

time, but it's a quirky little book that will certainly hold its audience from page one through to the ultimately indigestible squid at the end.

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Sea Change. Linda Smith. Thistledown, 1999. 328 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 1-895449-86-3.

The second novel in the Freyan trilogy, *Sea Change* is a thoroughly enjoyable, fast-paced yet thoughtful fantasy novel for the early to mid teens. Even though it is the second in a trilogy, it is complete enough in itself that the reader need not have read the first installment, *Wind Shifter*, to enjoy it.

The story centres on Kerstin Speller, a sixteen-year-old apprentice wizard who travels with her wizard father, Morgan, and another wizard to an unexplored part of their world, where only nine women carry all the magical powers that help their society. Kerstin and the two older wizards hope to learn healing from them but, during their stay, Morgan and the Healer fall in love while Kerstin discovers a boy with magical talent. These discoveries disrupt all their lives.

Smith uses this fast-paced novel as a vehicle through which to explore gender roles and the restrictions placed on both genders by their respective societies. Kerstin is considered unusual in her role as apprentice because girls in Freya usually do nothing outside the home. In contrast, on Islandia it is the men who are considered incapable of magic and, while the men have jobs and civic roles, women do as well. Smith cleverly shows the restrictions placed on both genders by gender role expectations and limitations, not only through Kerstin but particularly through her discovery of Raven, the boy with a powerful but unacceptable gift of healing.

Yet there is nothing preachy in Smith's tone. She works this theme neatly through character, setting, and plot, so that, while her point is obvious, it is a natural outcome of the elements of the novel, not forced or strident. Her characters are very strong. Kerstin herself is intelligent, stubborn, and strong-willed, while still having the uncertainties and longings of adolescence, including the longing for her widowed father's undivided attention. The tormented Raven, while a more background figure, evokes intense sympathy in the reader, as does Morgan with his loneliness which his daughter cannot completely fill, the Animal Helper, Gilles, with her bitterness and Rilka, the Healer, with her sweet gentleness and subtle strength. Smith's greatest strength seems to be in her characters, and yet other parts of the novel do not show weakness. The plot is well crafted, with no lag in the action and yet plenty of time for the reader to take in the strangeness of the setting, the differences of the characters, and the intensity of the themes woven through the story.

Overall, this excellent young adult fantasy is extremely well written and a thoroughly enjoyable read. We have every reason to look forward to the third volume of the Freyan trilogy.

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