



After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar

Joshua Palmatier (Editor) , Patricia Bray (Editor) , Anton Strout (Contributor) , Seanan McGuire (Contributor) , Juliet E. McKenna (Contributor) , Laura Anne Gilman (Contributor) , Ian Tregillis (Contributor) , Avery Shade (Contributor) , more... Jackie Kessler (Contributor) , Benjamin Tate (Contributor) , S.C. Butler (Contributor) , Jennifer Dunne (Contributor) , Barbara Ashford (Contributor) , Maria V. Snyder (Contributor) , Kari Sperring (Contributor) , D.B. Jackson (Contributor) ...less

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Science fiction and fantasy readers have long shown an affinity for a good "bar story". Now some of today's most inventive scribes have decided to tell their own tall tales-from an alewife's attempt to transfer the gods' curse to Gilgamesh, to Odin's decision to introduce Vikings to the Ur-Bar, from the Holy Roman Emperor's barroom bargain, to a demon hunter who may just have met his match in the ultimate magic bar, to a bouncer who discovers you should never let anyone in after hours in a world terrorized by zombies.

AN ALEWIFE IN KISH - Benjamin Tate
WHY THE VIKINGS HAD NO BARS - S. C. Butler
THE EMPEROR'S NEW GOD - Jennifer Dunne
THE TALE THAT WAGGED THE DOG - Barbara Ashford
SAKE AND OTHER SPIRITS - Maria V. Snyder
THE FORTUNE-TELLER MAKES HER WILL - Kari Sperring
THE TAVERN FIRE - D.B. Jackson
LAST CALL - Patricia Bray
THE ALCHEMY OF ALCOHOL - Seanan McGuire
THE GRAND TOUR - Juliet E. McKenna
PARIS 24 - Laura Anne Gilman
STEADY HANDS AND A HEART OF OAK - Ian Tregillis
FORBIDDEN - Avery Shade
WHERE WE ARE IS HELL - Jackie Kessler
IZDU-BAR - Anton Strout

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From Reader Review After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar for online ebook

Colleen says

Tales from Ur-Bar was a fun short story collection. The prologue starts "Fifteen authors walked into a bar..." and out came this compilation. It wasn't that simple, of course, but it sounded good. Anyway, this collection of stories is hung together on the premise that Gilgamesh did get his wish for immortality - as a bartender in an immortal bar. Yes, it's the bar that is immortal, not that it is a bar for immortals. The bar cannot be destroyed, but that it will reincarnate in another place and time, with Gilgamesh still in its heart.

The most interesting twist to the bar-conceit is that Gilgamesh has one magic drink on offer that has just enough kick to let them decide their futures clearly. In some stories, that drink does nothing more than make sure the person stays on the same path he started. In others, such as "Steady Hands and a Heart of Oak," it pushes a character through the decision tree of the future over and over again until the one possibly positive decision comes clear.

Like most short story collections, there were some that were better than others. Some were funny, some were thoughtful, and two were really on my wavelength. They were arranged in roughly historical order, running from prehistory and Vikings ("Why the Vikings Had No Bars") through the World Wars, up through to post-history time travel ("Forbidden") and zombies. While I purchased the book because it had a Seanan McGuire story in it ("The Alchemy of Alcohol"), I enjoyed many of other authors just as much if not more than McGuire. Dunne's "The Emperor's New God" tickled my history bone, as did Jackson's "The Tavern Fire." The end story, "Izdu Bar" was, of course, one with a twist. I didn't resent it, though I didn't like it all that much. Still, I recommend the book as a great sampler for many solid writers who all took a concept and really *ran* with it.

Shauna says

I thought I would love this anthology centered on a bar owned by Gilgamesh that travels through time. I have been intrigued with ancient Mesopotamia since high school, I've published a novel about Gilgamesh, and I'm teaching a course on the "Epic of Gilgamesh" in the fall. I also enjoy time-travel stories.

Sadly, this anthology was not at all what I expected. Gilgamesh is a minor character at best in these stories; in one, he doesn't even appear (he's sleeping in another room). Gilgamesh is a cardboard character that little resembles the Gilgamesh of the most ancient stories or of the epic. So if you're interested in this anthology because you're a fan of Gilgamesh or of ancient Mesopotamia, this anthology is not meant for you.

