



Eleanor

S.F. Burgess

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"Most people's lives begin with their births; mine began with my death."

In the final moments of her life, the enigmatic Conlan drags Eleanor from her world and into his. Mydren - a vast, majestic land where myths have substance, magic is terrifyingly real and Eleanor is marked for death.

Reborn as an Avatar, the living incarnation of an ancient magic, Eleanor must think fast and act faster if she wishes to survive. This new life comes with a price; Conlan has a vital and dangerous mission to undertake.

Eleanor must learn to control her newfound abilities and cope with a host of dangers both mystical and natural, while helping her fellow Avatars to master their own talents, so they can get the connection between them working.

Can she make 'The Five' a force to be reckoned with? Will their deadly enemies destroy them? Can Eleanor overcome her own fears and find the courage she needs to reach Conlan and release him from his dark secrets?

Eleanor Details

Date : Published June 30th 2013 by Jojosala Publishing Ltd

ISBN : 9780957699618

Author : S.F. Burgess

Format : Paperback 544 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Paranormal, Business, Amazon

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From Reader Review Eleanor for online ebook

Jaime K says

The map at the beginning was very helpful. Conversations and events that occurred referenced areas on the map throughout the entire story, and having a reference as to where these areas were allowed me to have a better mental picture.

And when conversations brought places up, it was natural, like any conversation between two people who have known each other for a period of time.

The book is written very well, with some minor grammatical errors (like a comma instead of a semicolon, which is sometimes personal preference anyway). Typos are listed at the end of this review.

I love how the passing of time is marked and is realistic. It takes weeks to cross through a desert; months to heal from nasty injuries; days to heal from emotional pain.

I like the Earthly references that Conlan doesn't get and remarks on: sci-fi/fantasy, television and movies, and the Bible.

It began as a fantastic fantasy and it waned from 4.5 stars to 3.5. There is a lot of emotional abuse, and some physical abuse as well. The depths of depression are portrayed well, but the caustic attitudes wore me down midway through. What's worse is that the abuse is blatantly pointed out, and the response is essentially, "OK, I don't care."

It's "Twilight-esque" in that sense, and accepting the abuse. I was planning on giving this 4 stars until I was about halfway through. By the end, I was disgusted by it (especially Eleanor thinking she'd never let Conlan know if he hurt her).

The book begins with Eleanor Murray having been shot and dying from the wound.

Actually, it begins with a quote from Eleanor in the "Extended History of the Five," so we know she truly is the central character from the start.

She is mentally contacted by some guy on another worldly plane named Conlan. He offers her (well really, her soul) another chance at life in his world by joining what he calls The Five. This group consists of him and three others. All but Conlan are able to channel the four elements: Earth (Eleanor), Air (Amelia), Fire (Freddy), and Water (Will). When each individual is around their particular element, their emotions are strengthened, sometimes for the worse.

Eleanor feels as if the four are part of her family, and takes to them immediately.

They even begin to act like a family--for both good (including the levels of devotion and love) and bad (including in-fighting).

Some neat facts that we learn, some of which directly correlate to our own world:

~ Your soul is energy and cannot be destroyed like your body can. Your soul is what makes you you.

Thus the four are created by Conlan to be Avatars with their original souls and even minds, but different bodies. They don't have belly buttons. They can't reproduce. They have powers (or can channel powers) that they have to learn to control and leave their bodies exhausted, for the soul remembers the living body. They can handle extreme temperatures for longer.

~ Conlan pulls the souls from Earth through a portal in his world, a portal that was once thought to have been destroyed. He's been doing this for 10 years, starting with Will. Unfortunately, he has attempted to draw new Earth-elementals a few times; the past three died/killed themselves. Eleanor is fortunately stronger.

~ The four have symbols branding the inside of one of their wrists, symbols representing the element which they are made of, and thus can channel. Those symbols become quite important, especially regarding the spiritual connection with each other.

~ The sky is the same as ours, but seems brighter because of the lack of ambient light.

~ Shamans are magic users who "live with the ancient gods." There are only two living ones

~ The law is the law is the land. It's scary yet typical fantasy as to its tyrannical nature:

Lords - Those who run the world of Mydren

Protectors - Those with limited power but who are many. They're the thugs and torturers; the police, and private army of the Lords of Mydren.

