



The High King's Tomb

Kristen Britain

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With the ghostly help of the First Rider, Karigan G'ladheon had transported the corrupt spirit of Mornhavon the Black into the future, buying valuable time for her king and country. But how far in the future is Mornhavon now? A hundred years? Ten years? Only one year? There's no way to tell. So though the immediate threat has passed, Mornhavon's shadow still lies heavily on the land, and on their minds . . . although there are threats closer to home as well. The D'Yer Wall, protecting Sacordia from the dark, corrupted Blackveil forest, remains breached despite Karigan and her fellow Riders best efforts. They've scoured the land searching for lost documents and magical clues to help mend the breach, fend off any incursions from Blackveil Forest and, more pressingly, protect them from Mornhavon's return. Nor is the breach in the wall the only danger. Mornhavon may have gone, but the descendants of his people remain and they're ready to claim the land that their forefathers failed to conquer. These vengeful enemies, hidden within the peaceful borders of Sacordia, have spent generations honing their dark magic ready to strike - and ensuring that their blow, when it comes, will be one that Karigan and the Sacordians have no defence against . . .

The High King's Tomb Details

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From Reader Review The High King's Tomb for online ebook

Kathleen says

Even though some scenes were really great, this book felt too long. I probably won't read the entire series, even though I have enjoyed it so far. Beyond the length, pacing needs work. Characterization and plot development, too.

Although not essential to the plot, I personally enjoyed the relaxing scenes at the Frost Farm, with Damian, Lady, Fergal, etc. Interesting stuff. However, the whole system for breeding, selecting, and training messenger horses is much more credible in the medieval series by Flanagan (see The Ruins of Gorlan).

Enjoyed the revealing of Fergal's special ability.

Characterization: Karigan is too often unlikable. Unpleasant to Estora and to fellow Riders. When Garth asks her to be patient with Alton because he's had a hard time (indeed he had), she frowns at him and storms off, thinking: *"And I haven't? Who had been assaulted, stabbed, and manipulated? Why did Alton get to have excuses?"*

Similar unpleasant behavior towards rookie Rider Fergal. *"Morning Karigan!" Fergal cried. Though it wasn't terrifically early in the morning, his enthusiasm grated on her...*

Captain Mapstone is behaving out of character, too. She's suddenly too political, acting like the king's chancellor or mother, as to his love life.

Amberhill. Hmmm. Are we supposed to like him? I feel ambivalent.

Pacing: Too much time and repeated thoughts/emotions at the brothel. Get on with it. We know how upset you are, girl!

But the big pacing problem was....The Wall! How many chapters? Some of them are nearly identical -- slightly changing songs from inside the Wall. Merdigen the Mage offers hope for the Wall at half-way through the book (48%) but then we never see him until the last chapters. Alton spent too much time in his despairing mind frame, wondering why the Wall guardians rejected him. Impatiently, I reminded him that he betrayed them (albeit unknowingly) in the prequel, and that his cousin Pendric — who hates his guts — is turning the singers against him. All this we already knew from the prequel, and so would Alton, because he was there!! Thank goodness for Dale. She made a difference at the Wall, and to Alton personally, and that felt credible.

Plot contrivance: The scenes in the Tomb of the Kings involved acts of god. Some funny moments, though! And same goes for the scene before that — the shortcut through the white zone involved Deus ex Machina and identity revelations that came out of the blue. By the way...who is the cat?

I have a hard time believing that large numbers of citizens still follow this secret society Second Empire sect, after 1000 years. That would be like the Anglo-Saxons preserving a secret but powerful sect since 1066, to suddenly attack all French-born citizens today. Lunatics only need apply. But okay... I can go with it.

The Berry sisters were left dangling. Are they going to be alright?

Lundos says

[In the end "Magic" doesn't real

Aristea says

Finally a comprehensive review on this book!

Spoiler: I loved this book, the best of the series just yet. And I am afraid and excited to start Blackveil because it has a great book to live up to!

First and foremost, the book was set up by book 2. A call to the (new) Green Riders was made right before the end of the book and Kerigan had her heart broken into a million pieces. The series has a strong Tolkien influence but this book in particular reminded me of the Lord of the Ring, a vivid reminder, including but not limited to the fairly heavy use of songs!

