is a prominent feature of this novel.

Blodeuedd Finland says

Review to be posted at the Gemmell Legend Awards first

If Night falls, all fall. That is the ancient prophecy of the Deraí people who inhabit the world of Haarth. There among the mountains they have their keeps and hold guard against the dark forces of the Swarm. The warlike Deraí are not native to this world, they came across time and space, and they have always fought the Swarm who wants to cover the universe in darkness.

Malian is the Heir of the House of Night. She loves the old stories of heroes past and she knows her duty as the Heir of Night. But as the Swarm attacks she will have to make a choice of her own.

There was this constant feeling of something else in this book. Some books are fantasy, you know this, and you feel it. Then there are those that are also fantasy, but still they have this lingering feeling of something else. Here it might be because the Deraí came from the stars, a portal, but still from the stars. And there is talk about hunting among the stars. The lingering feeling make it something more than just epic fantasy. There are other books that have managed this too and they do it very well. So for me it certainly feels more than just epic fantasy, it is epic fantasy infused with hints of sci-fi. Of times long gone by, of times to come. Of times forgotten and unknown.

Melian is the main character, our young heroine as she is not a child, not yet a woman. Her love of the history of her people, gives the reader an insight to the Deraí people. And they have a rich and colorful history, even if a very warlike one. They do not only fight the Swarm, they also fight among themselves. They have codes of honor and seem to be a very harsh people. But they are a fascinating people, warriors and priests. And Melian is a good heroine among them; she is still young and curious and has yet truly been shaped by the ways of her people. She can still change, which brings hope to the story since the Deraí are not ready for war against the Swarm.

There are of course also a bunch of other characters, but most important for the story to come is Kalan, a young priestling at the Temple of Night. He will have role to play yet and just like Melian he is young. I will be interested to see where the story takes these two and the others I have become invested in.

The story itself is about an attack at the House of Night and the things that follows. We know doom is coming and as always, can it be stopped? What will Melian do?

This book is a good start to this series. We learn about the history, and why things are like they are. We get to know the players so far and at the end of it, the story has truly begun. It ends with a cliffhanger, yet not a cliffhanger. It will make you want more, but because of how the ending is written you can survive until the next book. For which I thank the author.

Because of the rich setting and history I want more. I do need to know what happens if Night falls, or if Night can continue to keep the Swarm at bay. The book feels unique and different, perhaps because of that lingering feeling of otherness I spoke of.

Laura Summers says

Reviewed for www.bookchickcity.com (7 out of 10 on the blog)

'The Heir of Night' is the first in a new four part fantasy series. The Derai live on the edge of the world, charged with guarding 'The Wall' against the ancient and terrifying Swarm. A ferocious, demonic race.

The Derai are an uncompromising people, ruled by tough rules and routine. But their task is such a hard one, they dare not deviate from the way of life that has been followed for hundreds of years. For, legend claims that if the House of Night falls, the rest of the world will follow. Victims to the Darkswarm.

Thirteen year old Malian is the Heir of Night, daughter to the Earl of Night and as his only child and successor is destined to rule the Derai after his demise. A daunting task for any child to comprehend, but Malian embraces her future with relish, longing for adventure.

By contrast our other main character is Kalan. Kalan is from a noble warrior family, but when his family discovered he has magic they disowned him, turning him over to be trained as a priest of the Temple of Night. For in the Derai magic and warriors do not mix.

This is a book about destinies, bravery and hard choices. When after years of silence the Darkswarm rise again, it becomes evident that the Derai are no longer strong enough. A lot of the old ways and magics have been lost with time. And suddenly the fate of both a race and the world may potentially rest on the shoulders of two children - Malian and Kalan. But they are surrounded with suspicion, untrained and in terrible danger.

The first few pages take quite a bit of concentration, as there is so much world building and past to take in. It was one of those books where you occasionally have to pause as reread the previous paragraph in order to make sure you have understood it correctly.

I really engaged with the characters. They are complex and intriguing. Take Malian's father as an example, a tough and scrupulous man, strict to the point of brutal. He makes decisions that you can't quite comprehend and yet is softened by his love both Malian and his non Derai girlfriend Rowan.

Those of you that struggle with dream sequences, may struggle with this book as there are a lot of them. As Malian and Kalan discover the ability to enter the dream world and converse with legendary warriors of the past and mythical beings. A lot of the plot moves forward through these passages.

My one big criticism of this novel, is that it very much feels as though it's setting up the rest of the story and subsequent novels. It's about setting the scene and while still enjoyable, did feel slightly incomplete.

