

BOOK REVIEW

Something is amiss in Atria. Exactly what, I'm not yet sure, though whatever it is, it's profound. Atria is an eerily familiar world, yet quite different than ours: some sort of post-apocalyptic utopia, though the nature of the apocalypse has not yet been fully revealed. Whether the story is a prophesy or a warning or simply speculative fiction doesn't matter because this is a world that we can relate to in a substantive way; a world of magic and mystery but not of wizards and elves, or spells and potions, or murderous holy secrets and tenuous historical claims.

The Wait of Gravity introduces us to The Ossayu of Ahmenar Ishtam, an epic multi-volume story that is a modern myth for our troubled time. Overtly happy, Ahmenar is tortured by unsettling unknowns in his life: who is he really leads the pack and seems only to be the tip of an iceberg. Without any idea where to go, what to do, or who to ask, his only option is to surrender to fate and trust his destiny to take him "there," and so he adopts a culturally sanctified one: to make a pilgrimage to a far-away shrine of great historical importance. A journey called, in his world, an *ossayu*.

While it's my duty to attempt to pigeonhole this story as a mystery or an adventure or a romance or a new-age inquiry into purpose and meaning, I fail you in this regard. Whatever this story is, it is a tale that, as Tamara Zablocki has put it, "carries an important message for all human beings of all lands, no matter what their heritage or language or ancestry because it has a depth of meaning that is vital to all our living."

The Wait of Gravity moves along, but doesn't answer as many questions as it raises; it is about finding a door and stepping through; for Ahmenar and for us. The journey only begins. I suspect Ahmenar's *ossayu* will take him far and wide in his worlds. Lovers of epic adventures, hold on to your hats, the Wait of Gravity will pull us into its massive realm.

Stuart Malin enters the world of words with a blockbuster of a tale. For a first novel, we can forgive the failings for it is evident that the story will only get better. Malin is giving expression to the tale in a delightfully post-modern way, for it is told by one of the story's own characters. Will Malin end up in the story as well? I don't know, but it would certainly be fitting.