

The Whatnot

Stefan Bachmann

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"Oh, the Sly King, the Sly King, in his towers of ash and wind."

Pikey Thomas doesn't know how or why he can see the changeling girl. But there she is. Not in the cold, muddy London neighborhood where Pikey lives. Instead, she's walking through the trees and snow of the enchanted Old Country or, later, racing through an opulent hall. She's pale and small, and she has branches growing out of her head. Her name is Henrietta Kettle.

Pikey's vision, it turns out, is worth something.

Worth something to Hettie's brother—a brave adventurer named Bartholomew Kettle. Worth something to the nobleman who protects him. And Pikey is not above bartering—Pikey will do almost anything to escape his past; he'll do almost anything for a life worth living.

The faeries—save for a mysterious sylph and a mischievous cobble faery or two— have been chased out of London. They've all gone north. The army is heading north, too. So Pikey and Bartholomew follow, collecting information, piecing

together clues, searching for the doorway that will lead them to Hettie.

The Whatnot is the enthralling, surprising, and unforgettable companion to Stefan Bachmann's internationally bestselling debut novel *The Peculiar*.

The Whatnot Details

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Author: Stefan Bachmann

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MadameMelli says

Was ein toller zweiter Band! Die Erzählstimme war trotz der Kindlichkeit, die oft anklang (was aber ob der jungen Charaktere vollkommen in Ordnung ist), meist sehr düster. Keiner der drei Hauptcharaktere hatte es je einfach und ich flog einfach nur durch die Seiten, weil Richard Bachmann einen ganz besonderen Stil hat.

Aleshanee says

4.5 Sterne für den Abschluss der Dilogie - etwas schwächer als Band 1, aber die originellen Ideen und der Schreibstil sind wirklich großartig! ♥

Spoiler zu Band 1!

Mit dem ersten Band hat mich der noch sehr junge Autor total begeistern können und ich war gespannt, wie es mit Bartholomew und Mr. Jelliby weitergeht. Ich war im ersten Moment ein bisschen enttäuscht, dass dieses Mal anfangs andere Protagonisten im Mittelpunkt stehen. Das war mutig gemacht und auch überraschend, ist aber nach kurzer Gewöhnung auf jeden Fall

Im Fokus steht hier Pikey, ein Waisenjunge aus London, der eine extrem unschöne Begegnung mit einer mächtigen Fee hatte. Seine Erinnungen daran sind allerdings verblasst, aber die Fee hat ihm etwas gestohlen, das noch eine sehr wichtige Rolle spielen wird. Hier muss ich wirklich nochmal betonen, auf was für grandiose Ideen Stefan Bachmann gekommen ist, denn wie auch im ersten Band gibt es wieder eine Menge origineller und verblüffender Details. Sie machen diese Welt grausam und brutal, aber auch lebendig und zu einer abgefahrenen und realistischen Bühne, auf welcher die Figuren immer wieder um ihr Überleben kämpfen müssen.

Bartholomew taucht leider erst ab der Hälfte des Bandes auf und die Suche nach seiner Schwester hat ihn mit der Zeit doch sehr überspannt und ja, besessen gemacht. Seine Angst, zu spät zu kommen, ist aber durchaus berechtigt, denn Hettie hat keinen einfachen Weg vor sich.

Durch das Portal ins Feenland verbannt muss sie mit gehässigen, gruseligen Kreaturen zurechtkommen - und das Bild, das der Autor hier von den Feen zeichnet, ist unglaublich eindringlich und alles andere als zart und verspielt. Bzw. verspielt könnte man es nennen, wenn man noch Grausamkeit und Tücke dazu packt. Auch das Aussehen und die Beschreibungen bestechen mit treffenden Metaphern, die mir völlig neu waren und die das ganze auf allen Ebenen anschaulich gemacht haben.

Ich kann da nicht genug davon schwärmen, weil wie er das beschreibt, grade wenn man auch sein Alter berücksichtigt, ist wirklich bewundernswert!

