



The Hand of Oberon

Roger Zelazny

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Across the mysterious Black Road, demons swarm into Shadow. The ancient, secret source of the royal family's power is revealed, & an unholy pact between a prince of the realm & the forces of Chaos threaten all the known worlds with absolute obliteration. The hour of battle is at hand. Now Corwin and the remaining princes of Amber must call upon all their superhuman powers to defeat their brother-turned-traitor before he can walk the magical Pattern that created Amber and remake the universe in his own image.

The Hand of Oberon Details

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Author : Roger Zelazny

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From Reader Review The Hand of Oberon for online ebook

M Hamed says

what ???

who in the flaying holy flaming fuck is Ganeton ?

Kat Hooper says

Audio re-read

3.5 stars

Originally posted at FanLit. <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

The Hand of Oberon, the fourth book in Roger Zelazny's CHRONICLES OF AMBER, continues exactly where the previous book, Sign of the Unicorn, left off. The story was originally serialized in Galaxy Science Fiction and later printed in approximately 180-page installments. Each, therefore, is short and ends at some dramatic moment. These days, we'd probably be annoyed with an author who did this (why buy 10 books when you could just buy two?). For those of you who feel this way, there is an omnibus edition of THE CHRONICLES OF AMBER — I read it years ago — but it's a bit unwieldy. If you want to listen to the excellent audio versions narrated by Alessandro Juliani, as I'm doing, you'll need to buy them separately. The ten-book series is divided into two five-book arcs, THE CORWIN CYCLE and THE MERLIN CYCLE, so you're really only committing to five books if you start the series. You can just read THE CORWIN CYCLE (which I think is better) and decide later if you want to move on to the second arc.

In The Hand of Oberon, Corwin has just discovered that the pattern in Amber is not the first pattern. There is a primal pattern, which means that Amber is actually just the first shadow world. The primal pattern has been damaged because someone has spilled royal blood on it. This is allowing the forces of Chaos to enter Amber. Who has done this? Why? And who was the sacrifice? Most importantly, how can the pattern be fixed and is Corwin willing to do what it takes to save Amber from the forces of Chaos? And can he do it before one of his siblings ruins everything?

As with the previous book, there's a lot of revelation here about Corwin's family, Dworkin the mage, the Jewel of Judgment, and the metaphysics of Amber, Chaos, and Shadow. Corwin also discovers that he has another disgruntled relative that he didn't know about before. I'm still disappointed that we're told how much Corwin loves Amber, but we, as readers, can't empathize because all we know of Amber is Corwin's horrible family. I want to love Amber, too, but Zelazny doesn't really give me a reason to love it.

The Hand of Oberon moves very fast and ends with another big twist. This twist completely astonishes Corwin, but the reader may see it coming. Corwin does seem just a little dense occasionally, but he's so harried in this installment that I'm willing to cut him some slack and assume he had no time to sit and think. Most readers will want to have the next book, The Courts of Chaos, on hand.

Pay attention to the dungeon scene. Roger Zelazny makes a cameo appearance as a novel-writing guard named Roger.

Joel says

Things are really heating up now - the interfamily relations are getting intense. So many twists and turns, and the book contained two truly badass battles, arguably more. I am loving this series, and glad I'm ripping through it at such a rapid rate.

Kylie says

It is pretty sad when my favorite part of a book is the last sentence. Why couldn't a revelation like that happen in the middle?

The world is getting expanded nicely but when there is a legitimate threat to the existence of their universe, I should probably feel some type of emotion about that. But I don't. I don't care at all about any of the characters. The concept of the Trumps is the only thing keeping me interested.

Ken says

...And on into the fourth book of The Chronicles of Amber. It's been a pleasant journey, as the series keeps getting better. (I started out not particularly liking the first book.) This is fun, escapist fare, chock full of melodrama, scheming, betrayal, and cliffhangers. What more could you want from this kind of read? There are some dry patches during which characters explicate at length -- too much telling, too little showing, as I used to hear in creative writing class. But then things pick up again, and by the time this book ends I'm yearning to pick up book five and find out what happens next!

