



# George R.R. Martin, A Feast For Crows

Thu, 03/30/2006 - 13:00 ? rpgrev

Published in [Ticonderoga](#)[1]

He is known and loved in the world of science fiction and fantasy; we all loved the Wild Cards series, right? The fan community have paid their respects and have dished out several Hugo and Nebula awards for his contributions. Clearly inspired by this several years back George R.R. Martin started writing "A Song of Fire and Ice", an enormous multi-novel fantasy series which has spawned trading card and roleplaying supplements. The most recently published "A Feast for Crows"

is a several hundred page trade-paperback brick which is the fourth contribution to a series that spans 8000 years of history with dozens of major characters with at least another three planned. "What can I say? It's a BIG story, and a cast of thousands", Mr. Martin remarked.

Having marched wearily through the several hundred pages I throw my hands up in despair. Please Mr. Martin, stop. Just stop this \*pointless\* adventure in typing. Yes, the parallels shown with medieval Europe indicate a substantial degree of knowledge of the period. Yes, the complicated ties and marriages and connections between the various Houses do indeed create an setting of intrigue. Yes, there are notable parallels between the the events in War of the Roses and that in this 'epic'. Yes, the characters are somewhat realistic insofar they are largely motivated by a complex of self-interest, loyalty, and principles which is a change from the generic good versus generic evil, although it must be mentioned it certainly isn't within a medieval mode of consciousness; it belongs more to the late Renaissance. These are all useful contributions, but it doesn't change the fundamental flaw that this book in particular, and possibly the series as a whole, is simply awful to read.

As usual, the tired-old comparisons with Tolkien are brought out, just as they were with Stephan Donaldson's Chronicles of Thomas Covenant and even Terry Brookes' Shannara trilogy, and as usual they are quite inappropriate with the possible exception in this case of the utter improbability of the lay of the land. "The Green Fork" is an item of particular note. It apparently flows from a low-lying seaside swamp a significant distance southwards (no scale of course), past two towns (The Twins - one on either side of the river, see?) to exit to the ocean. In other words, it flows *without* gravity. Such is the magic of the land apparently.

As for the story itself, well, it's a little hard to discern at best. The book focuses on a chapter-by-chapter approach with points of view according to the narrator as indicated in the chapter title. Apparently, these characters are considered to be "non-central" or if they are major characters, those when acting *incognito*. In other words, it's a side project of characters which deals with the numerous unfinished storylines that arose in the preceding novels and deal with new rebellions and the manic attempt to acquire power. The shifting viewpoints has become almost standard in many third-person narratives and it is worth mentioning that the novel keeps a consistent pace. The problem is however, with such radical changes to the narration and with each character considering their PoV equally important the overall plot is lost. There are so many events, dialogues and actions that it is almost impossible, unless one wishes to be a scholar of this narrative, to work out what is incidental and what is critical.

It is impossible to recommend this novel in good faith. Even though fans of the series have waited five years for publication and apparently it has sold extremely well on this basis, it is, in a word, just awful a murderous waste of aborean life. Resist the temptation, put it back on the shelf, and find something better. Perhaps in future "A Feast of

Crows" well be recognised as ironically prophetic; the crows will indeed feast on the corpus that was "A Song of Fire and Ice" - and this book killed it.

*Review by Lev Lafayette*

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