Die Botschaften hier klingen auch wieder gut verständlich durch, gerade auch für junge Leser: Pickey, den Waisenjungen, bringt seine Hilfsbereitschaft von einem Schlamassel ins andere, und auch wenn er selbst nur endlich einfach einmal etwas mehr haben möchte als nichts, hat er immer auch das Gute für andere im Blick. Nicht aufgeben, die Hoffnung nicht verlieren - auch Hettie ist davon geprägt und man sieht hier sehr schön: wie viel Schlimmes auch im Leben passiert, alles hat seine Gründe und führt uns meist auf einen Weg, der vielleicht auch etwas positives bringt. Zumindest macht es uns zu dem Menschen, der wir heute sind.

Tyler Jones says

I gave young Mr.Bachmann's first book three stars because, like most readers, I was amazed at his evocative descriptions, masterful dialogue and mature style. I would have rated it higher but the plot was thin. I was hoping that in the follow up he would have mastered some of the finer points of plotting, but sadly this story is even weaker. All the fireworks of evocative language and description can not compensate for a story where even the author seems to have no idea what should happen next.

A good plot needs to develop tension, but the tension here never really builds until the last fifty pages. Stuff happens, but most of it is superfluous to advancing the story. Characters act with no explicable motivation (here I am thinking of the Faerie Butler) except that something has to happen to fill up the pages.

There are also problems with, to borrow a phrase from film, continuity. For example character "A" will dash across a snow-covered field, leaving character "B" behind, however in the very next sentence "A" is racing to catch up to "B" who has somehow managed to get ahead. A door that was on the north side of a room miraculously seems to have jumped to the opposite side when a character needs to exit through the door she came in through, but the way is now blocked. In short Bachmann take lazy short-cuts and hopes no one will notice. Didn't anyone edit this thing?

The whole experience was, for me, what I would imagine sitting through an eight hour performance by Cirque du Soleil would be like. For the first hour I'b be dazzled by the tricks and pretty costumes. By hour three it would be tired and pointless. By hour four I'd want to leave and go drink bourbon in a bar somewhere, and *oh*, *sweet Jesus*, *the book is only half done!*

The one redeeming thing is that it ended in such a way that Mr.Bachmann does not have to write any more books in the series. He can end it here and I hope he shows the good sense to do so.

Mpauli says

"You-hoo, toodeloo, Mi-Ma-Mister Mu-Mo-Magic!"

"What is it now, Cuteness?" asked the concept of Magic.

"Do-ho you wanna hug? It's free today-yay!"

"Really? Gods no!"

"Hm, may-hay-be tomorrow? I think it's going to be free then, too-toodeloo. Oh, and you have a vo-va-visitor."

"Couldn't you have started with that? Who is it?" asked Magic.

"It's me! Do you remember me?" asked the stranger.

"I have no idea," said Magic.

"I give you a few hints. Think of me as taller, green hair, longer. Different eye color as well, 20 pounds heavier, a fake beard and a top hat. We worked together on "The Whatnot"! said the stranger.

"Oh shoot, you're the concept of Imagination. You always reinvent yourself," said Magic.

"Imagine that! So, what did you think of my work in "The Whatnot"?" asked Imagination.

"It was truly something. I have to admit. Lots of great ideas, the whole society in the old country, some very interesting new characters. I really loved your work in the book," said Magic.

"Well, thank you. So what are we doing now?" asked Imagination.

"I think we have to wait for Stefan Bachmann to write a new book. I think he's already working on something. Fingers crossed that we're in it again," said Magic.

"I bet on it! So, in the mean time. Wanna try out something new? Maybe give a hug to Cuteness. I heard they're free today," said Imagination.

"Damn it, I'm always late, but I was so good in this book, too!" said the concept of Ending.

Jay says

"The city became a beast after dark; the streets were its throats and the graveyards were its bellies, and ever since things had started going rotten between the English and the faeries the beast had gotten hungrier."

Even in an alternate universe where the plot of The Whatnot was lacking, or its world didn't enthrall, Stefan Bachmann's bewildering mastery of prose would still make his second novel worth a read. I'm sure he's sick to death of people mentioning his age by now, but that's what makes his excellence so baffling. It isn't that he's good for a teenager (well, former teenager now), it's that he's good for a human being. Spectacular, even. One of my favorite current writers period, and if were in his forties he still would be. If anybody somehow doubted Bachmann's skill after The Pecular, his magnificent debut, then The Whatnot will put such worries to rest. This is no novelty. Like Gordon Korman, Stephen Crane and Mary Shelley before him, youth has little to do with his success.

