



Auralia's Colors

Jeffrey Overstreet

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When thieves find an abandoned child lying in a monster's footprint, they have no idea that their wilderness discovery will change the course of history.

Cloaked in mystery, Auralia grows up among criminals outside the walls of House Abascar, where vicious beastmen lurk in shadow. There, she discovers an unsettling—and forbidden—talent for crafting colors that enchant all who behold them, including Abascar's hard-hearted king, an exiled wizard, and a prince who keeps dangerous secrets.

Auralia's gift opens doors from the palace to the dungeons, setting the stage for violent and miraculous change in the great houses of the Expanse.

Auralia's Colors weaves literary fantasy together with poetic prose, a suspenseful plot, adrenaline-rush action, and unpredictable characters sure to enthrall ambitious imaginations.

Auralia's Colors Details

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From Reader Review Auralia's Colors for online ebook

Alissa Wilkinson says

I really don't do fantasy - Narnia is about it, and mostly because Lewis's snark amuses me - but this is good stuff. The writing is good, the story is significant without being overtly allegorical, and it ends really well. If you love fantasy, this is a must-read (and it's being followed by three more). And even if you don't, it's worth a shot.

Lindsey (Books for Christian Girls) says

I'm lost. I'm *so* lost.

Fantasy is a hard genre to write. Not many authors can succeed in writing it. To write it you have to be crazy detailed--because what the author is creating is just that! Some they're *creating*. I'm not in your head! I can't picture what you think! Sadly, I don't think this author succeed in sharing.

I'd like to start off with that I saw/read no Christian content at all. There was the whole "Keeper" creature which at first could pass as God but by the end you know it as a odd creature with different elements that equal a monster. But then you don't even know if "the Keeper" or the "Northchildren" are real. Who reading this was confused by that paragraph? Yeah, it didn't make sense in the book either.

Here's the overview on the writing style: Choppy; typos; told in the weirdest form of narration I've ever read (the author was trying to be whimsical, it sure didn't come across that way, following *every* character you meet. Or haven't. Doesn't matter.); storyline was confusing; thought a person was dead? Oh, jk, nah, he's alive and kicking; names NOBODY can pronounce (where is that guide! Lisa T. Bergren was nice enough to include a pronunciation guide in her fantasy/Dystopia! I swear, this author made up these names! For everything! I still don't know what a "vawn" is. (The author didn't share what was in his mind!))

The fighting, killing, torturing, fires and blood all went up to detailed. Lots of drinking (and it was looked upon as a great thing to do). For the Minor cussing there was: a 'bloody', two 'stupid's, two forms of 'shut up', three 'dumb's and six 'blasted's. Curses were also said but not written. Oh, and "ballyworms" was said four times (which I have absolutely *no* clue what is means, just that it was said like a curse. ~~And that my spell-check has a red line under it.~~)

For the sexual content there was quite a lot of sexual hints. Like when a thief stole another man's wife, touched, kissed and "cuddled" with her to have her wake up beside him wearing less clothes. There also was the Queen who basically tried to seduce two of her husband's (the King's) men into helping her remove the colors from the land. (*I don't know, don't ask me, I'm ready to throw this book.*)

Oh, don't even get me started on the magic and the colors and healing powers of said colors that only Auralia can weave. (Yes, spell-check, I know "Auralia" isn't a word. Just like all the other names this author has in his book.)

So. Moral of this review? I'm still so confused about what I just read and am currently feeling like this:

Ranting Dragon says

<http://www.rantingdragon.com/auralias...>

Auralia's Colors is Jeffrey Overstreet's first installment in The Auralia Thread, a Christian-inspired fantasy series. Found by two worn-out criminals in the woods when she was just a baby, Auralia soon grows into a beautiful, otherworldly young woman who has the magical power to weave gorgeous cloths out of only the forest's bounty. She charms her poor community with gifts and good nature, and she enjoys a special connection to the wilderness. Unfortunately, however, colors were outlawed in the kingdom's poor communities twenty years ago, and Auralia finds herself in a world of danger when the king and his counselors learn of Auralia's talent.

Magical writing

Though this is Overstreet's first work of fiction, he is an experienced non-fiction writer and film critic, and his experience is obvious in Auralia's Colors. Although he avoids complex vocabulary, the prose is still lush and it has a subtle, mesmerizing rhythm. Overstreet's wife is a poet and it's easy to tell that she influenced him in crafting the novel. Overstreet also sprinkles whimsically new yet recognizable words throughout the novel (cloudgrasper trees and spiderbats, for example), hinting at greater world-building behind the scenes.