Ditto if you're interested in time travel. The stories are set in many different times, true, and the anthology is the better for it. But there is no time traveling on the page, and we never see Gilgamesh adjusting to a new time and new customs.

I did finish the anthology, and leaving aside the Gilgamesh and time-traveling disappointments, many of the stories are worthwhile reading. If you're just interested in an unusual fantasy anthology or like theme anthologies, you may very well love this anthology.

April Steenburgh says

Imagine an eternal bar managed by Gilgamesh himself. It has existed everywhere and when, and always has exactly what its patrons need on tap (which sometimes differs from what they think they want). What started as an idea a group of authors came up with while in their cups translated magnificently into a collection that is the perfect combination of humorous and haunting. Each story has something new to offer- a bit of insight, a cunning use of Gil and his bar- and they all come together to build a beautiful look at humanity as a whole, the good and the bad. Snatches of life from a barkeeps eyes, without all of the cliché. It was a fun, often surprising, read from a very talented group of authors.

Benjamin Tate sets the scene in his "An Alewife in Kish". Here we meet Gilgamesh, and find out how exactly he came into possession of the bar. Immortality always come with a price and bargains seldom are without a catch.

S.C. Butler lays out just "Why the Vikings Had No Bars". Odin sees an opportunity to gather a good handful of warriors in Gil's bar. Drinking and hailing and berserking ensues.

Jennifer Dunne reminds the reader of the dangers in dealing with Gods in "The Emperor's New God". Mars is not a deity to be trifled with.

"The Tale that Wagged the Dog", by Barbara Ashford, is a brilliant look at Tam Lin and his selkie lover. I would suggest not drinking while reading this one. The biting humor will most likely lead to choking.

Maria V. Snyder writes a darker tale about a woman's place in Japanese society in "Sake and Other Spirits".

In "The Fortune-teller Makes Her Will" Kari Sperring moves us to 17th Century Paris and weaves a haunting story involving an innocent young girl who speaks with the voices of angels and the Poisons Affair.

"The Tavern Fire", by D.B. Jackson gives us a possible explanation for the fire that started at Boston's Brazen Head tavern in 1760, and its lack of casualties.

Patricia Bray reflects on the dangers of unicorn vomit as well as how rough a life of hunting the supernatural actually is in her story "Last Call".

In Seanan McGuire's "Alchemy of Alcohol" we meet the King of Summer and his Lady and their very unique problem.

"The Grand Tour" by Juliet E. McKenna walks the reader through the tensions of pre-World War Europe, through the eyes of two youths who experience the worst and the best strangers have to offer.

Dreams of glory are not all that they seem in "Paris 24" by Laura Anne Gilman.

"Steady Hands and a Heart of Oak" by Ian Tregillis looks at a talented sapper in WWII London and his drive for recognition (and penchant for womanizing).

"Forbidden" by Avery Shade is an eerie look at the 1980's from a far future point of view.

In "Where We Are Is Hell" Jackie Kessler somehow managed to roll a story about loss and redemption into a couple thousand words without leaving anything out. (And managing a very 'Lady or the Tiger'- style ending.)

Anton Strout winds up the anthology with "Izdu-Bar"- a cunning combination of alcohol and zombies.

Paul Bonamy says

A man/woman/dog/ghost/time traveler/god walks into a bar. Maybe it's just an ordinary bar, staffed by ordinary people. But maybe, just maybe, it's the Ur-Bar, the one establishment of its age that captures the essence of the very first bar, where the gods of old first granted the ancient Sumerians the recipe for beer. In that case, magic runs more freely than it otherwise might, and the giant of a man behind the bar is Gilgamesh, who found the immortality he sought but at a price.

After Hours is a collection of bar stories, and each touches upon this singular bar in some way. The stories aren't necessarily about the bar, nor its remarkable keeper, but then bar stories are really about people, rather than the place they gather. Each story is set in a different time and place, and they are arranged more or less chronologically, telling a history of the world as seen through the people stumbling into the Ur-Bar. Each author has apparently agreed to abide by some basic guidelines - this is the Ur-Bar, it's overseen by Gilgamesh, etc - but are then free to tell whatever story they choose. The end result is a set of stories ranging from more or less straight-forward historical fiction (aside from the magical bar and its eternal tender) to purely fantastical tales, and everything in between.