The villain is, again, the Second Empire. And I tend to like this plot better - maybe I can understand it better (my brain is not wired to understand an abstract - yet extremely dangerous - villain) albeit the enemy is, in essence, the same faction.

There are primarily four story lines that intertwine throughout the book: one for Karigan (duh!), one for Amberhill (view spoiler), one for Alton and Dale (focusing on the wall and the story is just incredibly interesting, with a crazy ghost mage!) and one for Beryl which was a brand new best for me!

The Elitians are a strong presence in this book (and I cannot stop drawing connections to the elves in the Tolkien stories); they are quite magical (view spoiler).

In essence, make yourself a favor and give this series a go. The main character is interesting (albeit immature at times which makes her more realistic), the story has an incredible level of detail, the characters, whether main or minor, are depicted with incredible skill. There is character development, there are good times and bad times. It is a satisfying fantasy read.

Karissa says

In this book Karigan is struggling with the King's wedding to Lady Estora and, when the Captain Mapstone asks her to go on a seemingly boring mission, Karigan is thrilled to leave the castle. The only downer is that she has to bring along a new Green Rider (Fergal) and train him in on the mission. The D'Yer wall continues to crumble and Alton struggles to find a way to repair it. Of course all is not what it seems to be and Karigan's simple mission goes awry.

The beginning of this book was slow and meandering. The only excitement was Karigan's duel with Amberhill in the museum before she left on her mission. I thought Karigan was strangely morose and immature in the beginning of the book; especially with how she treated Lady Estora.

I don't think that Fergal really added much to the book; I started getting flashbacks to Mercedes Lackey's Valedmar series when I read about Fergal. The introduction of Amberhill as the destitute noble/rogue was fun. Amberhill is an entertaining character but I struggled to get him to fit into the story. His role in the story seemed forced and a bit unnatural; although I think this character has promise for the future. Unfortunately I was getting the feeling that Amberhill's only purpose in this novel is to set him up as a future love interest for Karigan (I guess time will tell).

Damien and Lady Frost were very interesting characters that didn't get enough page space. It was also nice to see the Berry sisters again; although the role they played was tiny.

The story overall was disappointing. Both Karigan and Alton did a lot of hemming and hawing. There were a lot of issues brought up in the book that were left unresolved (Karigan's problem with her father trying to foist her off for marriage, etc). I think people who have previously reviewed this book and described it as a transition novel are right. There was a lot of shuffling people around and setting up stuff but not a lot of meaningful action taking place.

At the end of this book I had more questions than answers. I also started to despair that this is going to be a long un-ending series. I think it would have been good as a trilogy; I am worried that it will drag itself down if too many books are slapped onto this series.

So in summary, it was okay. I read it at a pretty good clip for a while and then had trouble finishing it. Hopefully the next book is more meaningful and hopefully it concludes this series!

Eric Allen says

An Opinionated Look At:

Kristen Britain's The High King's Tomb

By Eric Allen

This book is a little hard to rate, because the first half is boring and largely irrelevant to the story, where the second half is excellent and exciting. So I guess I'm going with a nice, neutral 3 stars. Not great. Not horrible. Just kind of there.

Before I start, I want to make something clear. There are a few very big things wrong with this book, and they are not the author's fault. The writing itself is excellent, and shows a marked progression in Britain's skills as a writer. However, it is very easy to see in this book how either the editor, or the publisher wanted her to include certain things in the story to cater to a broader audience. Britain fought back, lost, and is clearly bitter about it, and openly contemptuous of these certain things that she was forced to put in. Now, I don't know for sure if this is what happened with this book, as I wasn't there, and Britain is a busy woman who doesn't have time to reply back to everyone who sends her their praise, but it is the impression I get from how things are written, and the general mess that the first half of the book is in. In a perfect world, artists would be able to create what they want without interference and it would always be great. In reality, storytelling, whether it be books, film, television, or a dozen other different mediums, is a business, and those who run that business know that certain things sell well to certain audiences, and they do their best to make sure that those certain things are included in everything that they produce. Many a time a writer,

filmmaker, artist, musician, etc, must sacrifice their artistic integrity in the name of the almighty dollar. It is, unfortunately, the way the world works. Sometimes those imposed changes can be beneficial, and improve upon the story being told. The original Star Wars trilogy comes to mind. Read the original script to Star Wars and you'll see exactly what I mean. However, just as often, the interference from the higher ups fails to make an improvement, and it turns everything into a big mess. In short, there are times when the people up top should interfere in order to produce a better story... this was not one of them.