Enforcers - Those with the power of the elements, though it's twisted. They're the generals of the protectors. They're also slaves to the Lords from the moment in time since their magic was known.

These people want Eleanor and the other three dead, for being created, unnatural abominations. And yet, through kindness, Eleanor learns early (and also teaches the others), that hearts of these lawmen can change.

~ There is natural and unnatural magic, but one is no better than the other in essence. Natural just enhances natural growth and materials while unnatural forces it--like Conlan creating the Avatars.

~ The entire history of Mydren is fascinating. After a portal opened to parallel universes, there were Dwarves who created the language, Elves who brought magic and weapons, and humans who brought purpose. I love learning how the elements were controlled by a human named Alaric, and how his blood (and bloodline) was used to create Avatars.

The Dwarven language is steeped in growls and snarls that revolve around who one was talking to and the emotion behind the words. It's like a lot of global languages, both known and indigenous.

~ There are five virtues that men should hold dear: compassion, courage, wisdom, truth, and duty. As time went on, the Lords lost these virtues and tightened their grip on on the world. Yet the people considered the original elements, the original Avatars, to be gods who deserved worship.

At one point, Eleanor finds herself alone without Conlan or his horse, Rand. She cleverly, through realistic trial and error, tracks the horse's prints to a prison where she recklessly but courageously saves Conlan from an awful public flogging and possible death. Oh, and Rand, who is an awesome horse.

Conlan quickly learns that he cannot control Eleanor and that she can help him better lead, better help his Avatars channel and direct their elements.

He wants to save the world from his tyrannical father by restoring a proper connection with the elements. Because the elements are ready to destroy the world.

The consequences of Conlan's meddling have been evident to the group since before Eleanor, but her

curiosity allows them all to understand just how dangerous their unknown powers have. I really like seeing how they learn to control the powers and help each other. Unfortunately, Conlan (and others) seem to have a shield that prevents the Avatars from connecting with them.

So there are some mind-melding-like connections, great magical feats, and physical fighting techniques. The Avatars can't read each others' minds but can understand, react to, and communicate with what is open to be known.

I love how realistic it all is. Eleanor gets hurt while fighting and makes errors when learning the Dwarven language (and the mistakes are normal and natural). Conlan's ancestry and his feelings about his family are real. How the four come into their powers is scary and yet steeped in humanity.

How the Lords treat the "poor" and "inconsequential" people is awful.

The city of Baydon sounds beautiful.

Conlan's grandfather, Gregor Baydon, is awesome, as is the book he gives to Eleanor. The pictures and maps in it sound beautiful.

The five ancient Talismans that the original Avatars created sound beautiful: wand, sword, diamond, chalice, and crown.

The Dwarves and Elves are very interesting beings, and are not what we would normally expect. Dwarves aren't little people with axes; elves aren't beautiful sentients (other than the children).

I first liked Eleanor and wanted her & Conlan to end up together. But her holier-than-thou attitude and belief that she should know every part of every story makes her annoyingly arrogant. Then she becomes "woe is me" and her ego makes her almost solely think people are mad because of her. "Still think I need protecting?" Um, you can't carry the world on your own, jerk.

She thinks that Will has no right to talk about her private thoughts, even though they're already out in the open and she did the same thing about Will to Amelia.

So yeah, I grow to really dislike Eleanor.

Despite this though, I enjoyed the book overall, and wouldn't mind reading the others in the series.

Typos

Page 194/Location 3583: "She had agreed to warp it, however,"

Page 217/Location 4013: "...and you always did remind me of Obe-Wan Kenobi."

Page 444/Location 8398: "What are you stood out there for?"

Lisa McGann says

This book grabs your attention from the first page. I was completely gripped by the well written, complex and fantastic story. The first book (in what seems a carefully plotted series) is written from Eleanor's perspective but you quickly fall in love with the other characters, Conlan, Will, Ameila and Freddie. I am entirely invested in their quest and look forward to reading how the story progresses. Hurry up SF Burgess

and publish the next story.