Fortunately for us, the plot is not lacking, and Bachmann's world doesn't just enthrall but astounds: both brilliantly blend bitter truths of life in the nineteenth century British underclass with the wonder and mystery of the Fae. As in The Peculiar, Bachmann's creatures veer toward the darker side of whimsical, their violent capriciousness and alien morality in keeping with more traditional depictions of faeries (think Puck, not Tinkerbell).

The story follows the lead of its unpredictable denizens, twisting through two distinct plots connected by a street boy's stolen eye. An intentionally vague time lapse between The Peculiar and The Whatnot (as well as differing flows of time between England and the magical Old Country) further lends to novel's mysterious

feel, as does the conspicuous initial absence of The Peculiar's eponymous protagonist, the naive but stouthearted Bartholomew Kettle.

But yes, to top it all off, Bachmann's prose sets The Whatnot apart from its contemporaries. There are many fantastic stories in middle grade and young adult these days, but few are written with such unpretentious, utterly un-purple beauty. I wish he would narrate my life. Or at least my commute.

Seriously. Read this book.

Bailey says

"A tower of blood," she sang to a wavering, sliding tune. "A tower of blood and a tower of bone. A tower of ash and a tower of stone. Who's at the top of them, who's in the dark? Who climbs the stairs without leaving a mark?"

Stefan Bachmann did it again! He created an extremely intriguing and fantastical world that kept me glued to my seat for days. Not only did I get to fall in love with his old characters again from the first book in The Peculiar series, but I also had the opportunity to fall in love and became attached to new ones. By introducing fresh people, he brought together an even greater story. (However, I did wish that I could have heard from Mr. Jelliby a tad bit more.) Full of magic, fantasy, and a great plot, this book created a fabulous experience that included what it means to hope and persevere for what you love and believe in. I was extremely pleased with this installment and have decided that I enjoyed it just the same, if not more, than the first book, "The Peculiar". The ending was quite satisfying with, what I considered to be, a happy and content closing. (I love this series so much that I wish another book would be written!)

The Story's Plot:

Years after Bartholomew's sister, Hettie, became stuck in the Old Country, a quick trip to a prison on his never ending journey to find her reveals a young street boy named Pikey who claims to have seen his missing sister. Touched with his faery eye, Pikey has glimpsed this changeling girl but for only short periods of time. Desperate to escape his miserable cell, he tells Bartholomew that he can see her again. This promise gets him a chance at freedom, that is if he can still tell Bartholomew about his visions with his branch haired sister. The only problem is that he cannot necessarily see her when he wants to. It's sudden and unexpected. However, this does not stop Pikey from telling him that he can do as he's asked.

Hettie, while being stuck in the Old Country, is continually trying to survive in a strange and horrid land. Suddenly and against her will, Hettie is taken in by the persistent Piscaltine, a strange woman who claims she just wants a friend. Hettie goes on an incredible journey to try to find her inner strength and beauty, even though she is surrounded by faeries who call her ugly, stupid, and useless.

Consistently switching between Hettie's side of the story and Pikey and Bartholomew's, we get an equal part of adventure and suspense between all the characters. The two boys try so hard to find a door into the Old Country between the lies and and deceit, troubles and worries, and Hettie attempts to believe in her brother who promised to rescue her, and she hopes to find a way out of the Old Country.

I strongly advise anyone who read the first book to finish the series. You will not be disappointed!

"Why d'you believe the bad things? I don't care if you hate me and if you leave me behind, but you can't GIVE UP!"

-Pikey

You can read this review and others like it at http://knightingalereviews.blogspot.com

(http://knightingalereviews.blogspot.c...

Ashley Chen says

Okay, I need this book. I'm in it. Like seriously. Though it is a SUPER minor character...but still. >3< If you see an "Ash-Yandere-Ley" in the book....aha. You found me. I'll feel shit ass bad if all the reviews come back as "wtf was that "Ash-Yandere-Ley" thing?! Was Stefan trying to be cool or something?!" Guys, not his fault. This was forced upon his poor lil' soul. Sorry Stefan in advance if anything bad happens because of me; I love you. :3

Need. kbai.