After the near escape of Mornhavon the Black from Blackveil Forest over the summer, the D'yer Wall has become even more unstable, and worse, the Guardians of the wall refuse Alton entry while they go slowly insane and begin to crumble. Meanwhile Karigan meanders pointlessly through several misadventures that don't really have much point or purpose to the plot or the development of characters and by sheer coincidence finds herself in position to save the day in the end. Second Empire has discovered a way to destroy the D'yer Wall once and for all, and have hired thieves to bring them certain items that will show them the way.

The Good? As I said earlier, Britain has improved her skills as a writer since the previous book. There are a lot of problems with relevance in the first half of the book, but that irrelevant fluff is still written well. Even with a first half that really just doesn't have much reason to exist, she still manages to pull things together for a pretty awesome second half, and a suitably epic climax.

I haven't addressed the love triangle in this series yet, so I might as well do so now. Okay, I know that hating love triangles is kind of the popular thing to do right now and all, but this is a really well done love triangle. Why? BECAUSE IT IS HALFWAY REALISTIC AND THE AUTHOR COMES AT IT LIKE AN ADULT RATHER THAN A HORNY TEENAGED GIRL!!! I am sick to death of badly written and constructed love triangles, however, this one is very well put together, and it follows very realistic paths. Karigan is a commoner, both men she likes are noblemen. It can never be, and the story treats it like something that can never be, finding ways to alienate one of the men she is interested in, and having Karigan herself realize how impossible the other one would be, but still unable to stop feeling the feelings she feels. In real life kings don't marry commoners because they fall in love with them, they get dragged into contracted treaty marriages and the like whatever they truly want, and it is SO GOOD to finally find an author that actually realizes this fact. The characters got to know each other through sharing mutual experiences, and generally being around each other long enough to actually feel love toward one another, rather than the cliché and unrealistic love at first sight gimmick that is so over used in fiction. And they actually follow the rules of society in dealing with that love. I mean, this NEVER happens in fiction, and it is so nice to actually see it done so well. When characters actually have reasons to fall in love with each other, and reasons why that love can never be, it brings so much more to the story in emotional and dramatic tension than any poorly tossed together, love at first sight, Twilight-esque love triangle ever could. Anyone looking for an example of a love triangle done right, take a look at Kristen Britain's Green Rider series, because it is one of the best executed love triangles I've ever seen in fiction.

The Bad? Now, I hesitate to use the word "girly" to describe many of the things that go on in the first half of this book, because it has always seemed rather condescending and a perpetuation of the stereotype that women only like things societally considered to be feminine, when there are many who don't care for these sorts of things at all. However, there's just no other word that really describes it. We've got wedding plans being made, a love that can never be, a dashing masked thief, Karigan playing dress up. It really seems out of place for two reasons. Up to this point, Britain has managed to avoid these sorts of things in her writing. And second, she seems highly contemptuous of them, which is what leads me to believe she had some publisher interference. You have the parts Britain obviously wanted to write, Karigan training as a swordmaster, and fighting off thieves and brigands... mixed in with the parts she obviously does not want to write, like dressing

up, and marriage plans, and the contrast is really harsh. You can tell just what Britain thinks of "girly" things and stereotypes, and yet, she is clearly being forced to perpetuate said stereotypes in the name of selling more books. Now, I'm not a woman, nor have I ever been or plan to be, but I imagine seeing a very strong female lead I looked up to, who has never followed the girly stereotypes at all, suddenly getting dragged into them kicking and screaming would feel just a little insulting to me, and kind of put me off the rest of what was happening in the book. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it just seems to me that when you take someone who has avoided being the stereotypical teenaged girl with stereotypical teenaged girl problems, likes and desires, and suddenly dump them all on her at once in a big mess of boring, pointless fluff, it sort of feels a little patronizing, doesn't it?