Kayla says

It was just by chance that I stumbled across this book and I am ever so glad I did. As soon as I opened the cover of the book I knew that I was going to be taken on quite an adventure. That being said I was hooked from page one and that is a rare feat indeed.

Eleanor was a pleasant surprise and I had no idea where it was going to take me. S.F. Burgess created characters that the reader cannot help but care about. Before I knew it I found myself pulled into the story as if I was along for the adventure myself. I rooted for the characters along the sidelines during their trials, held my breath in moments where I did not know what was going to happen, and felt the joy, friendship, fear and frustration that gripped the characters as events unfolded.

Eleanor is beautifully written. Burgess has masterfully sculpted the rich, unique world of Mydren in such a way that it comes to life for the reader. I eagerly look forward to the next installment and highly anticipate what it may have in store for us.

This is a book I have already recommended to family and friends. They were not disappointed. In fact, I was so pleasantly surprised by this book I thought I would write my first ever review on it. I hope I did it justice.

Lenny says

I'm so happy I won this book through First-reads. Otherwise I might never have had the chance of meeting Eleanor or reading this book and that would be a shame. S.F. Burgess is really kind, and she's a wonderful writer. This book was refreshing, as well as well-written and I enjoyed it really much. I would like to say this was the best book I've read in a long time, but unfortunately I read 'A Feast for Crows' before 'Eleanor' and I really love 'A Song of Ice and Fire'. But this book is one of the better books I've read so far.

I got this book through first-reads as I already told, so I will make work of a good review. I will be talking about a few aspects of this book, like the characters, story and world-shaping.

First, the cover. It is really beautiful and very attracting. It is teasing and it makes you want to read the back of the book which will make you want to read the book. However, it doesn't give away too much and it isn't too full.

Without giving too much away, I can tell this story is a breath of fresh air. It has surprising twists and when you expect something, sometimes the opposite happens. I was never bored and the story kept me on the edge of my seat.

The world-creation was also quite good. Of course it's not as good as 'A Song of Ice and Fire', but I don't think you can expect that, because George R.R. Martin is one of the best writers in (epic) fantasy. There's a bit of everything, there are mountains, a savanna, a desert and cities, it's very diverse. There is a map in the book and I am so happy it is there! It really adds to the world-shaping. However, I think it's a pity it's not on scale, but most books don't even have maps, so you won't hear me complaining.

The characters in this book are also very real. They are not always the hero, they do things you despise. None of the characters are really black or white, except Daratus perhaps. Sometimes you hate the main characters, but a moment later you love them again. It varies throughout the book. They don't always get away with everything. If they don't regret something themselves, someone makes them regret it. They aren't always as strong or as smart as they need to be. Sometimes you really think, come on, use this or use that. But the fact that they don't always solve the problem and think of a way to make the impossible come true, makes the book so much more real and makes you able to associate with the characters and the situations.

S.F. Burgess also minds the details. She describes the faces of the characters so well, you can read their emotions from it. And if you can't, Eleanor helps you figure it out. I also like the detail of the names. There are four elements, Eleanor, the Avatar of Earth, Will, Avatar of Water, Freddie, Avatar of Fire and Amelia, Avatar of Air. If you look at it this way, it's easy to see the names of the characters start with the same letter as the name of the element. It might be a small detail, but that shows how much details are in this book and how S.F. Burgess minds them.

However well described, I'm left with some unanswered questions. Some people might be annoyed by that, but I'm not. I think it makes you want to read the next book(s) even more. Unanswered questions are for example, what lies beyond Mydren? Mydren is a continent, but are there other continents or islands? I had a few other questions but I won't mention them because I don't want to put spoilers here. I hope these questions will be answered in the next book. I really hope there will be a next one, because this world S.F. Burgess has created is far too beautiful and interesting to be limited to one book.

The only negative comment I could have is that the chapters are really long. There's a chapter of more than 90 pages and as I always read in chapters and never stop in the middle of a chapter, so that was hard to find time to read that whole chapter at once. But besides from that this book was really great and I really loved it and so will other people who like (epic) fantasy.

Summarized, I might describe this book as magic, meets revolution, meets unity and love. And this combination creates this wonderful world of Eleanor, a world of which I want to read much more.

Thank you, S.F. Burgess, for writing this wonderful book and giving me the opportunity to meet Eleanor and explore Mydren along with her.