VERDICT:

An interesting and promising start to a new fantasy series. With great characters, I really enjoy stories about destinies and look forward to seeing who Malian and Kalan become. I also have teensy hopes of a potential love story there too.

Mark says

Out at the garrison overlooking the Wall of Night, the House of Night is attacked and its inhabitants

slaughtered by a Raptor of Darkness. Our hero and heroine of this tale - Malian, the teenage heiress being groomed to inherit the House of Night, and Kalan, her male Temple trainee friend, escape the massacre and find themselves hunted by the Swarm of Dark. In doing so, Malian and Kalan both find they have magical powers. A mystery assistant from the Derai's past comes to their aid:

"First you must come into the heart of my power," the voice replied, "so I have some hope of protecting you, while you may draw on my strength. It is imperative that we work together, for you are young and untrained and I am weaker than I used to be. But together, and with the boy's help, we may do what needs to be done."

Also to Malian's assistance comes Nhairin, a seasoned female steward, a sort've Gurney Halleck to our Paul Muad'dib-like heroine. Her task, with Asantir, the Honor Guard Captain, is to find Malian and protect her from the evil monsters that wield magic and who seem to be determined to kill her. Asantir and Nhairin are sent by Malian's father, Earl Tasarion, to retrieve her. With the help of heralds Jehane Mor and Tarathan of Ar, they manage to get the two young protagonists guided back to the safety of the Old Keep.

This is not without a change, however. What Malian and Kalan's newly discovered powers allow them to do is travel whilst in a dream state between the physical world and the metaphysical plane. Whilst in the metaphysical realm they find both the presence of old warriors such as Yorindesarinen and old adversaries to the House of Night and the Derai Alliance.

There is, as you might expect, a lot at stake here, wrapped up in portents of doom. Earl Tasarion's sister, the witch-like priestess Korriya, foretells of prophecies and predicts that harm will befall the family and the House. The Earl's consort, the Queen of Winter, Rowan Birchwood, stands as an outsider amongst the Derai from the Winter Kingdom but is secretly part of the complex conflict herein.

And as the oldest House in the Derai Alliance, the old saying goes, *'If Night falls, all fall.'*

The last half of the book deals with Malian and Kalan embarking on a quest to obtain objects of future significance, both having been given tokens of power to do so, whilst attempting to survive Darkswarm attacks. Towards the end it all becomes dream-like and there's a lot of resolution in the final chapters and a lot left uncertain ready for the next tale.

This is not a debut work, but the writer's first adult Fantasy novel. An important point that, and one that I didn't know until after reading the novel, but helped me make more sense of the style of the tale. Whilst the audience being targeted may be 'adult', to me it felt more like a novel for young adults with adult overtones: not necessarily a bad thing, and in this regard much, much better than the last novel I read that tried to do the same (*Left Hand of God*, I'm thinking of you.) When we reduce *Heir of Night* to bare plot at its simplest, this becomes a little more obvious.

For example, we have teenage protagonists clearly destined for greater things, whose magical powers appear in order to fulfil their destiny and enable revenge for the massacre of their people. There's nasty enemies wielding magic for evil ends. All good genre stuff, if perhaps a little too close to the cliché of 'fatherless farm boy (or in this case, motherless child of aristocracy) who becomes a great King (Earl) and goes on a quest to save the World from destruction by great evil'.

There's also that movement between different worlds, something also seen recently in Kate Elliott's *Cold Magic*, an ancient skill, once used now seemingly lost to most Derai. This allows lots of foretelling and dream-sequences, which create tension or annoyance depending upon your point of view.

Despite this, lest that note of caution put you off, there is a lot here to like. The magic's done well, in that

‘for every action there is a price to pay’ way. The places of darkness and secret are quite atmospheric. And the fight scenes are both exciting and well written. Asantir’s elite troop of soldiers is reminiscent of James Barclay’s Raven, though not perhaps quite as violent.

Interestingly, there are hints that this story may not be as clear-cut Fantasy as the tropes (or my summary above) suggest, with a couple of nods to Gene Wolfe’s *Shadow of the Torturer*/ Urth, perhaps.

If you can get round the response that there’s a lot here that we’ve met before – I kept feeling that the book wanted to be a lighter version of *A Game of Thrones* or *The Dragonbone Chair* very badly - it’s a good, solid read that harkens back to the High Fantasy template that we’ve seen less of, of late. No profanity but a tale where honour, loyalty and sacrifice are paramount. Not particularly new but pleasingly well done.

