



The Cup of the World

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Adrian Jackson](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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In an intensely realised fantasy world, something like medieval Britain, the strong-willed Phaedra insists on her right to marry a man she loves but realises she will not be able to refuse the king's son when he comes to court her. She calls for help from the man she has met for many years in a kind of dream world who turns out to be the very real lord from across the lake whom she is happy to marry instantly. A bitter civil war ensues in which Phaedra causes the death of her father and the betrayal of her homeland. Interestingly the focus is not the warring itself but its effect on Phaedra's life away from the battles, as wife and then mother, and the equivalent civil war within her as she tries to distinguish right from wrong and who can be trusted. What is the 'dream' world, a hell or heaven, how have she and her husband entered it and at what cost? The answers shift about as events move on and her understanding, including that of her own actions, develops. It may be over-fancy to hear Shakespearean echoes: refusing the crown until the third offer, the relationship of fathers and daughters, the internal and external effects of civil war. It could in part be **Macbeth**, seen from the women's point of view, including the questionable goodness of the supernatural, although what relation Phaedra and her husband may have with Lord and Lady Macbeth is an element in the carefully balanced suspense. While high fantasy, which takes a while to tune into, it has the claustrophobic feel of a political and moral thriller that constantly surprises your expectations.

Running Order:

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