Faye Wildflower says

A beautiful book really! Some parts where a bit confusing and I didn't know very well what was happening.But I kept reading.The end brought me all the feels: so,so beautiful!

nad says

liked this more than the first one! it was as magical as I expected and also fast paced. I love Hettie and Pickey Thomas they're both such adorable and strong characters. was a little bit sad tho that Mr Jelliby wasn't really in this one anymore. 4/5 stars

KayvanTee says

Ein toller Abschluss dieses zwei Teilers. Mir hat es viel Spaß gemacht noch tiefer in diese Welt eintauchen zu können. Dennoch fand ich es ein bisschen schwächer als den ersten Teil.

Wow says

This book was infinitely better than the 1st in this dulogy.

The pacing, writing style has improved a lot, character development also happened after 139 pages into this

.

The only down flaw is probably the lacklustre villain, the author failed to provide a reason behind his actions.

I can see that this author have a talent and I should probably go easy on him considering that this dulogy is his debut novels .

But I really hated this and I sighed with relief when I saw THE END, I suppose that makes my feeling clear about this book.

Let's hope my next read will be better:/

UPDATE;

unhauled in the month of June 2017

Sina says

Hettie befindet sich im Alten Land und stampft seit Tagen durch den Schnee auf eine Hütte zu, die einfach nicht näher kommen will. Ihre Gedanken kreisen um ihren Bruder Bartholemew. So verbringt sie Jahre dort, auch wenn sich alles nur wie Minuten für sie anfühlt. Sie weiß, dass sie von großer Wichtigkeit für die Feen ist, denn ihre Macht als Mischlingswesen könnte den Feen helfen, endgültig das Alte Land zu verlassen. Währenddessen versucht Bartholemew alles, um Hettie aus den Klauen der Feen zu befreien und stößt dabei auf Pikey, einem einäugigen Straßenjungen, der die Fähigkeit hat, Visionen von Hettie zu empfangen. Und so machen sich die beiden auf ins Alte Land, stoßen aber unterwegs auf Hindernisse, die ihre Mission zum Scheitern verurteilen.

Nach dem etwas gewöhnungsbedürftigen ersten Teil "Die Seltsamen" wollte ich aber schon wissen, wie es denn mit Bartholemew, Hettie und den durchtriebenen Feenwesen denn weitergeht.

Der zweite Band schließt fast nahtlos an das Ende des ersten Teils an. Obwohl Jahre vergangen sind, ist es doch so, als wäre keine Zeit vergangen, zumindest ist es so in der Feenwelt, in der sich Hettie nun aufhält.

Was mir diesmal sehr gut gefallen hat, ist die düstere Stimmung, die im Alten Land herrscht. Feen sind sehr wandelbare Geschöpfe, im einen Moment zuckersüß, im anderen herrschsüchtig, hinterhältig und bestimmend. Hettie muss dies am eigenen Leib erfahren und merkt bald, dass es besser ist, zu machen, was die Feen sagen und sich still und heimlich einen Plan auszuarbeiten, um zu fliehen.

Bartholemew taucht erst ziemlich spät in der Geschichte auf und es wird erstmal Bezug genommen auf Pikey, einer neu eingeführten Figur. Pikey hat die Möglichkeit mit seinem sog. "umwölkten Auge" Visionen aus dem Alten Land und damit von Hettie zu empfangen. Dies macht ihn für Bartholemew damit sehr wichtig und man merkt, wie im Laufe ihrer Abenteuer auch eine richtige Freundschaft entsteht. Dies fand ich sehr wichtig, gerade für Pikey, der als Straßenjunge schon so einiges erlebt hat, dass Kinder eigentlich gar nicht erleben sollen. Er findet Halt bei Bartholemew und kehrt so zu einem normalen Leben zurück, wenn man ein Leben in einem von Dampfmaschinen betriebenen und mit Mischlingswesen bevölkerten London als normal bezeichnen kann.

Zuerst tut sich nicht sehr viel in der Geschichte und so plätschert erst mal alles vor sich hin. Mir kam es sehr lange vor, bis überhaupt mal etwas geschah und dies nahm mir natürlich auch etwas die Lust am Lesen. Doch ist man über die erste Hälfte des Buches hinaus, schlagen die Ereignisse Purzelbäume und der Showdown beginnt.