Maria Dimitrova says

While technically this qualifies as young adult fantasy it doesn't read like a YA. And it's one of it's strongest pros for me. There's no angst and hormone-induced stupidity. The main characters - Malian and Kalan - act appropriate for their ages most of the time with an air of wisdom and maturity that can be expected from an alien warrior race that has been at war for thousands if not millions of years.

I liked how the story progressed and it's pacing. The world building is a problem however. At places it feels as if you should be familiar with it from before to make sense so the reader feels lost and then there are almost random info dumps. I had a couple of headaches start while trying to navigate the world and the complex social structure. Thankfully there's a map and a glossary with all the characters in it so when I forget which one this character is (and there are a lot of almost identical names - for example: Terebanth, Terennin and Trithis - without constant reminders in the text, something you don't always get, of what the hell they are you could mistake one for the other) I could check it out. Adding to the confusion one thing could have several different names and/or titles. The problem comes from the fact that the introduction is not done gently and slowly so I was left feeling as if this is the second book of the series instead of the first.

As for the story it follows the usual fantasy tropes - good (Deraï) vs evil (Darkswarm) with a heroine at the start of her Hero's Journey. So there are a lot of similarities with other high fantasy books. The storyline might be similar but it's the details that make this book different and they were compelling enough to make me seek out the rest of the trilogy.

Mike says

Helen Lowen’s Wall of Night series was recommended in a recent by Courtney Schafer here as a series that improves after book one. Having read the first book of that series, Heir of Night, I’m excited to see if that truly is the case. Malian, the heir of Night, is set to inherit her father’s title and take over the long watch for the Darkswarm; the abominations that her people are pledged to fight against. Before she can even dream of ascending however it is revealed that the Darkswarm is rousing and the time of ancient prophecy, a prophecy in which Malian will play a key part, is at hand. What is so fascinating about The Heir of Night is how much

the familiar elements are used in counterpoint to what is an original and interesting world. There are elements of *The Heir of Night* that are strictly borrowed from science fiction and while couched in terms of the fantastic there is the general feeling that this is a novel of the far future and an alien world more than a typical secondary world fantasy tale.

Unfortunately, while Lowen introduces a fascinating setting with a rich history the overarching plot doesn't quite rise to the richness of its surroundings. That doesn't make it a bad book by any means but the familiarity of the plot keeps it from being a great book. However, given how I was introduced to the series I'm confident that things are going to change going forward. Lowen does an excellent job with the characters particularly the lead characters Malian and Kalan. While several years apart both characters are still rather young but exhibit a maturity born of their circumstances. Malian, as the heir to a powerful house shows a deep understanding of duty and responsibility that wars with her youthful desire for freedom and companionship. Kalan, a student in the order that studies magic, shows competence and knowledge balanced by a youthful desire to shirk responsibility. Each occasionally feels a bit older than their years but I felt this was more a function of the world in which they live than anything else.

Given the prominence of Night in the title there is a fair amount of darkness to Lowen's tale both in the history of the world and in the plot itself. The harshness of Malian's world, of the House of Night itself, is a function of the dark deeds of the past wherein the people of present are paying for the crimes of the past both recent and ancient. *The Heir of Night* is at its best when it leans on the weirdness of the setting. The somewhat trippy journey into a nether realm of dreams seen several times in the novel calls to mind past works of sword and sorcery and feels like something you might see in an issue of *Weird Tales*. *The Heir of Night* marks the beginning of an interesting series that many fantasy fans may have overlooked. I'm excited to see where things go next and to explore deeper into the vibrant world that Lowen has created.

Mark says

Robin Hobb says 'The Heir of Night by Helen Lowe is a richly told tale of strange magic, dark treachery and conflicting loyalties, set in a well realised world'.

And she is quite right, it is.

It is a beautifully crafted novel, the world is vibrant and so are the characters, although I must admit the characterisation sometimes left me scratching my head. I had a lot of questions as to maturity - in Malian's case - and what seemed to me to be leaps of logic. But this didn't spoil my enjoyment of what promises to be a very exciting new series.

Old wars, lost powers, blood feuds, prophecies and the rising of an ancient evil makes (on paper) a pretty regular book of standard fantasy fare - but I don't care if I have read a similar premise over and over again as long as the writing is good and the author does something different with it. And Lowe's writing is very good and the story is original enough in nuance to be fresh. The one thing I will nit-pick over is the Naming of things, particular creatures and powers and the like. I mean the 'Raptor of Darkness'? I was disappointed that Lowe did create a name in place of a title, she has the chops for it as the rest of her writing shows.

