



Shattered Pillars

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The Shattered Pillars is the second book of Bear's *The Eternal Sky* trilogy and the sequel to *Range of Ghosts*. Set in a world drawn from our own great Asian Steppes, this saga of magic, politics and war sets Re-Temur, the exiled heir to the great Khagan and his friend Sarmarkar, a Wizard of Tsarepheth, against dark forces determined to conquer all the great Empires along the Celedon Road.

Elizabeth Bear is an astonishing writer, whose prose draws you into strange and wonderful worlds, and makes you care deeply about the people and the stories she tells. The world of *The Eternal Sky* is broadly and deeply created—her award-nominated novella, "Bone and Jewel Creatures" is also set there.

Shattered Pillars Details

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Author : Elizabeth Bear

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From Reader Review Shattered Pillars for online ebook

Robyn says

Solid instalment in the series - looking forward to reading the third!

The mythology continues to evolve and intrigue. There are tantalising hints that this world might be more than it seems, which again, just makes me ready for the third. Despite that, the book is certainly whole in and of itself - all the pieces are now in play!

Joseph says

Let me start off by saying that I like the plot of this book, the main characters, and I think Ms. Bear is a wonderful writer. That being said I still had issues with the book. I found the book to be rather slow, and it took me longer than usual to read because of this. Not much happens throughout the book in terms of plot advancement until the last twenty pages or so after a long building process and in my opinion the payoff just wasn't there. It was much like the first story where the book ended with no real resolution and left it wide open for the last book in the trilogy. It also, in my opinion, had too many point of view characters. She switched around a lot between quite a few characters and I believe that slowed down the plot some. All in all I did like the book it just took longer than normal to do so because of the above reasons.

heidi says

Stop. If you have not read Range of Ghosts, preferably in the last year, then you're really going to be confused for the first quarter of this book. It does sort out so that you don't have to have read the first one, but c'mon, it's great, you want to anyway.

Ok, that said: What an excellent second book. Unlike many middle books in a trilogy, this one is fast-paced, compelling, and full of character development. At no time did I feel like we were just marking time until the climax. It is just that there is too much story to fit in one or two books.

If the first book was about the formation of the Fellowship of the Oddballs, (warrior, wizard, priest, tiger), this one is about figuring out what you want to accomplish with your life besides pure survival. Temur has to decide not to be a refugee, but rather a king-in-exile. Edene becomes a ruler in her own right. Samarkar finds a direction to harness her power toward. It's a wild tapestry with a ton of threads to follow, but unlike a Tom Clancy book, everyone has their own motivations and voice, so it is much easier to keep clear what is going on. Being a middle book, of course, there is a lot of wrapping-up to be accomplished in the next book, but I will be right at the front of the virtual release line.

As usual for a book by Bear, the language is amazing and evocative. There is a description of the smell of water that made me thirsty. And the trenchant voice of the characters, such as Samarkar thinking, "She comforted herself that no matter how far she traveled, no matter how changed her role, she was still and always would be a scandal." There are worse things to aspire to than being a permanently scandalous woman. Or Hrahima saying, "I don't believe in God. She drops by once in a while and we argue about it."

Read if: You are looking for not-another-swords-and-Arthur fantasy. You like books about adults, who sometimes have to make decisions about least-bad options. You want a world-sweeping fantasy where travel is actually time-consuming and problematic.

Skip if: You can't read about plague, bugs, liches, or women in control of their sexuality.

Also read: This. Well, buy the first one, Range of Ghosts and read it. But you should buy this one now, to encourage the publisher.

The Shayne-Train says

This book, the second in the series, did not let me down. So often the "middle child" of a trilogy is fundamentally lacking. But not so here, oh no. The characters you love return, and you're introduced to new ones that you begin to love as well. The plot moves forward, instead of spinning its wheels in a holding pattern and keeping all that good stuff for the final book.

And more Hrahima! She, if you don't already know, is a mysterious magical tiger-woman warrior. That should be enough to get you to read this series. C'mon.

I can't wait to get the next and (sob!) last one under my belt and into my brain.