The narrative arc occasionally feels unstructured; Overstreet hops from character to character seemingly without rhyme or reason. Is this the ale boy's story? The prince's? The failing king's? At first glance you might think that Overstreet has constructed complex characters, none of whom are acting heroically; perhaps there is no single protagonist, like in George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire. Yet this isn't actually the case in Auralia's Colors: good and evil are very obviously delineated and the heroes (and villains) are clear. It's just difficult to tell who is the focus of the story. Instead of the confusion feeling as if it is carefully and intentionally crafted by the author (as in the case of Martin), in Auralia's Colors the confusion just seems the unintentional result of an uncertain narrative structure. Auralia's Colors could have been a stronger novel had it been more precisely executed.

A distant main character

Despite the confusion, Auralia is obviously the book's heroine. She has little in common with her impoverished adoptive family, the Gatherers, and even less in common with the magnificently spoiled royalty within the protective city walls. She doesn't seem to fit in anywhere. Instead, Auralia flits around like a beautiful and perfect changeling. She doesn't even feel human. And although all that might still have been spun into an engaging character, unfortunately Auralia remained distant to me.

This isn't so much a matter of believability; instead, it's a matter of connection. There are as many scenes from other, more vulnerable characters as there are from Auralia, and those other scenes are far more emotive. Despite Auralia's own youth and vulnerability, her deeply and overwhelmingly good personality prevents the reader—who is, of course, an imperfect human—from empathizing too closely. It's hard to tell what Auralia really thinks or wants; her goodness, without even a smudge of darkness, is almost robotic in its intensity. I found it much easier to relate to the other characters: the sweet ale boy, the desperate old king, the conflicted prince, the rascally thief.

Fairytales and Christian fantasy

I mentioned earlier that Auralia's Colors is a Christian fantasy. I only found this out halfway through the novel, and learning it surprised me because the Christian symbolism is actually quite subtle—subtler than C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by far, although the two books do share similarities. A person could easily read the book and ignore the Christian implications altogether.

An interesting consequence of its Christian inspiration, however, is that Auralia's Colors has the glassy texture of a fairytale. Overstreet's poetic writing, Auralia's distant personality, and the absence of today's popular gritty violence and sex make Auralia's Colors read more like an abstract, philosophical myth rather than a modern-day fantasy novel. It's a refreshing change.

Why should you read this book?

Although it's certainly not for everyone, Auralia's Colors is a gentle fairytale for those who need a break from the doom and gloom of much of today's fantasy. Read it for the beautiful writing, the uplifting story, and—if you're into it—the Christian symbolism. It's no page-turner, but it has a charm of its own.

Michele says

Yet again, a book I desperately wanted to like but didn't (sorry, Jeff!). The premise sounded intriguing: the king of Abascar, a kind of city-state, decrees that all things of color and beauty be "donated" to the castle and everyone will from then on wear only shades of grey and brown ("Abascar's Winter"). At some indeterminate point in the future, he promises that all will be returned to the people and Abascar will be brighter and more beautiful than ever ("Abascar's Spring"). But one young woman, a mysterious foundling raised by the Gatherers (men and women exiled for petty crimes; they live outside Abascar's walls and hope to be readmitted at the annual Testing), knows how to draw colors from nature and create beautiful things for her friends. Auralia's colors eventually spark (literally) changes in the city.

OK, so far so good. But the author leaves massive holes EVERYWHERE. Explanations, if given at all, are so thin as to be transparent. Why would the people agree to this nonsense? What's his motivation in the decree (come to that, what are ANY of the characters' motivations)? Why isn't there a thriving black market in colorful stuff from the other cities? Who are these Beastmen and why haven't they been stamped out long ago by the other cities? Why was Jaralaine so unhappy and why on earth is she being held prisoner by them??? What the hell is wrong with the King all these years? Why is the annual event called the Testing when nobody is tested? Why was Scharr ben Fray exiled? Why does Stricia completely lose it when she finds out she doesn't get to be Princess? What are these Northchildren and are they real or imaginary? WTF is this Keeper that everyone dreams about and why does he, or it, even matter? Then there is the very bizarre denouement of the story which a) is way too melodramatic, b) makes no sense whatsoever, and c) has *nothing* to do with Auralia or her colors! (It's all down to jealousy and the fact that alcohol is flammable.)