That being said I did read it all the way through to the end, and I will pick up the next book to see how things progress. There were some wonderfully rendered scenes, especially as Malian is trying to escape those who

hunt her in underbelly of the Keep, and good use of pacing and some very interesting worldbuilding from a very talent new voice in the Epic fantasy field.

Amber says

The short review: Meh.

The long review:

There are books that you love when you're young and continue to love as an adult. Then there are books that you only really like when you're the same age as the protagonist (13 in this case). Unfortunately, the Heir of Night falls into the latter camp, or at least I suspect it would, since I am no longer of an age to verify this assumption. It includes a number of things that would have appealed to me very strongly at that age: a cool naming system for a society divided into nine Houses (the House of Night, the House of Stars, the House of Blood...); a prophesied Chosen One; a gloomy, maze-like Keep; melodramatic speeches galore; Spiritual Advisors; and a Quest to find the Magical McGuffin.

I do applaud the Heir of Night for having (a) a female protagonist and (b) a relatively gender-neutral world (by which I mean a world where there aren't strongly defined gender roles. In other words, there's no problem with women being leaders or fighters.) It's also inoffensive and didn't hit any of my pet peeve buttons.

This book could have benefited from a severe edit. The pacing is glacial. The story uses the well-worn trope of a dramatic event kicking off the hero's journey. Step 1 of the hero's journey is, of course, leaving home, but in this book it takes three-quarters of the book for our heroine to do so! Too many scenes were completely unnecessary and seemed little more than an excuse to have side-characters discuss how Very Important This Character and Their Epic Quest were.

Used judiciously, the eerie imagery of dream sequences and visions can be a way to create atmosphere and foreshadow, but when over-used it bogs down the narrative. This is the case in The Heir of Night: these scenes come across as mere padding and bring the narrative to a near stand-still at multiple points.

While the Heir of Night has some interesting mythology and concepts, the world-building didn't seem to have been fully thought through. Some examples:

- The Earl of Night explains the origins of the feud between Houses in an unbelievably nonpartisan way. They've been fighting about it for five hundred years, but he tells the listener how his House started it all with some heinous deeds against another House. If he can freely admit they started it and were in the wrong then why are they still fighting about it?
- The evil Darkswarm can only be defeated by use of the magical Golden Fire. Magical Golden Fire is consequently revered and seen as something holy, special and wonderful. But anyone who uses magical Golden Fire is immediately exiled because no-one trusts magic-users.

At its heart, The Heir of Night is wholly unremarkable. The plot is predictable. The characters are stock. The dialogue is, it pains me to say, appalling. The exposition is tedious.

All this mediocrity led me to put the book down $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through, and I doubt I'll be picking it back up to finish.

Courtney says

Oh boy do I have a lot to say about this book. First off, if you're not a huge Lord of the Rings trilogy fan, then it most likely will not bother you. However, I found so many allusions to the trilogy that made the novel lose most of its originality, at least for me. This is the biggest factor as to why I rated it 2/5. The story itself was pretty well-written and the author does have potential to being a great author. I'm probably very nitpicky about this but I personally find it frustrating whenever I see these things. Another thing that bothered me was that the heroine was younger than 14, yet the way the dialogue was written, her thought patterns, and her actions were too adult and unbelievable for one so young and thus made the character not relatable. Some parts of the novel were also a bit cheesy and cliché.

Also, the names of the enemies in this novel were pretty unoriginal, such as the Night Mare, darkswarm, or Worm of Chaos.

Here are some "connections" that I found if you care to know:

(view spoiler)

Cal Tidey says

This book was complete dreck. I made the mistake of picking up this book for a trip interstate, based of a neat title, an interesting blurb, and the way that one of the sequels was compared to Martin's work in a prominent review quote.

This book is so bad that I reactivated my Goodreads just to talk about it. Firstly, I hope you can tolerate stupid fantasy names. If you want to hear the term "Derai" about thirty thousand times, this book is for you. Every character speaks in expositional terms. They have to tell you their position when addressing each other. They give histories at a whim, mostly self-aggrandising nonsense about the central people, the "Derai", a pointlessly stupid group of militaristic bozos who have a racism metaphor tangled with their "Chosen One" metaphor (Oh, and there's literally a Chosen One, because the writer is a hack), which will no doubt be resolved by series end to teach you an important lesson about bigotry, because maybe you're discriminating against "The Special". It somehow makes the trite allegories of X-Men and Bright seem enlightened.