Karigan, the main protagonist, *HERO OF THE FREAKING STORY*, doesn't really have much to do with the first half of the book. In fact, you can completely remove most of her scenes from it and not really miss much of importance. The message errand she is sent on has the feel of the author simply making something for the character to do, rather than anything important or vital to the story in any way, and this unimportant errand has little relevance until the very end of the book, as it puts Karigan in the right place at the right time purely by coincidence. Britain does use this filler errand to give us some more of her world's lore, but it's really just not enough to justify the fact that the main character of this series is largely irrelevant to this story. Your main protagonist should be the center of the story. You shouldn't have to make busy work for her while important events are going on elsewhere. She should be right in the middle of it all, or connected to it in some way, rather than stumbling upon something of relevance to the main plot near the end in such a way that it could almost be considered *Deus Ex Machina*.

Divine intervention can work for a story under certain circumstances... this is not one of them. Typically, in my opinion, the *ONLY* times when it is acceptable to use divine intervention as a plot device are when a character is being rewarded for faith, or being rewarded for working through a crisis of faith. Neither of these things apply to this story. When you pretty much say "god stepped in and fixed everything" it cheapens the characters, their struggles, and any effort they've put into things so far. It's an even worse sin, if you'll pardon the pun, in my opinion, than even using *Deus Ex Machina* to resolve a problem. If some unknowable, all-powerful being does all the work for the characters what have they learned in the end? How have they grown as people by facing this trial? What new sides of their character did we, the readers, see? The entire point of a story is for the protagonist to learn and grow as a human being until she is able to win in the end on her own merits. Frankly, saying that god stepped in and saved the day in the end was a little lazy, and somewhat insulting as well. I mean, it's cool that Karigan got to ride Death's horse and all, and wield his power... but that wasn't *HER* doing those things, it was the Death God doing them. There is a difference, and a striking one at that. I felt a little let down by it. Karigan was a strong, smart, and highly capable character at the end of the previous book. Is it so much to ask that she solve the problem at the end of the next book by her own knowledge, skills, and ability, rather than sitting back and letting god fix it all for her?

As I said before, a lot of the things in the first half of this book just really don't have any real reason to be there. They just take up space and seem like obvious pandering toward a particular audience that the author has taken great pains before this point to avoid. You can remove huge chunks of the story without even noticing that they are missing, because it's really just a bunch of fan service for stereotypical teenaged girls who may, or may not, really care that much about it. The fact that the author is openly contemptuous of these sections of the book does not forgive the fact that they still do, in fact, exist. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that little things catering to a more feminine audience do not belong in any story ever. I'm not saying that at all. They have their place in a story, as well as those who enjoy reading about them. What I'm saying is that there has to be something else tying it in with the story in any way. They can't just be irrelevant pieces of fluff that have no impact on anything at all in the rest of the book. There has to be something else going on, even if it's pushed into the background and forgotten about while the pandering commences. There

wasn't. And the author's obvious disdain for these things made reading about them, especially when they had nothing to do with the rest of the book at all, rather awkward and somewhat uncomfortable for me. The story doesn't really get started until well over halfway through the page count. There are little tidbits here and there about the efforts at the wall, and the plotting of Second Empire, but they are few and far between. The rest of the page count in the first half of this book are just voids of nothing important to either the plot, or the development of characters, and really should have been removed because they serve no real purpose except to take up space. Back in college, while taking writing classes, I had several teachers tell me this very thing. If you can remove part of a story without changing a single word to the rest of it, you should.

In conclusion, despite the first half of this book not really having much point other than catering to an audience that may not have been much interested in this series before this point, amongst other problems, it was still very well written, and came to a satisfying and exciting conclusion. The first half of the book is, from the standpoint of a thirty-something man, rather boring and pointless, serving not much purpose to the plot or the characters, however, it does pick up in the second half. After the first two books this one was a bit of a disappointment, and I can see how the author was likely coerced into adding things in that she did not want to, and in fact was quite contemptuous of. That is only a matter of opinion upon having read the book, however, and should be taken as such unless confirmed or denied by the author herself. If you enjoyed the first two books, you'll probably get along with this one just fine, but you may, like me, end up wishing it had been a little more substance and a little less fluff.

Check out my other reviews.

C says

A fun read, and I enjoyed seeing what happened next to all the characters. The interaction with Amberhill near the end was great, too! Like other readers, I was also disappointed to be left hanging for a couple more years to find out how it all ends. Oh, well.