Worst of all, the central pivot of the story -- the fact that Auralia's colors have some kind of magical power -- is only ever mentioned *in passing*!! She has no idea that they do (in fact she says they don't). The first time it's mentioned is third hand, when one of the Gatherers says that so-and-so's breathing was better when he wore a yellow scarf that Auralia made for him. Why didn't so-and-so himself mention it? Or better yet, why didn't we *see* this happen?

Everything that happens in the story has this same third-hand feel to it, as if the most fascinating bits are happening off screen and we only get glimpses of them or hear about them later. The author invents weirdly-named animals and plants for no apparent reason (vawns? why not just have them ride horses like normal people??). The characters are paper cut-outs, one-dimensional and cliché: the mad king, the noble prince, the stalwart and loyal soldier, the mysterious foundling, the exiled wise counselor. The fact that the most interesting and complex character in the whole book is the guy who tortures people in the dungeon, who appears for a total of about 5 pages, should tell you how limp and pale the rest of them are.

I ended up just skimming the last hundred pages. I won't be reading the others.

karen says

when i learned i would have to read christian fiction for this readers' advisory class, i thought, "booo" expecting it would be preachy and didactic and like my old CCD classes where we were talked down to and bored the whole time. but when i looked at the list of christy award winners/nominees, i realized i already owned this one (yayyy) because b/n just classifies it as general sci-fi/fantasy and i had no idea it was christian and i bought it because i liked the cover (here is where i am glad david is on sabbatical so i don't have to hear a litany of **Why I Am Wrong**. but this shade of blue... she soothes me.)so but i didn't know it was christian. and after reading it, i am still unsure. have i strayed too far from my flock to recognize christian values and themes?? i am genuinely puzzled. this just strikes me more as basic fantasy that a y/a audience would be perfectly comfortable reading, but i don't feel particularly christianized after reading it.

in fact, it seems to have a decidedly un-christian message. a quick breakdown:

so the people in this realm are asked to make sacrifices for the good and the glory of their king (but really more the materialistic queen, naturally). they are denied color, and must donate all they have that is colorful and beautiful to the castle. they are told that after a certain period of time, all will be restored to them... and more. why is this so?? doesn't matter, don't ask questions - the specifics don't matter. but so far so good, right??this seems fairly biblical. and after a period of toil and deprivation the reward will come in the form of color and joy and freedom and all will have been worth it.. but so one little girl (our heroine) manages to thwart this by finding all these colors in nature and making a cloak that is so beautiful and magical and wowing them all and making everyone doubt their subservience to rules that seem, and indeed are, arbitrary. so by being a wild flaunter she wins and gets to be the one everyone loves. is this what god is up to these days??from what i remember, rules were not meant to be questioned, it is called "faith",right?, and trust and obedience are kind of big deals in the gentile worldview.

someone set me straight on this. {jen fisher, light of my life, does a very good job of this in her comments on the thread}

this is exactly what happened when i read lewis' *till we have faces*, which i love like candy. i never understood why it was shelved in the christian inspiration section at b/n - this is a retelling of the psyche/cupid myth (or eros, depending on where you're calling from) but it at least offers up a recognizable christian theme: do not disobey. if your god/husband says "don't look at me, i'm hideous" and you do, and he catches you, there will be consequences. so, exactly the opposite of auralia.

there is one line that struck a religious chord: "if you allow abascat freedom, some people will choose what they shouldn't... but take away that freedom and no one has the opportunity to choose what they should". so fine - yes - free will and all. but still - the impetus that led to this thought was still auralia's revolt. anyone read *paradise lost*? revolution is supposed to lead to banishment, not freedom and praise.

all "where's the christianity" aside, this book is probably fine, but it is most decidedly not for me. i don't read fantasy precisely for the things that are all over this book. too many "names" for creatures, people, lands... i just get lost in the unfamiliar. the prose seems overwrought and the story underwrought. for me, it's like the guy you try to avoid at work who means well, but if you get sucked into a conversation with them, you just let your mind wander a little until he has spent himself. kind, but dull.

Catherine Milos says

I ... ugh.... what?.... So depressing and I am not sure... I have no idea. What did I just read?