Yann Best says

As might be expected from the score given, this isn't going to be the most positive of reviews. However, there certainly is some quality underlying the novel, and the promise shown is what has convinced me to put down a review, rather than simply leaving the book with two stars and no explanation: it deserves more than that; its author deserves more than that.

I'll speak to the book's best qualities first: the core conceit of this fantasy world is an interesting one; the overarching plot is pleasingly dynamic; the focus on short, eventful chapters keeps things going at an enjoyable fast-pace. I can honestly say that the book never bored me, and despite being a fair length, remained engaging to the end. Which, considering the issues I had with it, is a fairly impressive feat. No matter what else, S.F. Burgess has an excellent sense of pace.

However, for all that it gets right, there are some significant issues with the book that really brought my enjoyment down, issues which can be broadly broken down into two areas.

Firstly: the technical side of the book - the writing itself.

While there are a fair few typos and a couple of garbled sentences, those are issues easy to forgive, suggesting issues with the copy editing rather than authorial failure.

More problematic is the prose itself - though fortunately free of the purple prose that afflicts some writers, there are a few too many occasions where heavy repetition is in evidence - repeated use of the same adjectives and verbs within a short paragraph; repeated phrases and scenes throughout the novel itself (there are only so many times blades can be pressed to necks in a single reading before the concept begins to wear thin).

The dialogue throughout the books is a little too mono-voiced as well, with characters generally speaking in near-identical manner; there's also an odd aversion to characters ever using contractions in speech, even in otherwise urgent situations leading the voice conflicting with the tone of the moment.

None of this is damning - if anything, it speaks of a need for a stronger editorial voice, a core element to the success of many of the greatest writers. I am sure that with some more involved editing, more discussions with S.F. Burgess during the writing process about maybe slightly changing a sentence here, altering a scene there; just something to flag up these niggling issues and the prose would flow that much more beautifully, making the book that much more pleasurable to read.

The second major issue for me is the more significant one, however, and it's the issue of characterisation. There are, again, a few aspects to this that impinged upon my enjoyment of the book.

A minor part of this is, again, the lack of a distinct voice for the different characters, but I believe that belongs more in the technical issues. No, more problematic is the characters themselves.

The characters are, to put it mildly, volatile. They swing from one extreme of personality to another with nary a backwards glance. Humans are indeed complicated creatures, and characters with schizophrenic personalities can be incredibly effectively used (Jorg of Mark Lawrence's *The Broken Empire* trilogy is a fantastic example of this), but an entire cast of see-sawing personalities is hard to get a hold of, and in this case the personality swings didn't make the characters feel like they were complex individuals; instead, they just felt muddled, confused in their actual creation, lacking in definition; their extreme reactions to situations feeling like contrived attempts to drum up drama.

This was compounded by an unfortunate narrative tendency to rely on the protagonists' stupidity to lead to dramatic situations, which combined with the extreme mood- and behaviour-shifts of the main characters to make *The Five* feel less like a force of noble, conflicted heroes, and more like a group of particularly troubled teenagers, hormones flying everywhere and all control lost. Which, when the group is meant to consist of one hard-bitten rebel, three veteran members of the military and emergency services, and one sole teenager (and she at the very end of the teenage spectrum), does feel a little off.

I should also mention that I did find the sympathy within the narrative for violent relationships (romantic or otherwise) a little unpleasant, as the book seemed to go out of its way to paint the characters involved as extremely pleasant otherwise, and to suggest that their constant apologies following their moments of violence made up for their repeated transgressions. That's not necessarily an issue of poor characterisation of

course, just something that rubbed me the wrong way in the narrative.

Aside from that aspect, however, I am confident that these niggles can be ironed out: as already stated, a major part of the technical issues I would put down more to editing (or lack thereof) than inherent issues with the writing. As for the issues of characterisation, that is something I fully expect to fade with experience: improved skill at defining characters and imbuing them with distinct voices is sure to come with practice.

As such, while I was disappointed by the book, I am genuinely looking forward to seeing S.F. Burgess's future works. The prospect of future works with the drive and pace of Eleanor, with a little bit more tightening of the prose itself, and imbued with greater coherence of character, would be quite the thing.