On the whole, this is a delightful collection.

David Fortier says

Book Review: After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar

One of the warnings I've been given as a fantasy writer is to avoid cliché tavern scenes. Enter AFTER HOURS: TALES FROM THE UR-BAR, an anthology about a time-traveling tavern that carefully breaks this rule and others.

Disclaimer: Since I know the editors and some of the authors of this book, I have tried exceptionally hard to be objective in reviewing. That said, I think the concept is cool. Check it out: (Shamelessly pilfered from <http://afterhoursurbar.livejournal.co...>)

After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar

The first bar, created by the Sumerians after they were given the gift of beer by the gods, was known as the Ur-Bar. Although it has since been destroyed, its spirit lives on--in each age there is one bar that captures the essence of the original Ur-Bar, where drinks are mixed with magic and served with a side of destiny and intrigue.

And now for the individual story reviews with mild ((SPOILERS)). Favorites in bold:

“An Alewife In Kish” by Benjamin Tate - Who doesn't like origin stories? Here we learn how Gilgamesh becomes the bartender of the Ur-Bar, bonus points for using a historical figure as a main character. The advice to avoid extended flashbacks in short stories was expertly broken here, as Gilgamesh's tale within the tale provides the basis for his downfall.

“Why the Vikings Had No Bars” by S.C. Butler - It is easy to like a story with a cameo by a one-eyed Norse god and his ravens. A double rule-breaker, this tale not only occurs exclusively within a tavern, but also includes a tavern brawl. S.C. Butler makes this work in a light-hearted way with a running joke between Gilgamesh and the god.

“The Emperor’s New God” by Jennifer Dunne - Another mix of mythology and history as Otto the Great makes a deal with the god, Mars. The Ur-bar doesn't play as big a role in this story, which focuses more on the characters and their flaws. That said, it was still an enjoyable read.

“The Tale That Wagged the Dog” by Barbara Ashford - A priest, a Selkie, and a talking dog walk into the Ur-Bar. No Joke. There are so many great things in this story that made me smile: William Wallace, a line from Billy Joel's Piano Man, and a reference to humping a Selkie's leg. Gil's magic brew features prominently in this story.

“**Sake and Other Spirits**” by **Maria V. Snyder** - Set in Japan, featuring Samarai's and a water-vampire. This is a great story about being true to yourself and respecting your foe. Gilga-san's information is crucial to the MCs development. **Favorite setting.**

“The Fortune-Teller Makes Her Will” by Kari Sperring - A tale of a poor young girl who the angels speak through, and another serving an important madam. The settings are rendered so beautifully I felt like I could feel the curtains. In the end, heroic sacrifice takes on a whole new light.

“**The Tavern Fire**” by **D.B. Jackson**. Is the mystery behind the Second Great Fire of Boston finally revealed? Perhaps. Or maybe D.B. Jackson has just found a way to weave a fantasy tale from the uncertainties of New England history. Nice to see a non-traditional MC in this one, and well-portrayed at that. To know what I'm talking about, you'll have to read this. **Favorite Historical.**

“Last Call” by Patricia Bray. All I kept hearing about this was book was "Unicorn Vomit," which finally appears in "Last Call." It goes without saying that it has a profound effect on the MC and his life. My personal highlight of this story was actually the two cameos by Dr. Guillotin and Frau Shelly. I'm still laughing inside.

“The Alchemy of Alcohol” by Seanan McGuire. Not only is this a great story about love, jealousy, and fighting for survival, but an alchemist has to confront the supernatural in the basement of the Ur-Bar if the Summer King and Winter Queen are to survive. Two great recipes for drinks are included after this story. Fantastic!

“The Grand Tour” by Juliet McKenna. I didn't recognize the historical figures at first as they have problems in Austria and end up in Gilgamesh's care at the Ur-Bar. The final scene brings things into perspective and made me want to read more about Sir Harold and Sir Eustace and the Treaty of Versailles.