Fantasy Literature says

Elizabeth Bear's entire ETERNAL SKY trilogy is now sitting in a neat row on my bookshelf. I adored the first book and consumed the second one so quickly it went by in a blur of semi-divine horses and cool but unpronounceable names. Before I read Steles of the Sky(released on April 10th), it's worth pausing to reconsider the middle book in what might be one of my favorite fantasy series in recent years.

In Shattered Pillars, Temur and his band of loyal and enigmatic followers continue their quest. But the quest is stranger and less certain than it used to be. Temur wants to save Edene, his horse-riding lady-love, but also reclaim his grandfather's throne and oust his rival Qori Buqa. In a vast and fractured political landscape dominated by independent city-states, this turns out to be ... Read More:
<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/reviews/eternal-sky-trilogy-shattered-pillars>

Vanessa says

I was blown away by RANGE OF GHOSTS last year, and was so excited to receive SHATTERED PILLARS in the mail, the second installment of Elizabeth Bear's The Eternal Sky trilogy. But before I start the review, if you haven't read GHOSTS, **stop** and read it before you continue. PILLARS will not make sense if you read them out of order.

With that out of the way, the question I'm sure you're wondering about is if the second is as good as the first. The short answer is: No, but only barely. However, PILLARS is still an excellent book in its own right.

Let's start with the good stuff. All the things I loved about GHOSTS was evident in PILLARS: an imaginative setting, interesting characters, epic good vs evil story. Bear's consistency across the books is excellent, including but not limited to the tone, pacing, and continuing build-up of the story and characterization. As before, her prose is astounding in its detail and stimulation of the senses, her observations on situational irony amusing counterpoints to the usually serious tone of the story. The dialogue and character interaction is particularly well done--it is crisp, insightful, and propels the story forward.

Bear expands the world even more in PILLARS, showing us the differing sensibilities between the cultures and their traditions, as well as the wizards of Tsarepheth in their element, and how dangerous the old magics are. The same characters you grew to know and love have experienced hardship and as a result are different people. After the events of GHOSTS, they can now stop, think, and begin to make choices that will impact their future: Will Temur decide to oppose his uncle? Will Samarkar follow Temur as he attempts to save his lover? What is al-Sepehr's next move and can they stop him?

It is these things that make PILLARS an excellent book. But it unfortunately still suffers a little from middle book syndrome. While Bear does well tying up plotlines and weaving new ones, the story still feels like a continuation/build-up/act 2, making it less the cohesive story it needs to be in its own right. It doesn't help that the climax feels less like a culmination of the novel and more like another big event. It is this reality that will make newcomers to the series hard to persuade to continue reading to book three, because without having read GHOSTS, PILLARS will lack meaning to them, they won't connect with the characters, and they will be lost in the setting.

There are some inconsistencies with setting/plot that weren't clear to me, particularly Edene's storyline. Is Bear attempting a mythological feel? Will she explain more later? Also, there are much more switches back and forth between characters than in the first book, as well as more PoV characters. In a recent review of a different novel I complained about those very things, and while Bear does it with much more finesse and a better sense of timing, it did get overwhelming sometimes, making it harder for me to absorb the story as a whole.

Still, Bear is painting a beautiful story in an exotic and foreign land with the kinds of people we want to see succeed. GHOSTS and PILLARS are written in the epic fantasy tradition, but Bear tells a timeless story with a fresh perspective. I can't wait til book three.

Recommended Age: 16+

Language: Maybe one instance

Violence: There's fighting (not as much as book 1) with some gore; a plague with resulting gory descriptions of deaths and surgeries

Sex: Scenes referenced with minimal detail

Read this and other reviews at Elitist Book Reviews.

Tudor Ciocarlie says

I love what Bear is doing with gender in this epic-fantasy series. There is a perfect equilibrium between men and women, between their roles and their support to one another, that is such joy to read. The thing that prevents Shattered Pillars to be the perfect novel that Range of Ghosts was, is the fact that, being the second book in a trilogy, we spend less time with Temur and Sarmarkar, and more time with some characters that

are more generic epic-fantasy, but are necessary for the future conflicts and for giving life and substance to the world. Anyway, I have not doubt that the third novel will be an incredible reading experience.

