

(Some) Faeries Are Scaerie

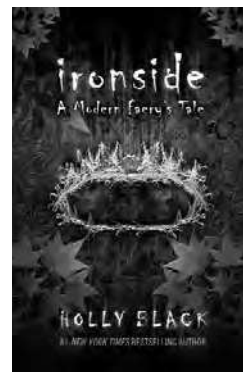
Patricia McKillip, Holly Black and Brian Froud headline Faerieworlds

Once upon a time, I went through a terrible breakup; a kind friend claimed that the way to combat my agony was to read Charles de Lint. I consumed his books in the wee hours, losing my pain in his dark urban fantasy world. When I read Susanna Clarke's massive *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* a few years later, I got it: Ravens signal Faerie. Oh, and faeries are *seriously* dangerous. They don't have morals, and some of them are a bit bloodthirsty (making my breakup look a lot better by comparison, let me tell you).

I soon discovered that some writers (like Eugene's own Nina Kiriki Hoffman) do urban fantasy better than others (the goofy *Borderlands* series). With the help of the teenagers I taught, I sped through British and American faerie lit, including countless variations of the tale of Tam Lin (www.tam-lin.org; one version of the story is Patricia McKillip's *Winter Rose*). And I learned a bit about Brian and Wendy Froud, faerie artists extraordinaire (Brian Froud and Alan Lee's classic *Faeries* changed the publishing opportunities for fantasy writers). The Frouds worked on the movies *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth* and are acknowledged royalty in the small but passionate faerie artist world.

The young queen of the faerie literature world is fast-rising star Holly Black, author of the popular, edgy *Tithe*. The gritty East Coast cities and decrepit fringe suburbs in *Tithe* feel

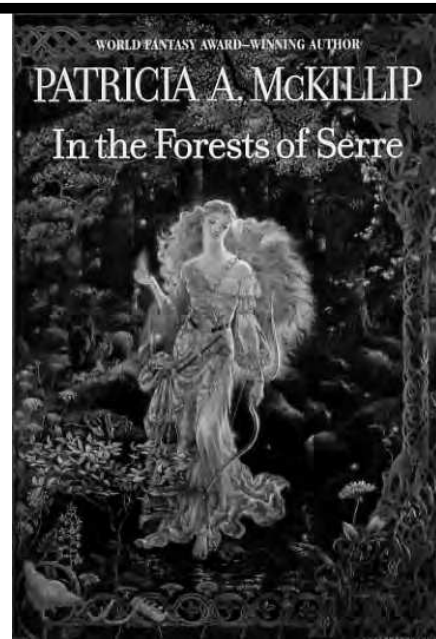
frighteningly authentic, and protagonist Kaye Fierch fits the perfect YA heroine mold: Her mother's in a violent relationship, her grandmother is sort of bonkers, she thinks her childhood imaginary friends might be real and, of course, she falls in love with a romantic, brooding murderer who also happens to be a faerie knight. The story of the Seelie and Unseelie Courts in *Tithe* continues with *Valiant*, a slightly parallel tale of (faerie) drug addiction in New York. Val's time spent sleeping in the subways of the city lead to more dealings with the darker world of faerie. And while fans awaited the sequel to *Tithe*, Black and illustrator Tony DiTerlizzi published more of the wildly well-received *Spiderwick Chronicles*, books aimed at a younger audience than the Modern Faerie series. Black, who posts frequently on her blog (blackholly.livejournal.com), is looking forward to the movie of *Spiderwick*, coming out in February of 2008.



Ironside, the sequel to *Tithe*, made its appearance in April (though the Eugene Public Library still doesn't have it). For *Ironside*, Black says, she wanted Kaye and

faerie king Roibin to develop a more mature relationship, moving on from that initial intensity to something more real. And Kaye's friend Cory's tragic faerie addiction stays strong, with dire consequences. The haunted-but-essentially-good Luis from *Valiant* plays a big role in helping Kaye figure out how to help Roibin. Because much of the folklore about faeries is bound up with riddling (see *Lord of the Rings* and Patricia McKillip's *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, for instance), Black inserts an impossible quest and a (fairly silly, but enjoyable) riddle into Kaye's life. Sometimes the world of Faerie moves too quickly or violently, but Black brings to life the seamy "real" world, including Cory's faerie-poisoning car and the depths to which drug-addled Dave sinks. Black, a cult favorite among hipster YA librarians and young adults alike, will no doubt be welcome at the Faerieworlds Festival.


Black says she has always admired one of the masters of the fantasy genre, Patricia McKillip, whose many books stand as classic fantasy and gorgeously written pieces of contemplative storytelling. McKillip's most recent book is *Solstice Wood*, which *EW* reviewed in the 2006 Winter Reading issue. Books editor Molly Templeton wrote, "McKillip is too skilled a writer to allow her work to be overburdened with morals and messages, but it's hard not to see certain threads as timely. Under the cover of this gentle, enticing tale is a current of



acceptance and understanding, of willingness to live side by side with the unknown."


McKillip, Black, Brian and Wendy Froud and a variety of other artists, illustrators, writers and musicians, along with those recycling Country Fair weekend fairy wings and those more attuned to the dark forces of Faerie, all descend upon Eugene (well, OK, Veneta) for the fifth Faerieworlds convention. If you can't make it, check out the books — they'll get you through many a long night. **EW**

For book notes and Q&As with the authors, visit www.eugeneweekly.com, where Black and McKillip talk about writing, inspiration, coffee, Oregon's forest and the reality of fairies. The Faerieworlds Festival runs July 21-22 at Secret House Winery in Veneta. Tix, which may be sold out by the time this goes to press, are available online at www.fairieworlds.com and at 800-992-TIXX or at Safeway and TicketsWest in person.



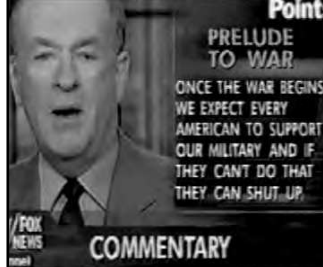
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