“Paris 24” by Laura Anne Gilman. This was a pretty good tale. Olympic Fencers in Paris for the '24 games

find themselves at the Ur-Bar. Gilgamesh chats up the fiction MC and through their conversation changes a young man's life.

“Steady Hands and a Heart of Oak” by Ian Tregillis. I wasn't sure what to expect from this as it starts out with bomb sappers in WWII. Tregillis presents a likable and despicable character. He draws personal conflict together with the threat of unexploded bombs in London and neatly ties things off with a little help from Gil at the Ur-Bar. **Favorite story!**

“Forbidden” by Avery Shade. The first sci-fi story in the anthology fits in nicely with the advancing timeline. Here, a woman from the future takes a harsh look at 1987 and for all the superficial individualism, finds that she might enjoy this time period more than the sterile, controlled one she originates from.

“Where We Are Is Hell” by Jackie Kessler. The first ghost story of the anthology, which portrays a woman caught in what she thinks is Hell, opening doors only to find more doors. Once in the Ur-Bar, Gilgamesh helps her remember her past and then offers her a choice, potential Hell through the next door, or take his place as the eternal barkeeper. **Another favorite.**

“Idzu-Bar” by Anton Strout. Gilgamesh and the Ur-Bar make their final appearance in a post-zombie apocalypse. Here nothing is as it seems, and though trouble is perhaps telegraphed a bit by how badly the MC wants to roll the newcomer, the execution is still satisfying. Braaaaaains!!

Unlike some anthologies which have perhaps a few great stories and a few real duds, this anthology was fairly level, delivering readable stories from start to finish. Some were more memorable than others, but that's to be expected. Gilgamesh and the Ur-Bar feature prominently in most of the tales, often affecting the outcome in some way or another, usually through the main character. It was nice to see consistency with Gilgamesh, even though he's written by fifteen different authors.

Now, you go forth and read this book because unless you've swallowed Unicorn Vomit, you're not going to live forever. (And you'll have to read the anthology to get that one).

Serena says

15 stories by 15 different authors all set in the same bar - well, sort of the same bar. I found 14 of them to be excellent and the other one was still pretty good. A time jump in a short story is harder to pull off than when it is done in novel. The author of that one almost succeeded, but I was left wondering if I missed a page in my reading.

The Editors are to be commended for compiling a fascinating collection of tales about the Ur-Bar. I am glad that I purchased the 2nd volume at the same time as the I bought the 1st one. I am looking forward to enjoying that volume once I get to it. I am hoping for at least 2 or 3 more collections of stories for this anthology series. As I discussed with the vendor, I would love to see "Drinks are On Me", "Last Call", and maybe "The Walk of Fame" added to this book and "Second Round" if they can find enough good stories to fill them. Who doesn't like a good story set in a bar. Especially when it is this bar.

This one was well worth the money I paid for it and as someone who gets most of their reading material for free as either gifts or free e-books that says something.

Vickie says

I rarely have luck with anthologies. I think that's the norm for a lot of people based on reviews I've read here and there.

That said, I saw a review for this particular anthology. Can't remember who was so in favor of it, but it was a 'trusted agent' and I put it on the WWBL. Then B&N must have been having a heckuva sale and it was put in the shopping cart and on Mt Git'r'Read.

I think it only languished for a bit before I was in the mood for this type of read.

And what a swell decision! Every single story is amazing and well-written, completely different premise from the rest with only the Ur-Bar as the single theme tying everything together.

The book seems to move in a forward pattern from the past to the future and the sort of nil.

Anything more is a rehash of the 'Back of the Book', so will stop here. I really liked this book, glad that not all anthologies are pewp and happy to 'meet' some new authors to add to the WWBL.

Five belly up to the Ur-Bar beans....

David Caldwell says

This is a collection of 15 short stories by different authors. The theme for the collection is that all of the stories include a magical bar that moves from place to place throughout history. The bar also changes its appearance when it moves. The bartender is cursed so that they can never leave the bar and is immortal. The only way for the bartender to give up their position is if someone willingly takes up the post. For most of the stories, Gilgamesh is the immortal bartender.

Stories range from okay to very good in the collection. Unfortunately some of the stories take a very broad approach to the theme. By this I mean the bar barely appears in the story and could easily be swapped out for another location. While this does not necessarily make the stories bad, it does hurt the over all theme of the book. Several of the stories seemed to fit more in the historical fiction category instead of fanatsy as well.