Griffin says

Worthy follow-up in the Eternal Sky trilogy. Even though it suffered from some pacing problems and the unlikely relationship between Temur and Sarmarkar, it delivers on prose. I found the story in Range of Ghosts slightly better and that's why I'm giving this book a 3.5/5.

Tim Martin says

Djinn and rukhs and ghuls oh my! What a fun fantasy book in a not often trod setting, the dusty deserts and windswept steppes – along with the teeming, opulent, decidedly non-western cities – of the Silk Road. There was a lot to like about this second installment in a rather promising series; really evocative (but not over wrought) language perfectly describing the feel of this vividly described world is the first thing that comes to mind. I don't think I have read in recent memory anyone who has done a better job of describing arid lands, the feel of a sunset or a parched landscape, or of hard, weather beaten, sun-battered lands than her. It is not all deserts of course; there are the rich oases with jewel-like frogs hiding in the dense foliage, soaring peaks fringed with ragged clouds, cities with soaring minarets, dominating the skyline...

I digress, but easy to do with such writing. What else was there to like? A fast pace, not a middling mess like some middle books are. Lots of action scenes. Interesting monsters (no one, I mean no one, has done rukhs - rocs as they are spelled in some other fantasy settings – better than her and I love her ghuls). Real character development, particularly with Temur and Samarkar but indeed with the whole Central Asian Fellowship of the Ring (my words) as well as Edene. Excellent handling of how an evil language should REALLY be done in a fantasy setting, one of the creepiest by far elements of the book. The only thing creepier – no, horrific, creepy is not strong enough a word – than that was the magical plague we see unfold in the book (perhaps a little TOO well described, as it got a real and visceral ick factor feeling from me).

I continue to love how magic is done in this setting and Bear does fantastic work with her unique idea that the sky of a given land should reflect the rulers of that land. Not only do the sky appearances (and changes!) have real story impact, they just give a great feel to this setting. I have never seen anything like it. Most interesting to me is what is the sky like in a land ruled by non-humans? You get to find out in this book.

If you liked the first book I don't think you will at all be disappointed.

Erica says

Just so you know, everyone in this story is pregnant.

Ok, that's not true, but there does seem to be a lot of pregnancy among main(ish) characters. I guess it's like when the one woman in your circle is gravid and then everyone gets gravid.

I enjoyed this book; the story continues to be questy-fantasy but the environments, the world, it's all just so intriguing. I do not recommend waiting years between the first one and this one, though. I had forgotten so much and now I realize that I should probably just start over from the beginning before I launch into the third.

This was easier to read, not the struggle the last one was for me. As a trade off, though, I wasn't quite as pleased to have read it once it was all said and done. I really liked it but I didn't love it like I did Range of Ghosts. And that ending! So abrupt! I kept trying to peel the page apart, certain the last two pages were stuck together and there was at least another paragraph, if not more.

I'm interested in how the whole Edene/Samarkar/Tenur thing is going to shake out because that seems like maybe it could be a mess. And when did Hrahima become a knower of every single thing ever? I admit, that bothered me at the end. I kept wanting to ask her, "How do you know?" because...how did she know?

So, GR friends, how come none of you have read these? It makes me sad. You people are making me sad. And lonely.

Mayim de Vries says

"To say a thing is to make it so."

I am occasionally told that my reviews are mean and that I rarely say good things about books. In an attempt to counter this allegation, I'd like to begin with an affirmative statement:

This book has a nice cover.

Now, that **was** nice, wasn't it?

As to the important things: There are two.

In the first place, **do not believe in a single word of Scott Lynch's review**. Clearly, he has not been entirely objective when writing it. (I don't hold it against you, Scott, you have paid the price).

Secondly, after a bad opening in the previous instalment I had hoped to be shattered here. I was not.