Cheryl says

She was discovered covered in mud on the banks of the Thronscalle River, a mere child not more than "two seasons", according to Krawg, a Gatherer. He and his partner, one-eyed Warney, discovered the mysterious child while investigating the ruckus produced by a flock of crows. Their unexpected find puts them in a bind. They are Gatherers, outcasts from House Abascar, forced to live outside the protective walls of kingdom until their criminal sentences have been repaid and grace is granted to them by King Cal-marcus. If the two known as the "One-Eyed Bandit" and the "Midnight Swindler" turn her over to a duty officer, they'll be accused of kidnapping, with punishment in the dungeons to follow. But if they leave her where she is, which they have ascertained is within a large footprint, one of the toes to be exact, then a duty officer will ride over top of her and "stomp her into the ground". So the two old thieves do the only thing that is left. They take the baby back to the Gatherers' village and hide her. That one small act is like a pebble thrown into a pond. As the ripples emanate outward, they will grow in strength, changing the Gatherers, House Abascar and reaching into the Expanse.

"River Girl" is the first moniker bestowed upon the orphan by the Gatherers. But a typical Gatherer child she is not. As she grows, she spends more and more of her time away from the village, exploring the Expanse and learning its secrets. She balks at her guardians' expectations she'll follow the traditions of House Abascar, especially the Rites of Passage. A free spirit, she can't fathom life within the kingdom's grim walls. But there is more to the river child, now called Auralia. She has a talent unknown to the Gatherers, or to any in Abascar. Her nimble fingers weave vibrant colors into whatever she touches, bringing joy and hope into the drab lives of her fellow villagers. An act that defies the laws of House Abascar.

Only the king is allowed to possess color. Years ago, Queen Jarlamine issued a proclamation declaring all colors the property of the palace. Citizens sacrificing the most during Abascar's "Winter" would be greatly rewarded at the time of its "Spring." But before the "spring", the Queen had vanished, leaving House Abascar and its lands trapped in perpetual "winter." Now word of the mysterious girl and her talent has spread. Will the king be able to maintain his rule over the people as Auralia's colors begin to awaken the memories of promises made, but never fulfilled?

Auralia's Colors is the strong, well-crafted debut novel by Jeffrey Overstreet. This is a story about loss and of hope, of the conflict that ensues when self-preservation and self-interest collide with self-sacrifice. Mr. Overstreet's talent shines on these pages. His poetic way with words brings his characters alive on the pages, within a world vivid enough the reader forgets its fiction. This book has earned a place on my keeper shelf, with enough space reserved for the rest of the series.

first posted at infuzemag.com

Scott says

I actually bought this book on accident. I ordered a signed copy of *Through a Screen Darkly*, Jeffrey's reflections on films and movie-going (very highly recommended!), and he accidentally sent me a signed

copy of *Auralia's Colors*. He graciously allowed me to keep his original shipment, AND sent me my original order. I told him to consider it a review copy.

So here's my review. I really liked it. There's been a lot of comment on the poetry of his language, with some loving it and some finding it somewhat overwritten. Put me in the former category. As I started reading the book I wanted to read it out loud because I enjoyed so much the way the words felt in my mind that I wanted to feel them on my tongue as well. There's a very strong chance that I'll add this book to my repertoire of read-alouds for my 8th grade class. The story itself is, to me, quite poignant. It reminded is somewhat of Guy Gaverial Kay's *Tigana* in the sense of loss that seems to penetrate the kingdom of Abascar, though to me the characters, especially the title protagonist, were quite a bit less conventional in *Auralia's Colors*.

Jeff's experience as a film critic has served him well, I think, in writing this book. The story is very VERY preoccupied with ideas and sentiments of art and beauty, fed I think by Jeff's love of movies and the way he's grown to appreciate what they do (again, explored wonderfully in *Through a Screen Darkly*. He really taps into some wonderful truths of God's gifts of art and creativity and beauty, which I think heightens the loss pervading this realm where beauty is verboten.

The one complaint I would have about the book is one that I often make about books with "intense" action sequences, and that is that I often get caught up in the action and read it too fast and end up missing details of what is going on. I do, however, think that this is more a problem with my reading habits and technique than a problem with the writing, as this is not at all the first time for me to experience this.

As you can see, I recommend this book highly to fantasy fans, but with the caveat that it is not "action packed." The book is quite a bit more contemplative and moves forward at leisure. This might frustrate readers looking for rapid plot advancement, but if you can relax and just enjoy the beauty on display you won't be disappointed. Definitely looking forward to book 2.