James says

If you've come this far with this gang of Machiavellian misfits, you obviously like the books. Volume 4 holds the reader's attention by making the plot of the series more complicated--if that is even possible. Zelazny does offer the reader a much-needed recap of the first three books, as well as something more important: an explanation of why the characters don't simply just live in any Shadow of their own design. "I never enjoy meeting people who remind me of other people," Corwin explains. "Personality is the one thing we cannot control in our manipulations of Shadow. In fact, it is the means by which we can tell one another from shadows of ourselves." In other words, once you know what reality is really like--once you are "attuned" to it, as the characters all say about Corwin and the Jewel of Judgment--you notice all the imperfections in any Shadow. The old song that claimed "Ain't nothin' like the real thing, baby" applies here. One can't pretend that Subway is as good as Tastee Subs. Cubic zirconia is not the same as a diamond.

Of course, the reader, being Shadow-bound, cannot wholly appreciate this, never having seen Amber. All we know is our Shadow existence.

Zelazny keeps up the fun of the plotting, but also raises issues more primal: the idea of the black road, the

mark of sacrifice on the primal pattern, seems like something sprung from the collective unconscious. A sin and a curse that mark a family through time and space is an archetype to which readers readily respond. At least this one did. As I've said in other reviews, I'm rereading these since I first read them in high school thirty years ago, so everything I write is glazed over with nostalgia. But they still hold up as page-turners, and unpretentious ones to boot. I'm looking forward to rereading Volume 5.

Mike says

For me, The Amber Chronicles started getting really good with the third novel, Sign of the Unicorn. The Hand of Oberon was easily just as good.

The story to this point has been full of deception and misdirection, but that didn't become apparent until the previous book. Now, with more (but definitely not all) of the cards on the table, it's interesting to see how Corwin handles an ever degrading situation in Amber, especially when he doesn't know who he can trust.

I think one of the things that really makes this series special is Corwin. He's a great character. Unlike many fantasy protagonists, he's not inherently good. Instead, he's more pragmatic. He thinks things through and tries to be logical about his decisions. He has unique personality and intangible qualities that make him likable character.

This novel also had one hell of a surprise ending. I won't reveal the details, but I was completely shocked and it compelled me to immediately move onto the next in the series.

My only real complaint are the hellrides. After the first couple of times, the novelty wore off and they simply became tedious. I ended up just skimming them, because the details didn't really matter, just the outcome.

Overall, I really liked this novel and The Amber Chronicles are quickly becoming one of my favorite fantasy series. If you haven't read this one, I recommend it, but make sure you start at the beginning of the series.

Ed says

At this point I'm pretty much done with this series. For the sake of closure I'm going to finish Book 5, but really I don't understand why this is seen as such a Fantasy classic. The narrative mainly consists of various fairly interchangeable characters explaining the plot to each other, followed by a dull description of yet another 'hellride' between parallel worlds. It isn't clear what anyone's motivations are or what precisely is at stake (I suspect probably because the author himself doesn't really know). I have read four books of this now and I still don't have a clue as to why any of these immortal fops actually care what happens to Amber. Considering Zelazny has infinite scope to explore whatever worlds he likes given the premise, he really doesn't take the characters anywhere interesting or do anything novel whatsoever.

It is a massive disappointment after Zelazny's early works such as Lord of Light and This Immortal, which at least hinted at something special. It seems like instead he went wholly the other way into lazy pulp writing. There is nothing wrong in my book with pulp adventure, provided it is done well, but this series entirely lacks the wit or sparkle of fellow pulp genre writers like Moorcock, Vance or PKD.

Eugenia says

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Mary Catelli says

With Corwin and Ganelon and Random having found the true Pattern, and seeing how the damage was done, Ganelon grabs it despite the danger. They find it's a Trump with a knife stuck through it -- not made by Dworkin, who made the Trumps they know -- and they know that it was blood that did the damage. Leading to the conclusion that Random's son Martin was probably murdered there.