I was surprised by how much I like Estora now, and I think she'll make a good queen...unlike Karigan. I think Karigan is great, but she's simply not queen material (the etiquette, the clothes, the court politics, the lack of adventure and magic, the whole role just wouldn't fit her, and she'd be very unhappy).

Although Zachary is a good king, I think he is excruciatingly inconsiderate of Karigan's feelings. As a love interest for her, Zachary's main attractions seem to be that 1) he is in love with her (or at least the freedom she represents to him) and 2) he's the king (whom she's forced to serve anyway because of the compulsion of the rider call). Karigan is no Cinderella, and she doesn't need to marry the prince--what would she do with a life of balls, anyway? At the end of the second book, Zachary was willing to destroy her respectability for the rest of her life by having her become his mistress. She, the only daughter and heir of a very wealthy merchant. What would her life have been like as his mistress--scorned by all the court and likely parts of her own family? A disappointment to her father and herself in that she couldn't marry and bear legitimate children? Hardly a happy ending for such a worthy heroine. It's time for Zachary to grow up and be thoughtful of the women in his life and start paying attention to Estora in earnest; they're similar enough that they can easily develop a mature, lifelong love.

And if I can express my hopes for the now "Sir Karigan", after her time as a Green Rider ends, I would like to see her marry Alton. She's a knight now, thus a good match for noble Alton. They're both Green Riders who will inherit relatively high positions in life. To quote Mr. O'Hara, "Like must marry like, or there can be no happiness." Alton loves her, she has a deep affection for him that could blossom into strong romantic love if Zachary would stop taking "special notice" of her, and Alton's only unkindness to her has been taking a long time to overcome the effects of the impersonation of Karigan by a malicious spirit--rather

understandable, considering the consequences to the D'yer wall and his own poisoned state and confusion as to whether Karigan really was involved.

J.V. Seem says

In *The High King's Tomb*, Karigan has to save the day again, as not only does the threat of Blackveil increase when the wall shows signs of breaking, but the king's intended gets kidnapped.

Thankfully, this volume in the series is much better than the previous, which was a bit of a disappointment. I still like it best when the story takes place in the "real" world, and this takes a couple of trips outside too, but not enough for me to lose interest, thankfully. The thing is, Britain does her main world really well, but the transition from that to the dreamy god world is less than smooth.

But this book definitely reminded me why I enjoyed *Green Rider* so much.

As usual, I feel very invested in the characters. They are very well-rounded, and you genuinely care what happens to them.

The author also handles the switch between the different perspectives and characters' voices very well, it's wonderful to read.

Britain also has the ability to present to me a character that I'll fucking hate the first time I meet him or her, and then develop him/her so skillfully and so believable that I come to feel affection for the character by the end of the book. That, in all of literature, is one of my favorite things, but very few writers are able to do it.

This book is very fast-paced as far as action goes, but there's also some intrigue in there, which in turn is very slow indeed. There's been UST for three brick-sized books, and I honestly wish for something to resolve itself one way or the other, as there's only so much a gal can take. If you're gonna put intrigue in there, I wish there would be more of a development, less stalemate.

There's, sadly, another problem I need to address, but since it only takes up like one percent of the book, it's not a big one, but it needs mentioning.

And that is the use of different times when switching between different worlds. Britain uses the ordinary "he/she was/did/said" throughout 99% of the book, but when one of the characters enter a different, magical world, she suddenly, for a very brief space, uses the present tense; "he is/does/says".

The purpose behind this is clear: To make the differences between the magical and mundane world distinct to the reader.

But authors: DO NOT DO THIS. EVER. ...EVER.

It's unsettling, you suddenly have to reboot your mind to fit the brand new form the text takes. Don't use them both, decide on one. The effect isn't great enough to make up for the fact that it's a very messy choice to make.

That's only a small part of the book, though.

Overall, I really liked it. It's entertaining and has a fast-paced and exciting plot, both factors which outweigh the minor flaws it has.

Sarah Vecchi says

If I could live in any fictional world, as any fictional character, it would either be Karigan G'ladheon of the Green Rider series, or Maxwell of The Chronicles of St. Mary's; both of whom are badass heroines who aren't blonde and stunning Mary Sue assassins (*cough* too many YA books).