In the grand scheme of things **the romance grows so does the political intrigue**. Plenty of **new characters are given voices** and so the book stops being about Temur and Samarkar. In a sense, Temur still is the linking piece in this puzzle but there are more POVs now, and the narrative is more akin to the omniscient narrative.

Having said this, **even though Temur seems to be the centrepiece, when it comes to character development, he remains a second son whose greatest ambition in life had been to serve as his older brother's general and enjoy the life on the steppe. There is no doubt that Samarkar is his queen in this game of political chess and the victory will come only through her** (even though I still think that the relationship between them is as perplexing as the whole Edana quest).

"Re Temur, I am Samarkar, and I will win you back your queen, and I will set you in a golden saddle as

Temur Khan, and I will see your brother avenged and this as-Sephr of the Nameless put down in your name.”

Generally, the more **feminist-minded readers will be delighted to know that the book is filled with devious and scheming women always being at least a step ahead of the men around them**, who usually go around blinded by their hearts, arrogance, and ambitions.

In addition to meeting new characters, we also get to visit **new places which made my head spin with hard to pronounce and remember names** (even though it is fair to point out that maps are included so you don't have to feel lost in this world where people have their teas salted and buttered).

There are **some interesting ideas**, like twin souls sharing one body or the concept of a true name, although there are **gaps when it comes to execution** (one person vanishing when convenient, or how do you exactly name somebody, do you just have to be first?). I also found it bizarre that the wizards are more like scholar doctors and magic is secondary to their learned skills of the academic kind.

It is a middle book and so, predictably, **everything goes so smoothly for the evil party, while the good ones struggle and suffer losses or face near disasters at every turn**. There are plenty of last-minute rescues, escapes, and chases. There are plagues, assassinations and dragons and, still, magic horses.

In other words, a decent but forgettable middle book. Read only if you have nothing better on your shelf.

Also in the series:

1. Range of Ghosts
3. Steles of the Sky RTC (less)

Matt Fimbulwinter says

Book 2 of the Eternal Sky trilogy. As is typical with Bear's books, I am in love with the characters, and find the villain threatening, but understandable. It was a fair bit of cognitive dissonance to read this while, in parallel, listening to the Game of Thrones audiobook. It makes the problematic shortcuts Martin takes with the Dothraki really, really stand out.

The only story line that I'm feeling shaky about is Edene's, but I won't know how I feel about it until book 3 when I find out how it resolves.

Justine says

4.5 stars

I really enjoyed this book. There was so much going on and the it was written with a very different kind of intensity. Shattered Pillars essentially picks up where Range of Ghosts left off and continues to develop both

the characters and the evolving storylines from there. While I really enjoyed *Range of Ghosts*, *Shattered Pillars* definitely turned things up a notch in terms of its complexity. I love Bear's use of language, which I find quite different from some of the other writers I have been reading lately. There is a certain cadence to her writing that goes well with the world that she is trying to create, which for me, really came alive in this book in particular.

Ron says

“To say a thing is to make it so.”

Well-conceived and well-told epic fantasy. Bear's created world breathes authenticity. Spared returning reader retelling the first book, though a new reader may not pick up the stakes and the players as quickly.

“Everything is lazy.”

Maintains the high standards of *Range of Ghosts* but still drifts a little sideways. Nothing requires a story stretch to three volumes if it can be told in two. Ends with the right mix of hope and despair.

“It's easier to be shared than to share.”

Scott says

It's my reluctant policy not to give star ratings to books written by the woman I am dating. ;)

With that said, *Range of Ghosts* was a very good book, a fine opening to this trilogy, but *Shattered Pillars* tops it in every particular. It moves faster but sacrifices neither detail nor characterization. It's brutal, beautiful, and nuanced, marrying the pace of classic swords-and-sorcery with the numinous, expansive worldbuilding of contemporary epic fantasy. Bear's touch is as deft and her control is tight as anything she's ever written. This sequence deserves many readers, and you deserve to treat yourself to it.