Jill Williamson says

Two Gatherer thieves find an abandoned child lying in a massive footprint near the river. They take the girl back to the village where she grows up wild and mysterious amongst the Gatherers, those unworthy of living inside the walls of House Abascar. The girl, Auralia, has a unique gift, the ability to weave breathtaking colors from the world around her. When Queen Jaralaine issues a proclamation that sends all of House Abascar into a colorless season of winter, Auralia's gift becomes illegal.

As Abascar's Winter stretches year after year Auralia grows up, nearing the age of sixteen when all enter House Abascar for the Rites of Privilege to show what gifts they might offer the kingdom. As the Rites draw near, Auralia must decide if she will go and reveal her gift to the king or if she will remain safely hidden in the forest all her days. Either way, her choice could mean the end of life as she knows it.

Auralia's Colors was a unique book. The writing was beautiful. I couldn't read it as fast as I like to read. It had many point of views, but the author brought them all together in the end in a wonderful way that fulfilled most of the plot lines, but left several dangling so that I have to read the next book to find out what happens. It was entertaining, creative, and unique. Recommended.

Bill Tillman says

Jeffery Overstreet has charted a different course for his fantasy tale. Perhaps in the shadow of J.R.R. Tolkien, to some extent but truly his own. Auralia is a very different leading character, who wraps herself in mystery, love, passion and wonder. Greed, envy, control, fear the list of dark human behavior is long in this tale. But portrayed in a way to bring pity and compassion.

Adventure, drama, conflict, war and tragedy are wrapped up neatly together. A page turner and best of all a series. Good raises to the top but not without cost, a truly great read.

Seth T. says

First, a haiku review!

Despite invention,
Telegraph in stereo.
Good meat cooked too long.

I had only heard good things about Jeffrey Overstreet's fantasy novel, *Auralia's Colors*. Which is, I'll state up front, not the best way to approach a text unbiased. I picked the book up expecting greatness and found only good-ness. I delved in hoping for something that would transcend its genre and discovered a novel mired in its genre.

Not that it's all bad. And neither is it at all bad. *Auralia's Colors* does make generous use of what for lack of a better term can be called faults.

First the bad.

The novel, like most of its kind, labours heavily under the burden of its forefathers. The stereotyped tropes of the genre are a cruel taskmaster under whose fell thumb Auralia and her colours never threaten to emerge. The themes are tired and overworn and I felt like I was reading any number of the fantasy books I grew up with as a kid. Many of the characters are mere caricatures and you know from the first page of their introduction exactly who they will turn out to be (I had hoped while reading that he would be turning these stereotypes on the reader, playing with and then dashing expectations, but alas...). The prose is overheated, wrought over and again in the forge of Overstreet's imagination. (I read the first couple pages to *The Monk* while she prepared herself a lunch and her response: "Hm, I think he's trying to hard.")

Randall Munroe (of XKCD) recently posited a helpful rule of thumb regarding these types of novels.

Auralia and her colours do suffer on this point—though not as much as they might. While Overstreet is not quite as imaginative world-builder as Phillip Pullman and doesn't have the master's grasp on the language as does Tolkien, he does tell a well-paced story. This is something at which Pullman, for all his imagination, utterly fails. Overstreet's characters who are less like the cardboard standees that populated the Suncoast Videos of yesteryear are engaging enough and I really did want to find out what would happen in the end. The climax to this first book was satisfying enough that I went to the library to see if they had the first sequel *Cyndere's Midnight*, but they didn't. And I'm not quite sold enough to actually purchase it.

As far as Fantasy goes, I'd put Overstreet far below Tolkien (but who isn't when it comes to fantasy), a bit

below Feist and Rowling, far above Pullman (though my butt is also far above Pullman), and probably on a par with McCaffrey and nearly on a level with Lewis (though in fair disclosure, I'm not the biggest fan of Lewis). Of course, this is his first novel and some authors have been known to hone their craft as they go.

Rachel N says

Rich in poetic language and character development, this work of modern day fantasy is a treasure. I find it difficult to put into words just how this book made me feel... for one, I wanted to turn right back to page 1 and read it again, because I know that I did not grasp all that the book has to offer. More than a classic story of good versus evil, Auralia's Colors is about pursuing your dreams (regardless of the consequences); it's about profound loyalty in relationships; it's about faith - in the deepest sense. I don't read a lot of fantasy - I guess I'm more of a realist - but I decided to give Auralia a chance, and I can now say, this new work will draw you in, and change you - if you'll allow it.