Aber wieder ist das Glück den Charakteren zu oft hold, wie auch schon im ersten Teil "Die Seltsamen".

Trotzdem geht eine kleine Faszination von der Geschichte aus. Ich vermute, dass diese Faszination bei mir von dem sehr düsteren Faden ausgeht, der sich durch alles zieht. Es scheint keine Freude zu geben, alles ist fast ohne Emotionen ausgestattet und das Augenmerk liegt auch darauf, diesen Eindruck bis zum Schluss durchzuhalten.

Ich weiß nicht so recht, was ich nun genau von dieser Diologie halten soll. Einerseits würde ich natürlich weitere Abenteuer von Bartholemew, Hettie und Pikey lesen, doch andererseits bin doch froh, die beiden Bücher abgeschlossen zu haben.

Fazit:

Eine Diologie, die ich so vorher noch nicht gelesen habe. Fantasy, Endzeitszenario und Steampunk in einer Mischung, die für micht nicht einzuschätzen ist.

Stuti (Turmeric isn't your friend. It will fly your ship says

OH GR, because of the few reviews, I will give you this one. I suck.

There she stood, one small girl in front of twelve great globes.

I believe if you can manage to imagine the gravity of this line solely, regardless of whether you've either book of the duology, I'll have the unquestionable freedom to bet my imaginary third arm against your real left one that you'll like this story as much as, if not more than, I did. Even if you can't, you might like it. I'm no astrologist or numerologist, or psychologist(though I am planning to be study it shits and giggles, and because my sister got a very costly and rare book on psychology for cheap cost at a book fare last year, and also I don't want to study chem/bio the following year).

Reading *The Whatnot*, I was reminded of how deluded I can be sometimes, thinking that childhood memories are full of bubblegum and precious shoes, that just because the good ones are favored over the bad times doesn't mean the latter didn't exist, that simply because a cover hints at a fun book, it won't always deliver.

No, I have never had to leave my family behind and stray far in a strange and wild land amidst stranger and wilder creatures; and no, I never did have to look under every rock and in all niches, pay in bruises and pride for my little sibling; and a definite no goes to roaming is solitude, which can be harsh enough without the added torment of the late 19th century Englishmen and faery around. But this dear story also tells of desperation, hope and well, how far one'll go and lie to maintain a *semblance* of hope, for oneself and otherwise.

The three characters to *The Whatnot* each follow a thread of lonely sorrow.

Pikey Thomas

Albeit he's the newest to our tale, it didn't take a lot for Pikey to break the forth wall with me. He's a street kid who lost his eye to a faery and lives beneath a chemist's shop. There's a lot of customary dolor in his life, but all he wants is to get away from wretched England and wretched faery and have a few of them caramel apples. His narration was oh so sad, and there's a point in the latter half where he wishes Hettie had been his

sister too(for his own reasons) and it had me wishing for a paperback I could clutch and shake! Pikey's stolen eye remains in the Old Country where dear Hettie finds and so he can occasionally get a glimpse of her, which connects two distinct worlds so disparate that even their times aren't synchronized and also makes him invaluable to Bartholomew, which follows...

Bartholomew Kettle

While he's still an integral part of the story and doesn't exactly play a cameo, Barthy appears at around the 50% mark. Years have passed since he managed to saved the world but lost his sister, and now he's a teenager. He's still adhering to the vow he made at the end of *The Peculiar* and seeking ways into the Old Country to bring back Hettie; he's left his mother and has been adopted by Mr Jelliby for the funds and support and gates he opens to assist in Barthy's quest. We don't have his perspective until a very short piece during the climax of the story, however, his feels and the person he's become aren't difficult to get a hold of.

Hettie Kettle

OH this lovely girl, how she grows! She is pathetic at times, she grows bolder, she is dismayed and she is courageous, and at one point, she wishes for the old days when she had been abducted and was different and, at the very least, special enough to be abducted, as opposed to the current time when she's scorned and petted and kept on a leash. Her intractable belief that Barthy will come back, that he'll save her one day keeps her going even whilst she's incarcerated in an absurd and frenzied faery house, circumventing pity piskies and the Belusites.