Our heroine does nothing active in the plot, apart from listen to more stupid exposition. It's a joy when she

receives a psychic message telling her to GTFO because it means we can stop getting scene setting exposition for a moment. Of course, it means all the pompous crap we dealt with up till that point was for next to nil. Characters judgements don't make sense, they're done for plot purposes. Some characters are magical, and several characters are established as bigoted against those with those powers, but that bigotry ranges from segregation and extermination to non-existent depending on the plot. It's shallow worldbuilding, and since the history of the world makes clear this magic was essential to their survival to this point, the bigotry makes no sense. Obviously, the reader is meant to feel clever understanding that our protagonist's society is not perfect, but it's just stupid and makes you feel like your time is being wasted.

Characters rarely get development, and there is a sort of real bigotry underlying the writing of this book. Our heroes matter because of their noble birth and magic, everyone else doesn't because they're not the Chosen One. It's the most problematic elements of Campbell's Hero's Journey, yet the book mysteriously chooses NOT to utilise the 3 act structuring of the aforementioned, leaving character agency to the wind, and having MacGuffin's established moments before they pop into the world, and into the hands of our protagonists. It's crap, sheer crap, making something with a strange structure is one thing, turning from a chase to a political thriller, to a chase that turns into exposition for MacGuffins, which are then immediately bestowed, is just hideously bad writing. Tension does not rise or fall, because the book can't establish things ahead of time, not build to anything.

It feels like how a child might invent a story. AND THEN THIS HAPPENED AND THEN THIS HAPPENED AND THEN THIS HAPPENED. It could be exciting in the moment, but as nothing is established, and our characters are pretty universally stupid and unlikeable, and beholden to plot contrivance, it fails at that. Also, the action lacks detail, to the point where several monsters lack descriptions, bar names like "The Raptor of Darkness" and "Night Mare" (A demon horse). Yes, this level of cheese and stupid is on full display. But these things come and go with little to no real impact, being brought in and killed off with a lot of ceremony, but without any tension, because nothing is established. "THE RAPTOR OF DARKNESS". Come on, please, laugh at this stupid shit.

The psychic realm drops in and out of our story, and it's always bad. It means extra exposition and extra magic which is unexplained and unnecessary, and unestablished. A lot of it references Tolkien, or English or European Folklore, and the story seems to think that you'll care because of the weight of these references. They actually just drag down the story further, by adding the impression that these things should be as significant as the folkloric inspirations, but just leeching off assumed prior knowledge.

All of the characters are stupid and do whatever is required by the plot, motivations and decisions aren't considered. It feels contrived throughout. A rescue mission is mounted that has the weight of the world hanging on it, and a handful of people are despatched, and all others are waved away as "They're needed to defend elsewhere", however, nothing else is properly established, and it feels contrived to create a small group. It's still not tense though because there is no expectation that they won't succeed. THIS HAPPENS, AND THEN THIS HAPPENS, AND THEN THESE CHARACTERS I ONLY JUST BOTHERED TO NAME DIED. Crap. Complete crap.

When they explain things, they're pompous, and adopt "half chants", for things which clearly weren't memorised nor in verse. It's poor writing. Few characters act as though they lived in a world which is a consequence of the past. The few times characters are likeable, is when they rip through this charade, by being irreverent, impudent, or not caring about this dreck.

You will get very used to reading the word "Derai" reading this book because the author insists on dropping worldbuilding on you at every moment. It actually ruins most of the dialogue, including internal dialogue,

because characters don't think of each other in terms of their relationships with each other, but in terms of their backstory, which most readers won't care about. Worldbuilding is a plague-some authors believe dropping unnecessary information and leaving plot threads waiting for resolution counts as storytelling. It isn't. Good worldbuilding means our characters should know the world they live in, and their actions in relation to it should teach us about it and build the world for us. If the characters have to tell us, through internal dialogue, and through monologues, what the history is, then there just isn't worldbuilding.