Jason says

4 Stars

Let me start by saying that I love Elizabeth Bear and can say that she is easily a five star writer. *Shattered Pillar*, book two in the *Eternal Sky* series is even better than book one. This book is filled with so much action, magic, and adventure that it was tough to put down. My only real gripe was I had a tough time remembering who was who, and who was a man or am beast. This book has many points of view that also was a bit tough to keep up with for the first third of this book. Once things got going, I loved it.

Bear has a real gift for writing and she writes with a poetic touch. Her style elevates her stories and this book is no exception. Highly recommended to fantasy readers and lovers of fairy tales.

Megan Baxter says

It's been a while since I read the first book in this trilogy, but it didn't take me long to slip back into this world, and I think I liked Shattered Pillars even more than Range of Ghosts, and I liked Range of Ghosts quite a lot. The characters have settled in, though, and the struggles they're facing are deadly and affecting.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Anya says

What a lovely trilogy this is! This middle book is a bit hard for me to separate from the first since the quest flows directly together, but I enjoyed my listening experience. There is more romance and a bit of sexy times, a lot of development of Temur's plot line, world-building of new and terrifying areas, and a lot of beautiful phrases. I don't love the narrator's male voices always, but audio is otherwise a great way to read these books!

Reed says

Sadly, I did not enjoy Bear's second novel set in her intriguing take on Earth's steppe nomads, as well as neighboring regions. While I adored the first book, Shattered Pillars suffered some of the the symptoms of second book syndrome:

--New characters that the reader is not connected with, because they are new.(duh)I spent most of the time thinking "Why can't I be reading about Temur,Sarmarkar, and Hrahima.

--An exploration of new places that aren't as nifty as previous ones.

--A feeling that the plot is "spinning it's wheels", waiting for the third volume to really get going.

It was the third aspect that spoiled the novel for me. I felt the characters spent most of the book, moving from place to place, getting nothing done whatsoever. Temur feels compelled to track and free Edene, but never seems to get any closer to solving his problem.

In addition, some of the events of the novel seemed a bit random, a bit odd for the sake of odd. I quite like Bear's take on fantasy, but sometimes it seemed she was trying a bit too hard.

Many readers here have rated the novel much higher than I have, so perhaps this novel just didn't click with my tastes. Bear's writing is still stellar, and I certainly intend to read the next volume with the hopes she hits that high mark once again.

Jeremy Preacher says

Arrgh. I really like this series so far. It's got some great worldbuilding, beautiful imagery, and characters with well-drawn relationships - plus, ponies! - and this book in particular has some fantastic action sequences. But my feeling that maybe I should have waited until all three books were published remains, because dammit, I want to know the end. That's more praise than criticism, mind you - I am too old and cynical to look forward to the conclusions of uninteresting series, even if I know I will read them. This is far from uninteresting, and the last couple chapters are just an avalanche of "Wait, what? WHAT?!" and then the teeth-gnashingly abrupt ending.

Some of the particularly good bits include the relationship between Samarkar (who is not only a great character in her own right, but hey, how about that exploration of the distinction between sexuality and reproduction!) and Temur, who is the sort of Destined Prince who, in other hands, would get right up my nose, but is actually a sweet, appealing fellow having entirely realistic reactions to the often ridiculously over-the-top circumstances in which he is placed. The assassin twins, now sharing a body, are also entertaining - I sense further plot-twisty developments to come from the female twin now placed for strategic reasons both in her brother's role and also in a new role of her own in a much more gender-egalitarian culture than she's used to. Especially given the ending.

I also very much enjoyed the entire POV of the powerless wizard Tsering. Or, perhaps, "powerless," since she gets rather a lot more done than most of the people around her, despite her lack of magic and her resultant self-doubt. Her relationship with Temur's mother Ashra in particular is lovely - I am a bit of a sucker for doomed heroism, and Tsering's perspective, watching someone die who might have been a friend and mentor, made the whole plotline much more affecting than had the poignancy rested entirely on Ashra's relationship to Temur. I do hope the mist dragon comes back in the third book and does something other than mutter encouraging platitudes, though.

In conclusion: I want the third book, a pony, and possibly a disillusioned humanoid-tiger ex-priestess. Not necessarily in that order.