It is strange that I like bar stories. I don't drink or smoke so bars aren't my normal destinations. But as a teen I fell in love with the Spider Robinson's Callahan series, Every since then I have sought out bar stories.

While none have quite lived up to the Callahan series, I have found some that were quite good. I feel that the concept for this collection had the potential to be awesome. Unfortunately the theme was a little too broad with all of the stories taking place at different points in history and the possibility of using the bar and Gilgamesh as only minor points.

Like I said earlier, the individual stories ranged from okay to very good. But as a collection, I felt it was a fairly weak effort. If the 'rules' for writing the stories were tightened than I feel the overall collection would improve. While a second collection would be possible, I doubt that there will be one since they have already covered such a wide range of time in this collection.

Mark Easterday says

This is an interesting mix of short stories. My favorites were "Forbidden" by Avery Shade, "An Alewife in Kish" by Benjamin Tate, "The Alchemy of Alcohol" by Seanan McGuire, "Where We are is Hell" by Jackie Kessler, and "Izdu-Bar" by Anton Stout.

Eric says

It took me a long time to work my way through these stories. As with any anthology there were some that stood out and some that I struggled with. The stories were all of a very high quality - I suspect the trouble was with me more than anything.

The stories that really stood out of the collection for me were "The Tavern Fire" by D.B. Jackson and "The Alchemy of Alcohol" by Seanan McGuire.

My two favorites from the collection show a couple of interesting things. First, good writing is good writing. I like Jackson's work that is published under his other pen name and I didn't know he was the author before I read that story. Second, good writing is good writing. I've had issues with other works by McGuire and I don't think I was overwhelmed by the novel I read (as I try to remember now). A good story combined with good writing is really a special thing.

One other very enjoyable thing in this book: there were a couple of drink mixes at the end of McGuire's story. I am going to accumulate the ingredients and try "To Wake the Winter King" because that looks delicious.

Mrs Giggles says

Imagine this: there is a bar. It's a magical bar in that it can travel through time and appears at any place in this world, apparently at its own whim, and its appearance changes accordingly in order for it to blend in with its surroundings. At the whim of the owner-cum-bartender, you may be served a special brew that can make a wish come true. The bar is a prison for this person, however: the person is blessed with immortality, but this person can never leave the bar. The stories in *After Hours: Tales From The Ur-Bar* feature this bar in one way or another, although, in some stories, it just happens to be the setting where fun things take place.

Benjamin Tate's *An Alewife In Kish* is the author's own spin on the events at the end of the old tale *The Epic Of Gilgamesh*. In this one, he presents the story of how the Ur-Bar gets its present owner, Gilgamesh, when it was originally fashioned by the Sumerian gods as a prison and punishment for Kubaba, the very ambitious lady who eventually rules her own kingdom, according to history. This is a nice way to introduce the anthology, especially because the accounts of Gilgamesh's muscular tussles with Enkidu are charged with erotic electricity that is made even more, er, intriguing because it's not really about sex. Or maybe it is. You know what I mean, I hope.

SC Butler's *Why The Vikings Had No Bars* sees the bar popping up in a medieval Viking village, introducing the joys of alcohol, brewed by the Arabs, to the local men who are more familiar with mead and ale. What happens is a party to remember, for all the wrong reasons. This one is a darkly amusing and violent tale, but while I enjoy it, I feel that the author's inserting some contemporary "violence is wrong, these Vikings are wrong" disapproval of those guys' beliefs, through Odin himself, is an unnecessarily preachy thing to do.

Jennifer Dunne tells the story of an unwise Roman emperor who wants to achieve glory for his dynasty in a manner he is ill-suited for in *The Emperor's New God*. It's a nicely written tale, but it's essentially another "love peace, go study your books, because war is bad" tale at the end of the day.

Barbara Ashford has a very quaint and entertaining tale in *That Tale That Wagged The Dog*. Tam Lin is transformed into a Border collie by the Queen of Faerie as punishment for his efforts to leave her court, but that doesn't stop him from shagging - or humping the legs - of any female that gives him the time of day. He hangs out with other characters from folklore at the bar. Recently, he hooked up with a selkie - bestiality is okay if both partners aren't human, naturally - only to have the selkie lost her skin and be stuck in her humanoid form. Oh dear, what will happen now? Tam Lin is such an unrepentant rascal, he's most amusing and almost adorable, heh.