An example: Our setting is a wall on the edge of the world defending against an alien race of monsters which conquer everything before them. It's manned by a warlike people with many internal disputes, who dislike outsiders, the outsiders also not understanding pretty much anything. Different factions have different issues with each other, which somehow aren't overcome by the threat they face. They discriminate against those with the powers needed to defend the wall, even though that's the be all and end all of their civilisation. Our geography is never really given proper import, and the defence of said wall doesn't actually get much of a look into our setting. Considering the way the book takes liberally here from Martin, consider the Night's Watch, who are a defensive order, with racial biases, who've turned from the original purpose of their order, to protect the realm from the Others, to fighting Wildlings, and how they are built up as Rangers, probing beyond the wall, scouting, and Builders and Stewards, maintaining the Wall, and the supply lines. The story doesn't care. They take the idea of Castle Black, at face value, choose it for a setting in implication, then use a bunch of nonsense for the actual layout. It's not worth considering.

The author just doesn't care. They thought this was a novel idea, they took it. Our protagonist leaves partway through, and gets given MacGuffins, and it's obvious that eventually, this will come under attack and that will be our sign of rising tension, for our Chosen One to return and PROVE RACISM WRONG with her MACGUFFINS to defeat the enemy, but the setting just gives us nothing.

Characters speak in riddles for no reason. it's tiresome, they're obviously saying nothing, and the author obviously thinks they're being smarter than they are. You want the characters they're lecturing with nonsense to attack them and force them to give them a straight answer, not talk shit. Prophecies are dropped everywhere, and they're just straight up chosen one shite. Just crap. It'll turn the most patient person into a shallow, aggressive and argumentative prick, ready to shake or punch the hell out of these characters "Just say what you mean" "THAT WASN'T AN ANSWER" "THAT'S A CONTRADICTION" or worse "THAT'S A TAUTOLOGY". It's meant to sound deep, it isn't. The dialogue also has a problem where it changes from old-timey and pompous (Which is universally awful) to a lot more modern and conversational, at whim, from scene to scene. It's not determined by setting, one of the most pompous scenes in the book is between lovers, it doesn't build the world, it's just the author can't handle dialogue or giving character through dialogue. The Derai all have one characteristic dialogue, the Heralds have another, and the Bard has another, and none of them really build character.

The tale is not "Richly told", nor full of "strange magic" or "dark treachery". There's not a single "conflicting loyalty" in it.

Characters do what the plot demands, they don't have the character to have loyalties or treacheries. The setting is constantly exposited to you, but it's never established to make dramatic stakes clear. It's just a hodge-podge of cliches and stolen ideas anyway. It doesn't hew to a traditional structure, but not out of idiosyncrasy, it just doesn't know better. This book is basically a MacGuffin hunt where the hunt only starts most of the way through, and the protagonist is just given the item, and told to get the other ones. It's slowly paced considering the tripe it puts on you, and feels patronising to read, I can't see a child enjoying something this ponderous, and I can't see anyone who could ponder the page count as being stupid enough to enjoy this.

I am shocked that this got published, absolutely shocked. The editor should have sent it back, with a ton of notes to make the story at least a bearable ride through. An opening to a series that leaves me utterly lacking in desire to read the others to see if it improves.

I have a low bar for fiction. I can generally read anything and get through it, and I've had very few experiences I utterly regret bothering with. The only reason I finished this book, is because I refused to let this shit beat me, because goddamn it I won't hear that I didn't understand it. This crossed a line with me, it's boring, overlong, unlikeable, unstructured, and yet cliched.

Don't read this book. You deserve better. Read The Lord Of The Rings, read ASOIAF, play Warhammer. I guarantee you will enjoy yourself more.

Simone says

I read this book in short time on the recommendation of my sister. However, when I read the back of the book I knew that I wanted to read it. My favourite books are the type that have a strong female lead and generally fall into either science fiction or fantasy. This book is definitely fantasy, though it does have some flavourings of science fiction.

Malian, the Heir of Night, is an intelligent but duty bound young girl. Her position within the keep depends on her father and her ability to lead the Deraï, as such when she unlocks her powers she is both fearful of them and scared. I happened to like this for the realism of a girl who knew her entire world would change. Then she stepped up and filled her role brilliantly.

Kalan I was indifferent to for a long while but I think he proved to be a good second lead and an intriguing character showing the other side of the Deraï. The Heralds however intrigued me the most, and I'll be interested to learn more of them and Asantir as well.

Overall, a good read and looking forward to the second book.