And I have this quote I have been waiting to use, although I've forgotten where I got(some help):

We hope, dream, regret, yearn, and engage in all sorts of behavior good and bad that reveals the inner workings of our spirits. Nothing more than that should be needed to qualify as alive.

There is darkness to Bachman's story, belied by his clean prose and unhealthily fun cover(I have major peeves). Not only for his characters and putting aside their emotional egressions, this tale has a miscible alchemy of the erratic and fiendish nature of ours, and the unapparent things we take for granted. Or so it appears to me.

In the plot section, the *Whatnot* follows the formula set in the previous installment. There's unrelated mishaps in the beginning leading to future events, which involve seeking missing sister and saving the world. While *The Peculiar* set about introducing and acclimating us with the steampunk, alternate London of 1850's, the second book takes us deep into the heart of the original faery realm, their ways of the old and the changed ones, rendering the traditional image of faeries and their violent, implausible and extremely fickle personalities, while still not creating entirely immovable, emotionless creatures as faeries have been depicted elsewhere.

Bachman's debut novel didn't give him an indelible place in tbr list, but *The Whatnot* managed that and more. This is not the best series out there, in fact I can name some awesome MG books right off the top of my head(A FACE LIKE GLASS|WHEN YOU REACH ME), but I still am glad, for myself, that I didn't miss out on it.

Bubbles of gratitude to Harpercollins for giving me a free review copy. Because they're hollow and pretty so my thanks will be conserved even while I appear very magnanimous in the stead of a miser.

Eseltritt says

Ziemlich verwirrend geschrieben. Man hat das Gefühl, dass einige wichtige Stellen einfach fehlen oder übersprungen werden. Der Vorgänger war viel besser.

Brandy Painter says

Originally posted here at Random Musings of a Bibliophile.

I enjoyed The Peculiar by Stephen Bachmann when it came out last year (my review). MG Steampunk is such a rare thing and the world building in this one is so well done. I was eager to read the sequel, The Whatnot, and excited when I received an e-galley.

The world building is again the greatest strength of this novel. Bachmann has created two vivid and separate worlds. In The Peculiar we were concerned mostly with the alternate England. This story flashes between that world and the Old Country, the world of the faerie. In England war has begun between mortals and faerie. Peculiars and fae alike are being rounded up and put in prison. Very few places are safe. In the Old Country the King is working on a plan to take over England and use it for his own purposes. Bachmann built up the King quite a lot. He is whispered of by the faeries in England, who fear him. He is whispered about by the faeries in the Old Country, who fear him. While he is most definitely a to-be-feared-villain, he was a little too predictable to make me worry over him so much. Still, the creatures he controls are frightening. I also enjoy the picture Bachmann paints of the Sidhe. He makes them so perfectly ruthless, uncaring, unpredictable, and changeable.

As the story focuses on two places, it also focuses on two different characters. One is a character familiar from the previous book, Hettie, who is not in the Old Country. Hettie who is far more resourceful and cunning than was seen in the first book. I thoroughly enjoyed her and how she thought out her problems. She was expecting Bartholomew to come rescue her and her goal was to survive in the meantime. That is a high reaching goal for a changeling navigating the world ruled by the Sidhe and evil King bent on destruction. It was interesting seeing her mind work. In England the story focuses on a new character by the name of Pikey. Pikey has endured terrible things at the hands of the faeries and yet he isn't completely repulsed by them. He is a gutter rat and not the sharpest knife in the drawer at times, but he has is a strong sense of honor and a whole lot of courage. As in the first book it was hard for me to connect with the characters because of the shifting perspectives and the newness of Pikey in a plot so full of action. Bartholomew doesn't appear until halfway through the book and Jelliby is barely in it at all. Bartholomew is very much changed but the reader gets no real sense of how this change came about as it is not seen happening. This frustrated me as a reader, but that is because I'm a character reader.

Anyone who has read The Peculiar will want to read the continued adventures of this delightful alternate Victorian world, particularly if you are a reader who enjoys creative world building and fast paced twisting plots.

I read an e-galley provided by the publisher, Greenwillow Books, made available on Edelweiss. The Whatnot is on sale now.