Sake And Other Spirits by Maria Synder takes place in a medieval Japanese village terrorized by a blood-sucking kappa. Of course, there has to be that feminist heroine that challenges the establishment - our heroine Azami - who is wiser than all the guys around because they are blinded by male arrogance while she, by virtue of her amazing female intuitive and intelligence, is all that and more. This one is also a very readable story, if predictable.

Kari Sperring goes to France in *The Fortune-Teller Makes Her Will*, where it is the mystics, oracles, and fortune-tellers that are target of the witch hunt instead of aristocrats. A lady's maid feels reluctant compassion when a fortune teller's simple daughter is dragged to prison to face what seems like inevitable death sentence, but the Ur-Bar may have a solution to her dilemma. This one is the author's personal *A Tale Of Two Cities*. It's not bad, but it begs me to compare it to that other story despite my better judgment, and, naturally, the other story is better.

DB Jackson blames the Great Boston Fire of 1872 on the wish-granting brew of the Ur-Bar in *The Tavern Fire*. Okay.

In Patricia Bray's *Last Call*, she offers a darker look into the mind of the big boss of a secret cabal of warriors against evil paranormal woo-woos. This one feels largely unsatisfying because of the way the author rushes through things - understandable given the circumstances, but still - but it leaves a pleasant bittersweet aftertaste, t speak, that I like.

Sean McGuire is next with *The Alchemy Of Alcohol*, and it's amazing how the author manages to

introduce a new urban fantasy setting vividly enough to pique my interest, insert an adorable female protagonist, and put together a story that brings me a smile to my face. It has little to do with the Ur-Bar theme, though, as the author replaces Gilgamesh with our bartending alchemist heroine. Her bar ends up being a battle zone among two powerful factions, but don't worry, she can deal with things just fine. This one is easily my favorite of the bunch. Why haven't I read her books before?

Juliet E McKenna's *The Grand Tour* is all about how tolerance and understanding can make the world a better place. Of course, those scumbags that shot at the good guys in the *World Wars* still need to be exterminated with extreme prejudice. No goodwill and love for them! It's all so touching, really.

Laura Anne Gilman's *Paris 24* tells me that it is fine to have middling ambitions and wanting a life free from stress and uncertainties, as long as you are certain that you are happy with what you want. Or something. Following the previous story, this one makes me feel like these authors are aware of some kind of inadequacy in my life and are now lecturing me to change... something.

Ian Tregillis presents a guy who is so afraid of getting married - he'd rather play the field - that, when he ends up sleeping with a girl whom he can barely stand even as she adores him, and she gets pregnant, he starts to freak out. *Steady Hands And A Heart Of Oak* tries to pass off commitment-phobia as some kind of noble sacrifice, when I personally think the guy is just being unnecessarily melodramatic. Then again, the story is set in 1940, a time before Oprah, so maybe I should be more understanding.

Avery Shade tells of a woman sent from the future to the present day, to collect and study genetic materials of living creatures that have long become extinct in her time. In her time, people all share the same hive mind and many fun things are forbidden. Naturally, she likes the life here better so she's now unsure as to whether she can go back to her sterile time. *Forbidden* is, like most of the stories here, pretty readable while it lasts. It's very predictable, though.

Jackie Kessler's *Where We Are In Hell* is a nice companion piece that sheds some light into a previously unexplained development in her *Hell On Earth* books, but as a standalone story, it doesn't really make much of an impact.

Finally, Anton Strout is up with *Idzu-Bar*, where the Ur-Bar is now is a future where the zombies are everywhere. One night, a stranger with a guitar shows up to entertain the guests, while a bartender plots to steal the man's guitar and money after the show. This one is actually a fun read, but I can see the twist coming from a mile away. Also, I'm quite disappointed that there is no story to provide some closure to the Ur-Bar itself.

