

Notes for Podcast: *Stranger in Olondria*, Book 6

Book 6 opens with Jevick burning Jissavet's bones. He plans to burn the books containing her story as well, as a substitute for her jut, but ultimately chooses not to. Jissavet's ghost, his angel, is gone from him. He continues to want to see her.

He learns from Aurum that the Cult of Avalei plans war against the Cult of the Stone. In fact, he has been used to provoke this war. Aurum knew that the king's guards would raid the Night Market killing many, and planned to use this as an excuse for a rebellion. In a way, the Priest of the Stone was right. Jevick is being used.

Aurum presents the war as a war between the illiterate and the literate. And so, libraries will burn. Jevick is horrified by this. As readers, we wonder what Jevick the book-lover will do.

We also might be wondering what will happen to Tialon. Everything she "built" will be destroyed.

At this point we might also wonder more about the Stone. We know a lot about Avalei at this point, but little about the theology of the Stone. Where did it come from? Who wrote on it? What sort of god is the god of the stone? These questions are unanswered. But perhaps it makes little difference because the main issue is political. Who will have power? Aurum is a kind of populist, inciting the people to rise up.

What does Jevick do? He goes back to Tyom. He is not the kind of hero who could stop a war. He is an *avneanyi* without an angel. (by the way, the book misspells this word on page 276, a hazard of making up fantasy words that spell checkers and editors don't know)

When he returns home, he finds that Lunre has married and gone to live in the mountains. He brings him Tialon's letters, which have a devastating effect.

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A tchavi is a wise man, a teacher. The student has become a master. And at this point we might reevaluate Lunre. He was a disciple of the Priest of the Stone, Tialon's father, but disagreed with the violence, especially the burning of the school. Perhaps he could have stopped the most extreme measures and prevented the catastrophe of war. And he was a friend and mentor to Tialon, but thought his love for her unworthy because of the 20 year age gap. Now he is married to an illiterate island woman 20 years younger. It could be said that he ran away from his problems rather than confronting them. But this could be said of Jevick too.

Jevick starts a school and begins teaching young people in Tyom to read. He uses the Olondrian letters to represent Kedeti, the system he developed to write Jissavet's *vallon*, which he now tells his students is the first work of Kedeti literature. He calls the writing system, Jissavet's letters. He is giving her the kind of immortality she wanted.

The climax of the action is the burning of Jissavet's bones. The falling action is the return home and the founding of a school.

Questions:

An overall pattern we might discuss is that there are lots of parallels and binaries in this book. The biggest binary is between Avalei and the Stone, but within this conflict there are many others in the families, in the myths, in the stories that are told. If you were writing a paper about this novel, there are many connections to explore.

1. Jissavet's mother and Jevick's mother have much in common. However, Jissavet resents her mother and Jevick loves his. Why are they so different?
2. Jevick's father is a wealthy merchant in the small scene of Tyom. He enjoys his wealth and status and wants Jevick to value it, though Jevick rejects it. Jissavet's father, who turns out not to be her biological father, is likewise born to wealth, but also rejects it, as Jevick does, not for books and poetry, but for a simple island village life. How does Jevick compare with Jissavet's father?
3. Is Lunre a coward who ran away from problems and responsibility, or a wise teacher who gave Jevick the education he needed and desired?
4. Was Jevick right to burn Jissavet's bones and lose her forever?
5. Does the conflict between Avalei and the Stone reflect divisions that we have in our own society? Do we really need to choose between passion and reason, between freedom and order, or between orality and literacy? Who will win this conflict?
6. Finally, about the style of the novel. The sentences are lyrical, complex, full of sensory detail and odd words. They are slow to read because we must taste them, experience them, not skim them. It is as if the author was doing LeGuin's "Being Gorgeous" activity and turned it into a whole novel. Does this style help or hinder the enjoyment of the book?