Alienor says

I'm of 2 minds on this book.

The good points first; the pacing. Burgess' rythm is excellent. Her book is hefty but there is never a dull moment. Her world construction is not wholly new, nor is it thoroughly explored, but it's interesting. There is some creative problem solving, some healthy ruthlessness, a few intriguing moral questions... The best part is never getting bored, striking a good balance between action and learning what's going on. I also liked the way Eleanor's feelings about Conlan were progressing.

The less good points; typos. And oh my god the characters' emotional IQ!! It is sub-par. Sub-freezing. Sub-Twilight! Considering all the main characters (except Eleanor) are seasoned ADULT veterans/military/heroes, why are they all behaving like 5 year olds on crack?? They get mad, they get maudlin, they get angry, do something they shouldn't then agonize over it, take ALL responsibilities on their shoulders or alternatively refuse ALL accountability, 'glare', wallow, feel guiltier than a stack of Mormon Bibles, learn nothing from their mistakes, take EVERYTHING personally, physically abuse each other all the time, do not communicate thus fall into rages over literally NOTHING... Seriously, they moan and bitch and accuse each other of stuff and then immediatley turn around and do what they were accusing others of committing. Etc etc etc Eleanor is 19, so could be forgiven but the others, I repeat, are warriors/first responders in disaster situations and they're more volatile than most chemical villains' labs! Amelia in particular is ALWAYS scared, jealous, petty and generally useless (is this so that Eleanor will look more interesting?). A LOT - half, maybe? - of the useless drama they go through is of their own making, and one would think they have enough to handle, what with a whole country trying to kill them, artifacts to find, family tangles to be dealt with... I think a good editor could make the book more palatable in that respect.

The problem is, if people have low emotional IQ (hero complexes, pettiness, violence, possessiveness, lack or overdlow of accountability etc), it also means their general intelligence is impaired. My suspension of disbelief thus sits on the fence. I hope this trait gets resolved. I think SF Burgess can get pretty fabulous.

Sue says

Right, it's been several months now since I read the book, but I finally got to writing a proper review. I'll try to keep it spoiler free :)

I picked/bought the book at random. Mostly I do check books here on goodreads prior to buying them, but every now and then I pick a book purely because I like the title and/or cover. Eleanor was one of those random picks. But, I think I'm not exaggerating if I say that this book was my best random pick EVER!!! I only was 1/4th into the book when I rang my sister and started talking about the book nonstop and convinced her to read it too!!

The book is well written and I was hooked from page 1. I stayed up several nights just because I could not bring myself to put it down, because I just had to know what would happen next!!

I loved the idea of using the elements of nature/earth throughout the story, with each of the main characters representing one of them.

Secondly you have the world itself, Mydren. If I could, I would want to go on a visit! It's a beautiful world and so well described, it was like I was really there!!!!

Moreover, what really needs to be mentioned, the book was funny too!!! There were times where I just rolled double from laughter and needed a minute or two to recover!!! Especially when the '4 elements' were talking about something from our world (where they originally come from) and then there was Conlan who wouldn't have a clue what they were talking about!!

Or the little references to things from our world which would be mentioned totally unexpected that would just make you shake spastically from laughter too.

Or or or those unexpected, but damn hilarious, comments the characters would make whilst they actually in a life threatening situation!

..."Reality moved out of focus. Eleanor knew what she was doing, but it did not scare her. -Will living Prozac pill- she thought, hearing Will chuckling in the back of her head."...

...Will: "I need to concentrate on Amelia, so please make sure I don't walk off any cliffs."...

..."You talk to animals?" Conlan asked. Eleanor wondered how much effort it had taken to keep the surprise and the amusement out of his voice.

"Do I look like Dr Doolittle?"...

(Eleanor is a vegetarian FYI - so when they made dinner which contained meat, Eleanor couldn't/didn't eat it and felt bad about it.)

...Conlan hung his head. "You have nothing to apologies for. I'll find you something to eat." Eleanor felt a hysterical giggle coming up. - Where is he going to find something to eat? Did I miss the supermarket on the way in to the woods?...