Jenn Cavanaugh says

Slightly overwritten, but erring on the side of poetry can be refreshing in this genre. I'm chalking it up to editor error and looking forward to the next installment. Another thing I'm seeing more of in (post)modern fiction is the breakdown of hero and villain - characters take sides, but the author takes great pains to let everyone know the antagonist's weaknesses and/or well-motivated reasons for their hurtful behavior. On some levels that's great - very humanizing, true to life - but fantasy needs heroes and monsters or an as-yet-undeveloped substitute: nuance is great, but we need someone to identify with and a soulless evil to vanquish.

Jennifer says

I always like learning that there will be "more" of a good story. This one will be one I find myself waiting for.

Debbie says

I wanted to like it. My main problem with the book is the first 77 pages. First, we jump all over in time with numerous flashbacks. Second, the point-of-view is constantly sliding from one person to the next in a very distracting way, but also rarely going very deeply into any one person's head. There is very little dialogue and what little action occurs is often repetitious: we're told in a distant viewpoint what happens, then we jump back and replay the scene with dialogue and various point-of-view characters. I couldn't bond with any character because there were so many of them being introduced (with few of them reappearing during the first 50 pages), and Auralia wasn't even one of the point-of-view characters.

However, after page 77, the time- and head-jumping halts, Auralia becomes the main point-of-view character, and the reader is allowed more fully into the point-of-view characters' heads. The pacing became

more balanced at this point, and book was pretty enjoyable.

Another problem I had, though, was that Auralia was at least 15 years old and was probably 16. However, she's repeatedly described like a young child (e.g. she has tiny arms and hands). People keep saying, "But she's just a child!" and reacting to her like she was about 8 years old. In fact, she often acts like a 8 to 12-year-old (depending on the scene).

The world-building in the book was good, but the author frequently invented names for things with little to no concrete description attached. It was often difficult for me to visualize what a new thing or creature was like. The characters were interesting and varied, but only one character really changed much during the book.

Mark says

I'm never quite sure what to expect from fiction by an author of Christian faith... for every wonderful reading experience (like Stephen Lawhead's Celtic Crusades or C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia), there are numerous slogs through preachy & cliched schlock. (Insert obligatory reference to the Left Behind books here.) It's a little like Tim Burton films - you never know when an "Edward Scissorhands" is going to bloom amongst a field of weeds like "Batman Returns" and "Planet of the Apes."

It helps, of course, when you trust the author as someone who appreciates story & subtlety, which is certainly true of Jeffery Overstreet. As a long-time reader of his articles & reviews at ChristianityTodayMovies.com and his blog, LookingCloser.org, I was excited to find his first book, Through A Screen Darkly, which is a series of essays on movie-going & faith.

So when Mr. Overstreet released the first book in The Auralia Thread series, Auralia's Colors, I... checked it out from the library & felt really guilty about not reading it. Yeah, I know, that wasn't the story I wanted to tell either, but it's the truth. I'm not sure what kept me from digging into the first novel - some of the reviews I'd read made it sound "artsy" and I never managed to pick it up and get into it before I had to return it.

Fast forward a couple of years to the early part of 2010 when I agreed to blog/review Raven's Ladder, the third book in the series. I quickly realized that I didn't want to read book 3 before I read the first two books. So, for the past couple of weeks, I've carted around The Auralia Thread books and read them whenever I could... waiting for my boys at the park, taking a break at work, even squinting at them by the light of a bedside lamp.

Yes, the books are that good.

It's my assignment to review Raven's Ladder... a task which I'm finding daunting. I want to try & paint a picture of the book (and the series that leads up to it) without spoiling the joy of discovery that comes from reading a fantasy series set in a new world. I hope to get you to pick up Auralia's Colors and find yourself swept up by Jeffery Overstreet's beautifully crafted descriptions & plotting... leading inexorably to you buying all three books.