Asami Uchiha says

It has taken me 56 days to finish this book . . . BUT IT IS FINALLY DONE!!!

Thank God for the existence of holidays!

I first intended to finish this book during the Tome Topple Readathon . . . as you can see, this did not happen, but the readathon motivated me to continue reading this book, so I am grateful to have been able to participate.

The amount of pages in this series is intimidating, especially as the books grow exponentially larger by 50 pages every book. That being said, it allows for a large amount of world building to take place. I am growing fond of the world being created through these pages as well as the characters old and new being introduced. I must say my favourite character is by far Fastion.

There were parts in the book which I thought dragged out a little too long and the first 400 pages were a little dull at times. In comparison I absolutely loved the last 300 pages of this high fantasy novel. The pace quickened and there was a lot of action . . . Fastion also made a prominent appearance which was much appreciated.

I am curious to see how these characters will develop during the course of the next book and I am happy to conclude that I am officially half way through this series and will continue to power through (or so I hope)!

Mike (the Paladin) says

With great sorrow I must say that this, the third novel in the Green Rider series is not quite...that's "not quite" as good as the first 2. I give it 4 stars which is the same rating as the others because I don't want to drop it to 3 stars as that's in my rating system moving to "good" but not outstanding. This book is still outstanding...but long, oh so very long for the story it tells.

From what I've read publishers are now asking that fantasy/science fiction novels be about 90,000 words. I've seen evidence that in some cases lately that may have caused...stretching.

This is a good book. The characters are still here, the plot is still here and my interest held, mostly. The point of view changes were for me sometimes a bit annoying and the story telling itself often bogged down. The conversations that take place around the book's action usually start out germane to plot and character but then wander off to superfluous information and topics. There were times I got hardily tired of it... there came a point of sighing over the side roads we were running down.

So, a bit long, maybe the book would have done better to tell they same story in 2/3 the space but not a huge problem. Of course I have the next book (Blackveil) on my shelf and it looks even longer...oh well, we'll see.

I like these books and the story is still holding up well. The plot is deepening and while there may be some false notes all in all this is an excellent series of books, I can recommend it.

Dan says

Not bad, lengthy, I skimmed a few sections, but quite good.

Karyogini says

[I'm q

Beckyhr says

AH! What happened to this series?!? I was heartbroken. The book did nothing to advance the plot of the story, didn't reveal anything new or interesting about the main character or her love interest and was, in my opinion, a flop. I mean, what's up with character the knacker's son? Who cares? I hope she concludes the series in the next one.

Text Addict says

I feel like I need to point out up front that this is actually a positive review of this book and series. It's just that there are some relatively minor things that bug me.

So, my local public library finally picked up the paperback of this third-of-four volumes and put it on the "NEW" shelf. Well, at least that means I found it.

I've been patiently following this series since Green Rider was published way back in (checks author's website) 1998. Patience has been required, because the sequel First Rider's Call did not appear until 2003, this third volume came out (in hardcover) in 2007, and the fourth volume, Blackveil, was issued in hardcover and ebook formats in February of 2011.

Am I going to say it's been worth the wait for this third volume? Yes. Am I in raptures over the series? Not quite. It's good, solid high fantasy, with good, solid writing (language, characterization, plotting, the works). There are good, creative ideas in it, and some derivative ones. I'm not, I have to admit, completely convinced that the basic story really needed four volumes to tell, but that's more in the nature of a quibble (and one that I've felt more strongly about with regard to some other series).

About the story: The country of Sacoridia has spent centuries recovering from a devastating war. In that time, the use of magic has been abandoned by everyone except the elite corps of "Green Riders," the monarch's messenger service (their uniforms are green), and even they don't "use" magic as such; they think they have "talents" granted by the magical brooches they wear. Oh, and they're "called" by magic.

Sound vaguely familiar yet? They also have unusually intelligent horses; the secret of these is finally revealed in High King's Tomb, and I have to admit it wasn't anything I was expecting. That's the way the whole series has been for me: various vaguely familiar elements that usually turn out to be new models. I know it's asking a lot to suggest that any high fantasy be composed of all new ideas, but there's enough of this in the series that it keeps me from enjoying it without reservation.