The storyline is just brilliant!! There is always something going on that keeps you eager to continue reading, because you want to know what happens next and the bond between the 5 characters is yet another great storyline that keeps you interested throughout the whole book.

When I finished the book I was quite sad, as I didn't want it to end. Luckily I found out shortly after that S.F. Burgess is writing the second book as we speak. Unfortunately she still has a 'normal' day-time job and can't dedicate 24/7 to writing, so we still have to wait a little. This being said though, I can not wait for the second book!!!

Sooo to all of you out there: I really do recommend this book to everyone!!!!

Go go go go, get it and enjoy the world of Mydren!!!!

Cecile Bordier says

Started Friday and... finished Sunday. I have one idea in my head " when can I read the volume 2?? " (it is going to be one right??)

Ok now that you have my general feeling let's develop:

First page you are already in the action that make you want to finish at least the paragraph....(which make you want to finish the next paragraph...which make you want to.....).

The idea is nice. You can feel the influence of lot of great and nice other fantasy series, but it is staying original and unique in its way.

I wont talk about the story...because I am scared to give too much information. However, the personage are all appealing (not sure it is the right word), complicated ... but for each of them I could feel empathy. The hero is really a hero maybe sometime a bit too much (everything is on her, dependent on her..and only her can have the solution etc...), but that is often like that in fantasy (and other type) books.

What I really enjoyed , is the details given which permit you to have a good idea of the general ambience but you still have enough space to add your own imagination details...which allowed me to have very nice dreams the last two nights.

Thanks for this very good time Sara! I am looking forward for the next book :-)

ps: English is not my mother tong, so I apologize about all the mistakes I made.

Merissa (Archaeoliberalian) says

This is quite a difficult review for me to write because if I look at the whole book, I really enjoyed it and couldn't put it down but there were aspects which have been mentioned by other reviewers that I was slightly uncomfortable with. I understand that they are now living in a more 'physical' world but I still wasn't sure about Eleanor being beaten the way she was. Mind you, at times, I wanted to hit her myself as she made yet another assumption that she shouldn't have. Saying that, the story drew me in and I loved how it progressed. The Elements are not yet a cohesive unit and they have a long way to go. However, I am hoping that given the ending, they will have the time and opportunity to progress and become a force to be reckoned with. The concept behind this book is amazing and I really enjoyed it.

I will definitely be reading book 2 as soon as it is available and will be looking forward to re-entering the world of Mydren. Recommended for all fantasy fans.

I bought this book as part of the Kindle Daily Deal on 14th February 2014.

M. A. P. says

After an unfortunate mix up with my Amazon order, I should finally be getting this within the next few days. I can't wait to commence reading this! The sooner I get this, the sooner I can also start with *Will*. Letting the latter rest on my night desk untouched for so long has been akin to self-torture.

EDIT:

4.5/5, to be precise.

Wow, where to start! I'm definitely all the more excited to start the second book of the series now that I've read *Eleanor*, which truly ended up surprising me on more than one occasion. I am SO pleased with my decision to purchase and read this before starting with *Will*.

First surprise: There was never, never ever, a dull moment in this book. Which is, in itself, rather remarkable feat for a book that's as long as *Eleanor*. This was the first book that circles around the idea of the four elements (as understood in the West) that I've actually felt did justice to the subject matter. The world felt fascinating, the story captivating.

However ironically, my one and only real complaint regarding this book also has to do with the story line. Plot devices, to be precise. To include even more precision to what I'm saying, particularly the whole plot device of Eleanor's character losing consciousness. It honestly makes me a little torn, all her fainting or blacking out after someone hitting her. Because, on one hand, I can see that it is actually a realistic turn of events, to become unconscious as a result of intense pain, injury, and so forth. Yet on the other, I still feel it definitely got overused, to the point it bothered me enough to not quite justify a full 5 star rating.

Moving on to the characters, what else could I possibly say but that I absolutely loved them. Each had their distinct core personality, yet were complex enough to show other characteristics outside of that as well. They didn't fall into just being caricatures. For example, Will mostly had this calming, gentle, almost pacific air to him, yet even he wasn't above violence when he felt it was justified.