As I've thought about how to do this, I realized that The Auralia Thread reminds me of the TV series, "Lost." No, there's not an airline crash or a smoke monster or even a four-toed statue... but Mr. Overstreet uses the same kind of cinematic style of storytelling to move his plot forward. We get to see important moments from the viewpoints of different characters. Hints are dropped & questions are raised at odd moments that pay off chapters (or sometimes even books) later. The author, much like the writers on "Lost," isn't afraid to kill off characters or radically alter their lives rather than simply pander to our desires for things to be tied up in a

simplistic package.

And while the story has definite philosophical & spiritual themes (esp. the relationship of art & faith), those themes don't seem to drive the plot. Instead, they flow out of the natural development of the characters and their lives.

Importantly for me, this is NOT a Christian allegory. Playing the "who's the Christ figure?" game with Christian-penned fantasy novels quickly grows tiresome and takes me out of the book and into "theology debate" mode. Jeffery Overstreet deftly avoids this while still dealing with questions about blind faith, the relationship of art & theology, legalism & freedom, desire as the arbiter of truth, and a plethora of other important themes.

I realize that writing about "serious themes" is likely to turn off some readers. I wonder if my initial hesitation to read Auralia's Colors has to do with other reviewers writing similar things. Pleased, give the story a chance... let the wonder & mystery of this fascinating fantasy world pull you in.

Some specific notes about Auralia's Colors:

- The book doesn't explain everything to start with... it allows you to discover the world in flashes & scenes rather than through long pages of exposition. I like that.
- Don't try & fit standard "Christian fiction" templates over this - it won't work & it will just frustrate you in the process.
- I actually like this book better in retrospect (after reading the next two novels in the series). I love that Jeffery Overstreet allowed themes & storylines to play out over time and didn't feel compelled to tie up all the loose ends in the first book.

It's probably no surprise that I recommend this book (well, the whole series) heartily!

NOTE: this is a slightly edited copy of my review for Raven's Ladder.

Taochou says

It's a painting, much like Perfume and Stardust combined together.

Courtney Kleefeld says

Am I going to do this? Am I finally adding a review to goodreads for my favorite book? Before, I hadn't ever written a review for it because I could not gather my thoughts, but since I had to write a review for a class, I decided to do it. Here we go:

From the moment I first read the opening of the second chapter of that book called Auralia's Colors at the age of thirteen, I declared to my mother that this would become "my favorite book in the whole world." She doubted my ability to predict such a claim from reading the first chapter and another page, but I was convinced. The writing was the first burst of true poetry I had ever read and I began whispering it aloud to myself over and over again at the dinner table till my older sister told me to stop. This was real writing. This was what writing could be. As I continued to read, my love of the book was only further confirmed, and soon I found it had awoken in me a desire to write stories at least half so beautiful as this masterpiece. Seven years later, the book still surprises me with each reread, hidden sentences now revealing new insights only age and

maturity could bring.

Auralia's Colors by Jeffrey Overstreet was published in 2007, the first book in a series of four. It is an uncommon fantasy novel that goes unnoticed by the masses – however, its writing has been used as an example of good description at a writing workshop I have attended. It is a mosaic of elaborate prose and philosophical questions to be pondered and discussed. I would not recommend it to people who prefer easy action films and books to stories that invite the reader to think critically about the meaning of art. It is not an easy nor a quick read.

The plot revolves around a kingdom devoid of color and a young woman who was raised by outcasts and thieves – she stirs up controversy through her artistic creations. People are baffled and offended by her talk of a mysterious creature called the Keeper whom children commonly dream of and whom about which adults have nightmares. And Auralia must choose whether or not to go before the King with something of her own making in a rite that will decide her place in the kingdom, whether as an attendant or a prisoner.

Auralia's Colors is often mistaken for an allegorical story with a creature that represents God and a young woman as a Christ figure or a Joan of Arc. It was not marketed as Christian fiction when it was published, however, although Overstreet is a professed Christian. Overstreet has explained on his blog that it is meant to be metaphorical, with multiple possibilities, and problems will arise later on in the series if the reader interprets the story as a simple Christian allegory. I experienced this upon my reading of the final book in the series where the story takes a dramatic, surprising turn. It forced me to acknowledge my own hard spiritual questions and how I react to them, much like the characters in the series.

Auralia is the main character of the book, a feisty, elusive character with an eye for the unexpected. Another significant character is the prince-soon-to-be-king Cal-Raven who grapples with whether or not the Keeper exists. An ale boy who doesn't feel like he belongs anywhere forms a friendship with Auralia and begins to seek answers about who he is.