Taken as a whole, the stories in this anthology are a good way to pass the time, although most of them are either too short to leave much of an impact or telling me something that I have read many times before. While I don't feel that this is a "must read" anthology, it's a decent way to forget the tedium of, say, a long plane ride or something similar.

Deborah says

15 stories set in a bar that moves and morphs with the times. I really like the concept, but some of the stories are just not to my taste, someone who likes historical fantasy more than I do would probably like more of the stories. I would be interested in reading more stories by other authors set in this bar. I'll add ratings below

only for the ones I liked.

An Alewife in Kish by Benjamin Tate - liked this, good set-up for the anthology. 4 stars

Why the Vikings Had No Bars by S.C. Butler - interesting 3.5 stars

The Emperor's New God by Jennifer Dunne

The Tale that Wagged the Dog by Barbara Ashford

Sake and Other Spirits by Maria V. Snyder

The Fortune-teller Makes Her Will by Kari Sperring - 3.5 stars

The Tavern Fire by D.B. Jackson - this was very good and makes me more interested in Theftaker - 4.5 stars

Last Call by Patricia Bray - 4 stars

Alchemy of Alcohol by Seanan McGuire - 5 stars

The Grand Tour by Juliet E. McKenna

Paris 24 by Laura Anne Gilman.

Steady Hands and a Heart of Oak by Ian Tregillis

Forbidden by Avery Shade - 5 stars

Where We Are Is Hell by Jackie Kessler - 4.5 stars

Izdu-Bar by Anton Strout - 4.5 stars

Maria V. Snyder says

I downloaded this to my new Acer tablet I bought to take on my tour. Yes, i have a copy, but didn't want to lug the extra weight around :-)

Well it seems I don't really like to read on my tablet - a book in hand is my preferred method of reading, so this took me quite some time to finish since I only read it when I was traveling.

The short stories are all centered around a bar owned and operated by Gilgamesh are interesting and diverse.

And I must admit I wrote one of the stories so the rating and review are biased big time!

Michele says

As always when I buy a multi-author anthology, I make a beeline for the stories by the authors whose work I already know since the chances are very high I'll enjoy those stories. After that I work my way through the remaining stories from start to finish. I'm pleased to say there was only one story in this collection which failed to engage me and I left it unfinished. (No, I'm not going to 'name and shame' the author as it may well be down to me not the author that I couldn't get into it.) Of the authors with whom I was unfamiliar, I've added 3 to my 'want to read more of their stuff' list. Always a good sign.

I believe this anthology is the one that started the partnership of Bray and Palmatier and led to the Zombies Need Brains annual Kickstarter anthology campaigns. This year's anthologies are just about to go out to backers, and I'm very much looking forward to receiving my copy of 'Death of All Things'. And to backing the new campaign when it opens on August 29th!

Raj says

This is a bar stories collection, about a bar that travels from place to place, tended by the Mesopotamian hero Gilgamesh, made immortal but unable to leave his bar. I'm a sucker for bar stories, from Tales from the White Hart to Callahan's Crosstime Saloon. This was a fun collection, but, for me, didn't match either of the others I mentioned. There are no recurring characters (the regulars of the bar) other than Gil himself, whose importance to the story varies wildly and those barflies often add a lot of flavour.

Also, for a bar that's existed since Mesopotamian times, I thought the authors limited their scope. The first story told how Gil took over the bar, but the next jumps immediately to the Viking period, and we move forward in time from there. Nothing in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome or any of the other brilliant places for a tavern story, which is a shame.

Of the stories themselves, I enjoyed *The Tale That Wagged the Dog* about a man cursed by the Queen of Faerie into dog form and his selkie companion and what it means to be a man. Seanan McGuire's *The Alchemy of Alcohol* is a nice little story about warring seasons and also includes a couple of cocktail recipes. It is, I think, the only story in the collection not to feature Gil at all, although he is mentioned. *The Grand Tour* by Juliet E. McKenna is a nice little story about a couple of arrogant upper class boys, on the verge of entry to Oxford, at the eve of the Great War, and what they're taught while on a tour of Europe and get into a fight outside Gil's bar.

The rest of the stories are a mixed bunch, some good and some bad. It's a nice example of the bar story genre, but I'd rather spend my evening with the regulars of Callahan's, the White Hart, or the Fountain.