Speaking of violence, before I read *Eleanor*, I did take a look at some of the reviews left on it, and couldn't help but notice how many were put off by the violence between the characters, particularly Conlan and Eleanor, feeling that the story was presenting the abuse in their relationship as healthy. Why I am bringing this up, is because my own opinion ties in with what I said of the characters above, and also because I see it differently.

Yes, if there was something that made me uncomfortable in this story, it was the abuse directed at Eleanor by Conlan. I never found his reasons for his actions justified. However, this never made the book in itself any worse to me, and I never felt the abuse between them being presented as healthy. It never made me think "S.F. Burgess probably really sympathizes with abusers and the hurt they inflict." Rather, it made me think it added to the depth of the characters. No matter how I feel about abuse, it is something that does exist, and many people who get abused by those close to them can make up endless excuses for their abusers, much like Eleanor seemed to do on quite a few occasions. I don't know what drives other people to read books, but with me it most definitely isn't just so I can see only healthy people making healthy decisions in a healthy environment. Part of the reason I read is to explore the many possibilities of the human psyche, and I'm pretty sure that is one of the driving forces with many authors who write as well.

And, let's face it... Turbulence galore makes the story and characters interesting. Not because we have that turbulence, but because it offers the reader the possibility to watch characters grow, becoming capable of

lessening that turbulence, working better together, becoming individually stronger. (view spoiler)

But I digressed quite a bit there. Let us move on to the last albeit shortly presented point I wanted to point out about what in particular contributed to me enjoying this book so much. And that is, the fact that elves and dwarves weren't just your trite text book examples. There was all this reinventing going on, and I absolutely loved it! While I have nothing against the usual pointy eared beauties that elves are often presented as, or the whole idea of dwarves being short, stout and hairy miniature vikings, it is truly delightful to see Burgess get away from that. Definitely made the world all the more original to me.

Bottom line: Just read it already.

Sara says

I love fantasy novels and have the library to prove it! I am currently working my way through a websites "Top 25 Fantasy Novels" list. So when a friend recommended Eleanor to me, I was apprehensive to move away from my solid list of proven literary masterpieces, to read a debut novel that had just been published. I am SO glad I did. I can honestly say that Eleanor gives the novels on that top 25 list a run for their money! The plot, characters and the world of Mydren have obviously been given meticulous thought by SF Burgess.

The plot is complex - yet easy reading, exciting and brilliantly delivered. The world in which the book is based, Mydren, has been carefully created and is described beautifully. I was so immersed in the book, that at times I felt I was actually in the desert with the elves!!! Last but not least, the characters. I have read the other reviews written (so far) and the majority of them mention the characters. Who their favourite character was, why they liked them etc. I think that's one of this books real strengths - you really gain a deep insight into each character. Even if you dislike one of them, you can find yourself warming to them later in the book. It's so easy to relate to the characters, they are so true to life, that you feel like you actually know them. Proof being in the reviews that people refer to them as if the characters are real people and they know them personally! There is a character for everyone in the book and so many different aspects of them that you can relate to. SF Burgess has managed to create really complex, layered people in this book; and I get the impression that her intention was not for the reader to sycophantically love every one of them. I had a real love/hate relationship with some characters in the book - even the main character Eleanor. Yet I think that's what makes the characters so life like, that they aren't perfect and you relate to them as you would to a real human being.

Other than fantasy, the other genre of books I enjoy is romance. So when I read a book that is fantasy with a hint of romance I am never happier. This book didn't disappoint in that department for me and was another reason I kept turning pages late into the night!

Eleanor is a fantastic debut from SF Burgess and I am eagerly awaiting the next instalment with bated breath!!!

Ru says

The book has two major problems - writing and characters. What really bothered me about the characters was how unrealistic they were and that is something which can ruin any book. The idea was great, but the

personalities completely obliterated the concept. The way "love" is described is so far from the actual feeling that is left me speechless - trying to depict an abusive relationship as romantic and turning it into the main concept of the storyline baffles me. I am not only referring to Eleanor and Conlan, but all the friendships described throughout the book. Let's take Remic f.e. - the guy just meets Eleanor, they have contact for several hours and all of a sudden this is the foundation for him swearing allegiance to her, giving her access to the dwarfs spy network and army and a sack of money? It just can't happen in real or fictional world - there should be logic in the actions that the heroes take. Same story with the core heroes Amelia, Will, Freddie and characters like Laurice, Nials which hate each other so much that they cause unfathomable and unforgivable things to each other, but it's depicted as deep affection? Also most of the situations the heroes encountered themselves in were too unrealistic even for a fantasy/paranormal genre. I am sorry, but this book truly disappointed me.