One common complaint from nay-sayers concerning Auralia's Colors is that it is slow and hard to read. Aside from the defense of subjectivity and personal taste, I now do agree and say that a few of the chapters, namely chapter four with some unnecessary exposition and a few middle chapters containing a possibly confusing subplot, could have been shortened, edited, or even omitted from the book with no harm done to the story and forming an easier-to-read book as a result.

Two other complaints I have found among negative reviews is that the prose itself is too much and the writing tells more than it shows. My defense is that it was a stylistic choice of the author to make the writing sound like a storybook with bursts of showing detail and summing up some events rather than writing many drawn-out scenes to show what happened moment by moment. Often, the sentences that “tell” are beautifully constructed. I do, however, agree that the book might feel dreamy and detached from itself because of how it is written in places, as though the prose is there for the sake of beautifying itself constantly. In many scenes, the writing turns the attention of the reader to multiple places in a few words, which might soon become exhausting to some readers.

Despite the imperfections that I have grown to acknowledge, I have continued to treasure the book and call it a masterpiece. In addition, I have felt strongly that it was written for me. As a creative person, it is still rare for me to find a book about a confident and creative heroine whom I have related to so much. Auralia is not only curious about the world and not simply accepting of the way things are, but she also struggles with her purpose and with the purpose of her creativity. But she is bold.

Last year, in the Spring, I stayed up till midnight with two friends in the college dorms who had asked me to read aloud from Auralia's Colors. I read them my favorite scenes and kept going only because they asked me to keep reading. They wanted to know what happened next. With each word I spoke, I felt my childhood running through my veins and colliding with new perspective, new eyes to see old beauty and flaw, and I

was encouraged once again to write what I hope will be considered literary fantasy. If ever I am given the opportunity to read Auralia's Colors aloud for an audio book, I will jump at the chance and say yes! Absolutely!

I now own two copies of the first book, with much underlining in one of them, plus the three other books in the series, and I try to reread them every so often. I have come to be content with the fact that few people will read it, even though I often mention the book to people who ask for book recommendations. Sometimes the most impacting books are only impactful to a few people, becoming secrets known only to those who read the books for themselves, and, by some divine plan, find grave comfort in their pages. Thus, Auralia's Colors remains my secret, even as I offer it to anyone who will listen.

Mirany says

I really tried to like this book, the plot seemed hopeful, but the moment I opened it up and actually read the first paragraph I knew I was in trouble. I've seen some people draw comparisons to Tolkien, and to be fair, I really didn't like reading Tolkien either. The lyrical quality of the writing, while beautiful at parts was mostly frustrating. It was hard to understand what was going on past all of the tangled sentences. It was discouraging to read and not get any sense of action, the character names also threw me for a loop, and that the flashbacks (the one that I actually read through) were announced repeatedly and painstakingly setup for, really annoyed me too. And this is devolving into nitpicks, but I don't like having to read through written accents that are described as hard to understand, it just makes it even more meaningless having struggled to understand a sentence only to find out its coming from someone that "doesn't speak well." So I ended up skimming...through the rest of the book. And, potential spoiler or not, it end's happily! I'm assuming Auralia, the titular character does manage to restore color through her kleptomaniac ways, catches the eye of the prince, and restores equality among the people! And then I realized it's a series.

My tastes didn't fit this book. If I take the time to read a book, I don't want to have to work at, I want to be able to enjoy it and not want to put it down. Auralia was not that book for me, probably is for someone else though.

Kendra Ardnek says

I saw a review for this book on a blog, and thought it looked interesting, so I ILL'd it (my library didn't have it). The glowing review it had been given was well deserved.

This is not a fast paced or exciting book, its more like a carving being slowly chiseled before your eyes, or a tapestry being woven of a thousand strands. You find yourself empathizing with every character, even the dungeon master, because the author takes the time to show everyone's story. At first, it felt a bit disorienting, but soon I grew to appreciate it.

The writing is simple, yet complex, and not to be taking in overdose. I'm usually the one who reads a book I love in a day or two, but it took several weeks before I finally saw the completed statue. I didn't put the book down because I got bored, I merely needed to step back for a while and let the story lie.

The Christian themes in this book were subtly woven in, and if you didn't know they were there, you might not have noticed them. I'm told that they become clearer as the series progresses, so I think that, once I've let the ending gel in my mind for a month or so, I'll ILL the next book.