Ruth says

2010: Cheated is how I feel about this book. Marketed as the author's first foray into Adult fantasy, I was enticed to give it a try. To then find out that the protagonists are 12/13 years old. No, I cry and wail to the Heavens - how can this be? I don't particularly care that there are so called adult themes and the promise of growth throughout the trilogy. This is not what I wanted to read. This is not the author's fault and I lay the blame on her advisors, agents and publishers. This is NOT a book for adult readers. For YA - absolutely. Why can't the publishers be more upfront and actually say YA. There is a big enough market for this without tricking me into spending my hard earned money on a book that, had I known it to be YA, would not have bothered with. Grrrrrrrrrr. Many of the details and devices seem to echo earlier works by well known authors so that this book seems to be a compilation of bits and bobs rather than anything original. And, to boot, one of my favourite authors who is a writer par excellence describes this as a "richly told tale" - ok - it could be that any caveats were not used - but still - Ms Hobbb **much wailing and rendering of clothes** Bah! after reading up to about P366 I decided that the protagonists were not going to grow up and nothing unusual was going to happen. So, technically another DNF Damn it!FWFTB: wall, enemy, keep, hidden,

magic. FCN: Malian, Kalan, Nerion, Teron, Rowan Birchmoon. "Oldest, first and greatest of all the Deraï Houses on the Wall, in deeds and duty if not in numbers."

Tim says

It is rare that I will pick up a book based on the promotional 'guff' that is used on front covers, especially as I work within publishing and know exactly what goes into that process. However, because I worship to the goddess that is Robin Hobb, I bought it (thankfully on offer).

There are some interesting concepts at work here. I like the mythology behind the story and good characterisation of different races.

That is pretty much where the praise finishes.

For a start, the protagonists are too young for epic fantasy and yet seem to have retained the emotional and mental maturity of much older teenagers.

In addition, Ms Lowe has a nasty habit of explaining EVERYTHING. The key to successful world-building is to research thoroughly, define firmly, and explain sparingly. She seems unable to differentiate between a world with a strong backstory and giving us the entire backstory in unrealistic chunks of conversation.

I also felt that the characters were all a little bland. They were all equally as witty, equally as intelligent, equally as friendly, equally as blah blah blah. Yeah...they weren't compelling enough. She set up what could have been some great mysterious secrets and then gave them away too easily.

It was definitely not a stand alone book either, but part of a trilogy (or more). The ending was unsatisfying and anti-climatic.

I won't be buying the sequel and I would only recommend to readers who don't normally go for fantasy and want something light to break them in.

Abhinav says

Shadowhawk reviews Helen Lowe's debut novel that won her the David Gemmell Morningstar award this year, *Heir of Night*, the first in the *Wall of Night* series by Orbit Books.

"A fantasy novel written as a grand mythology epic, *Heir of Night* hits all the right buttons and is another must-read of the (last) year." ~The Founding Fields

Read lots of different stuff this year, I thought back in January. Step out of my comfort zone, I thought. Honestly, nothing could have prepared me for Helen Lowe's debut novel from last year, *Heir of Night*. What usually sets fantasy novels apart from one another is usually the setting or the type of characters being talked about or how gritty or soft or adult or simplistic they are. Rarely does an author focus on how to tell that

story itself, by which I don't mean the choice of tense or flashbacks or anything like that. I mean the style of the narrative, the mood it creates, if that makes sense. What Helen does with her novel is something entirely different from any other fantasy novels I've ever read, except for those by a particular author: Tolkien.

And if that's not a clue enough, then, simply put, Helen doesn't just tell the story of a young girl on the run from the forces of darkness that want to utterly annihilate her people and her struggles to deny that future, she tells the saga of the same, an epic. She evokes the wonder of Tolkien's style and the mood of his most popular works and yet stamps her ownership and influence all over the novel. To use one of my oft-used phrases, she writes an epic fantasy story in a truly epic way. I could easily have been reading a Norse saga or a Greek myth.

That's what defines *Heir of Night* for me and what sets it apart from all its contemporaries and its peers.

The first in the *Wall of Night* series, Helen's debut is about a young noble girl Malian who is forced to confront one harsh truth after another about her race's arrival on the world of Haarth and the terrible enemy the Deraï have brought with themselves. It's a coming-of-age story, of innocence slowly forgotten in the face of reality and a toughening-up of character to become the leader the Deraï need and yet do not know of it. The protagonist is neither a thief nor an assassin, a long-suffering noble or a disillusioned common man. The protagonist and her supporting cast are neither superfluous nor stupid, they are all logical and realistic beings, if often susceptible to their emotions. First and foremost that is why I liked *Heir of Night*.