At any rate, despite its rejection of magic in a world where it actually does work, Sacoridia has not been ravaged by foreign magic-users ... because the remnants of the Arcosian invaders who might be using it were locked in the Blackveil Forest behind a physical/magical wall (called the D'Yer Wall). Garth Nix's *Sabriel*, whose Old Kingdom is hemmed in by a magical wall, was published in 1995. These two walls are in no way identical, except for being walls that keep evil at bay. (I'm not clear, in either case, on why the evil doesn't just go around, but oceans may have something to do with it.)

So. Our main protagonist is Karigan, a merchant's daughter who is drafted into the Green Riders. By Volume 3, she's settled into the life (which is not at all what she had in mind), helped to prevent the overthrow of the rightful monarch by his brother (and fallen in love with him), and managed to keep a breach in the D'Yer Wall from leading to the total destruction of Sacoridia. Alton Deyer, descendant of the D'Yers who have forgotten their ancient magical building skills, is trying to figure out how to repair the breach and, as the book goes on, how to keep the wall from failing entirely. Also, the book tracks the activities of the survivors of Sacoridia's fifth column, descendants of the Arcosians who call themselves Second Empire and expect to take over Sacoridia any day now. Their leader has magic – and she, by the way, seems to be a completely original (and chilling) character.

So, seriously, the historical background mostly makes sense, especially with the various reveals that finally turn up in this volume. The plot actually zooms right along, making these elements I'm complaining about recede into the background most of the time (though the way horsemaster Damian Frost and his wife Lady reminded me of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry was a bit painful). Did I mention the Eletians? Tolkienish elves, with variations. They and some of the other characters can traverse another dimension, which looks like an endless plain, which I think I recall from the early volumes of the *Wheel of Time* series (I only read the first two or three).

I think, as with the *Wheel of Time* series, that it's not the presence of these familiar elements that bugs me; it's the number of them (there are a few others that I haven't mentioned). I bet if the series were shorter, there would be fewer and I'd notice them less. And I do have to say, the burial customs of the Sacoridian kings were a most unexpected and interesting touch. I'm not sure they make sense in the larger cultural context, but they're definitely different – and the tombs are the setting of the book's climax, which features a revelation that I was definitely not expecting.

So, the story is sweeping, political, magical, sometimes military, and in this volume it's clear that at least one god is getting involved. There are vanishingly few instances of characters being stupid for the sake of the plot; in a couple of cases there are characters being more intelligent than I expected, which is a very nice thing. There is only one thing that actually bugs me enough to nearly make me put the books down: Karigan's main character quirk seems to be getting into embarrassing – even humiliating – minor scrapes. In this volume, for example, she's talked into going out with a young merchant's son and winds up trying to fight in a fancy, restricting dress (humiliating) and later gets knocked off her horse by a porch roof (don't ask). I can easily see Karigan being played by Anne Hathaway in the movie. But it undercuts her overall competence and, frankly, I personally hate embarrassment and hate seeing it repeatedly in a book (or a movie, for that matter).

Still. The books are enjoyable reads, despite these things that bug me, and I hope my library gets the fourth volume soon, so I can read it.

Ashley says

This book is definitely not as good as the first two.

I really felt that this book was slow and uninteresting for the beginning, and parts of the middle as well. Karigan is stuck doing trivial things with a boring companion. And I felt like I was being preached at for parts of the book - for example, the dissertation on whorehouses and love, the random mention of same-sex couples, arranged marriages, etc. It just felt like the author just *had* to put her view of societal issues in the book and then put it under the thin guise of plot advancement.

Not to mention that there are so many characters sharing their POV now. It just seems like the telling of the story is diluted with all of the separate third person narratives - Karigan, Estora, Amberhill, Grandmother, and even more that I can't place right now.

And, pirates? Seriously, pirates? Just, out of nowhere, pirates plopped in my fantasy book. Uh, what?

And now that I think about it, this book has a total deus ex machina ending. The god-stallion appears in the middle of the tomb and Karigan becomes his avatar to pen up all the zombies and spirits again.

The more I think about it, the more I dislike this book. The other two seemed very fresh - a different story. This one seems to be incorporating far too much to try and make the plot different.

Really, this book is two-and-a-half stars, but I'll give it the benefit of the doubt and put it at three.