John says

Straight away you are thrown into a wonderfully crafted world and with "Eleanor" you are given a book and group of characters that are well formed and interesting. The "Eleanor" of the title is a strong female lead and is truly a force to be reckoned with along with a story that grabs your interest and never lets go!

A wonderful first book from this new author and with the world of "Mydren" here's hoping we'll have more books soon, as I want to know what happens next!!!.

Please tell me there will be more!.

Roxanne says

First, I started reading Eleanor because I won a First Read copy of Will, the second book of the series. What a delight to have discovered this author!

I did not have much expectation for this book, the cover and the summary did not inspire me at all but I was wrong! I really loved this book! The story is original and the plot is fitted. Burgess has created a rich and complex universe to make her characters evolved. Mydren is a fascinating place with a diverse culture and Burgess has put his personal touch to creatures (I think here of the dwarves and elves) which are, in my opinion, overused. It was refreshing!

There is of course some downsides to the book. The technical aspect of writing is certainly not the strong point of the author. She uses a looooooot of repetitions, both in her choice of words and in her situations (blade under the chin, fainting, etc.) but nothing that has been able to make me drop out of the history.

This book was a great discovery and at some moments, I was barely able to put it down!

Ps. Sorry if I made any mistake English is not my first language!

Cassandra says

This was wonderful!! What a great book! It drew me in from the first sentence and I had a really hard time putting it down. I finished the story last night at around 2 in the morning! It was exciting, engaging, and didn't have ONE boring moment in it! Honestly, it is such a long book - I think my Kindle told me it would take over 8 hours when I started - but it never dragged, never had a dull moment in it! The story was exhilarating, there were always new and interesting developments, the characters were wonderfully flawed and life-like and their journey took me on an emotional rollercoaster ride!

I have to admit I don't read a lot of traditional epic fantasy, mostly because I usually miss the love story in these books. And while the romance isn't as prominent here as in a typical romance book it is still an integral part of the story and very well done. There's not much physical intimacy (just a few kisses and a love scene almost at the end that is not described in any great detail) but unlike with some romances who rely heavily on the physical aspects and often miss the emotional connection, here I could actually feel the love between Eleanor and Conlan. And it was wonderful and passionate and everything that I hoped for!

I'm actually rather critical when it comes to stories and can always and in every book find something that I find lacking or wanted better or differently explained. I can overlook plot holes if they are not too obvious but I usually have an issue with discrepancies related to the characters. Thus said, I found very few things that bothered me here. All of the main characters were very well developed, had their own personality and acted according to it. I thought that Eleanor adapted a little too easily to her new world, she never seemed to miss her family which she never talks about and she developed a strong bond to her fellow Avatars within weeks and started to love them like family. But on the other hand I have to admit that she is a very open, caring and loving person, she is very honest with others and with herself and has no problems expressing her feelings. Also, Conlan was looking for a strong and resilient person to become the Avator of Earth so it wouldn't have made sense to make Eleanor anything less than what she was. She had to handle the transition to her new reality better than the former Avatars or the whole story would have been moot. And most of the things were explained at one point or another. So I was quite happy with the way things were handled. Ok, the way the horses were described was pretty unrealistic, their thoughts and feelings wouldn't be like that. But this is a fantasy and they acted like I would love for them to act, so I can live with that. :) Oh, and maybe Amelia wasn't as explicitly portrayed as Conlan, Eleanor, Will and Freddie. But these are minor complaints in an otherwise brilliant story!

I'm very much looking forward to the next book. Though I have to admit that I would like to read more about Eleanor (and Conlan) and can't imagine how Will (who I think will be the focus of the second book) can fill her place as she has such a vibrant and commanding personality. But this was so good that I will give it a try anyway. I really need to know what happens with all of them and what adventures they are going to face next! I can only encourage everyone to read this book, it is well worth the time and money. :)