As the novel is not in first person limited to the POV of the protagonist, we see the world of Haarth, the Deraï and the various native races in detail. Haarth is not a place where I'd want to live by any means but all the same, it is a world where I'd love to go at least once! The flight of the Deraï from their homeworld to Haarth eons ago, their settling on their new world, their interactions with the natives, the Deraï culture, their history, it all makes Helen's world complex yet simple in a genre that is increasingly being burdened with too much of the former and not enough of the latter. The author has found the right mix of these and has stayed consistent all the way to the end.

As the Deraï culture and society is the one we see most of, I can say that the Deraï were richly portrayed and come across as multi-faceted and realistic in and of themselves, rather than being caricatures of any "real-world" culture or society. They are certainly original, but they are also something much more. Their formalities, their titles, their codes of conduct, their histories, it is almost as if *Heir of Night* is not just a fantasy novel kicking off a series, but also a deep and insightful study into that very culture.

My appetite has really been whetted for the sequel, *Gathering of the Lost*.

You can find the full review at The Founding Fields:

<http://thefoundingfields.com/2012/08/...>

Online Eccentric Librarian says

More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>

Your enjoyment of a novel is often based on your taste, so whether or not you'll enjoy this book might be

influenced by a similar taste. I love:

- Both Fantasy and Science Fiction genres
- Strong female protagonist
- Lots of action
- Some romance is good (though I'm fine if it's not there - Phillip Pullman's His Dark Materials series fits all of four of the above)
- Originality (like George RR Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series, where there isn't a "Good vs Evil")
- Interesting politics (like Lois McMaster Bujold's Paladin of Souls or George RR Martin)
- Wry, intelligent dialogue and interesting, real characters
- Although I love Tolkien, I now really don't like novels with orcs, dwarves, elves, etc.

Helen Lowe's *The Heir of Night*, *The Wall of Night* Book One hits a lot of my sweet spots and misses on some. Overall, I enjoyed reading it and found it engrossing, with a lot of great action.

Malian is the protagonist, a girl of 13 who has grown up knowing she is the Heir of Night, one of the nine Deraï houses that came from the stars to the world in which the novel is set. The Deraï have tasked themselves with defending all worlds from the evil Swarm, and came to this world and built a wall with different keeps which protects the rest of the world from the Swarm. Other reviewers have mentioned that this novel has a "Sci Fi edge" because of their "origin from the stars", but in the end of the novel it explains that they came through magical gates. This to me keeps it strictly in the Fantasy realm.

500 years before, Deraï leaders had committed terrible acts, and subsequent generations have kept to a strict code to prevent this from ever happening again. One result is a strict division between magic and non-magic users, with enmity between the two. The disfavor with which magic users are viewed (due to the historic events) has led to the loss of old magic and left the Deraï divided and very much weakened. As this novel opens, the Swarm are about to exploit that weakness.

The author paints a dreary and dour existence for Malian, with a father (The Earl of Night) who "never smiles" and a setting reminiscent of George RR Martin's *Game of Thrones* (the wall protecting everyone from the "unknown" hordes, the political/social misalignment with the other peoples in the world, the sense of dread).

That wasn't the only time I was reminded of other novels, including the *Lord of the Rings* series. As originality is important to me, that was one sweet spot missed. However, the action and characters kept me continually interested.

The history is interesting and at times enthralling, with legendary heroes and events with far-ranging impact. Where the story fails me is with the magic use. I credit the author with trying to explain things after the fact, but it only exposes me to more questions. For example, when they are running for their lives from the Swarm and a Night Mare, they are attacked and able to kill or drive off all of their attackers. The Night Mare is a very powerful beast and it can cloak itself and others...so why did it and the band of attackers appear to Malian and Kalan and allow them time to defend? In the novel that question is asked by Malian, and her young male friend Kalan replies that demons become visible when crossing water, and they had just crossed a river. So the author tries to explain away why this supposedly incredibly strong creature wouldn't have just killed them all before they knew it was there, but you have to ask yourself...why didn't the Night Mare just wait until they were further ahead? Doesn't it know the shortcomings of its own magic?

The same questions arise when you find out at the end that someone can relatively easily create gates to other

parts of the world (something previously referred to as very difficult to do). Why isn't this kind of strong magic used more often, and at more convenient times? There were just a few too many cases where the reader finds out about potent magic and it raises questions about the storyline.

I loved it that Malian learns more and more about her world and its history and then further insight and information challenges her beliefs. She definitely evolves as a character in the wisdom of her thinking and in her non-Derai ability to think outside of long kept beliefs.

I enjoyed the book and will read the sequel when it comes out.