Followed by a summary of the first three books that would have been better in a "what has gone before" section -- eminently skippable -- and Random, after learning something about Martin from their brother Benedict, hares after him.

Corwin goes back to the cell where he was imprisoned in the first book, and the drawing that let him escape. And the tale unfolds. As brothers and sisters are forced to reveal their plots, and who is lying becomes clear; Corwin visits his Earth home; a madman takes Corwin for his father; a warrior spares Corwin on learning his name, and more

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<https://knijnikrile.wordpress.com/201...>

Kevin says

The road to Amber keeps getting twisty and full of surprises. I'm glad I have the next book ready to read because the ending of this book just drives you onward to find out what's really happening here.

Paul Darcy says

by Roger Zelazny, published in 1976.

As I pass through shadow once again, rereading The Chronicles of Amber, I begin to realize the genius of

Zelazny even more. Not only does he write an enjoyable and original fantasy romp in “The Hand of Oberon”, but he manages to do it with an economy of pages, though some would argue that the first five novels are really just one big one.

This, The Hand of Oberon, is the fourth novel in the Amber novels and much is revealed about what is going on. The unicorn has lead Corwin to an amazing discovery at the end of the third novel, but an even more startling one is coming up by the end of this one.

In fact, in this volume you learn exactly who conspired against Corwin right from the start, who was allied with whom, and how their power play was supposed to unfold. But a unicorn, Dworkin and Oberon have made other plans, and let’s face it, they are the “real” powers in the universe.

Oh the princes and princesses can conspire against each other, and even against Oberon himself, but when it all washes out - well I can’t say too much more or give it away.

Just read this volume (like you wouldn’t anyhow after the first three) and you will continue your journey with Corwin as he makes these remarkable discoveries. I find these Amber novels unfold at just the right pace also. Nothing seems especially rushed, and the entire tale comes at a masterful rate - this is Zelazny.

I think I mentioned previously that only Robert Bloch seemed to equal Zelazny in the short, compelling novel department. Well, maybe some of Arthur Clarke’s early work or Heinlein as well, but I stray.

Now, with only one novel left in the first Amber series, you would expect this, the fourth book, to end in a bang to force you to read the last.

And boy, what a whopper of a reveal on the last page.

I’ll say no more. Rereading this series is a blast.

If you have never read it, don’t wait any longer. It really is as good as you’ve heard, and maybe even better.

Petya says

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Mari8Ami says

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Nathan says

Oh shit! The ending of this book was brilliant! I really was not expecting anything of what happened to happen. Definitely my favorite of the series so far. Looking forward to the conclusion of the books on Corwin

Kimberley doruyter says

there are a lot of shifts in this book.
some things you thought true are not and some things that you didn't even know become important.

Fred D says

To be honest, I read all of the first Amber Series novels in rapid succession so to me it's all one continuous story. I rate them all pretty-much the same, with the exception of the first one, which got the series off to an awesome start so I gave it 5 stars. I loved all the books and couldn't put any of them down.

Darwin8u says

I'll review more later. To round out my commitment to a friend, I'll read the first five (The Corwin Cycle). I just can't see myself finishing all 10. I'm just not a fantasy guy I guess. I've been waiting for a book to signal what others get. The Hand of Oberon, book four, is not that signal. I'm doubting any can be heard by me. The dialogue doesn't work for me, the narrative seems forced. It is like dancing with a woman significantly taller (theoretical) or shorter than me. The timing is off. There is no match. If I found one, I might set myself on fire.

Valter says

I adore new wave.

I tried to re-read some sci-fi/fantasy that I loved as a 13, 14-year old, and I could not believe how bad those books sound now; flat characters, silly plots. I am sorry, Asimov and Clarke.

But this is definitively not the case with the mind-bending experimentations of the new wave. Upon re-reading, they just become much much better, and this is particularly the case with Chronicles of Amber.

What started something like an urban fantasy in the first book of the Amber series, in *The Hand of Oberon*, it became a pure psychedelic poetry when describing "moving through shadows", and following dream-like logics and twists of the book. This is one of my favourite book/series of all time.

