

Interview with Jayel Gibson **Author of *Dragon Queen: An Ancient Mirrors Tale***

Today, Tyler Tichelaar, an interviewer for Reader Views, talks with Jayel Gibson, author of the fantasy novel, “Dragon Queen: An Ancient Mirrors Tale”.

Jayel Gibson grew up listening to her grandmother’s stories of Celtic folklore and faerie tales. These stories inspired Jayel to become an author. After teaching elementary school, she retired from education to devote herself to a full-time writing career. The result has been a blending of myth and fantasy and an influence from role-playing games that led her to write “Dragon Queen.”

Tyler: Welcome to Reader Views, Jayel, and thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today about your book “Dragon Queen.” To begin, would you tell us a little more about your childhood and its influence upon your decision to become an author?

Jayel: I grew up in a military family and much of my childhood was spent abroad. Our frequent moves didn’t encourage lasting friendships, but imagination was my constant companion. Reading and writing were the equivalent of comfort foods during my childhood.

I was blessed with a stout Irish grandmother, a woman for whom the faerie faith was very real. To this day I can close my eyes and see myself perched on a stool and hear her retell the legends of our Celtic ancestors. The love of magic, legend and folklore fostered by my grandmother is a very powerful influence in what I write.

Tyler: Do you then see yourself writing within a Celtic tradition?

Jayel: There is little in my life that is not influenced by the Celts and that includes my writing. While I take great license with both the history and lore, the Celtic flavor is always present in my work.

Since the setting for the Ancient Mirrors series most closely resembles that of Arthurian Britain and the division of Britain into a Brythonic west, a Teutonic east and a Gaelic north, the character and place names are based on the familiar Anglo-Saxon and Gaelic sound patterns of that period, while keeping the pronunciation simple.

Tyler: You mention the Arthurian period. Were you influenced by the Arthurian legends or any specific Celtic stories?

Jayel: I think it is impossible for lovers of history to avoid the influence of Britain's Arthurian period. It holds such mystery and intrigue that it lends itself to continual re-molding in new stories. I drew on it for a number of political elements.

I have been careful to avoid using specific Arthurian or Celtic stories, but the belief system that unfolds in the Ancient Mirrors series is based on traditional aspects of the faerie faith.

Tyler: What about modern Celtic or Irish writers? Have any of them influenced you?

Jayel: W.Y. Evans-Wentz' research on the faerie faith in Celtic countries was the most influential work for me. His interview subjects provide a unique insider look at the Celtic tradition and modern man's relation to it, as well as fine retellings of many Welsh, Irish and Scottish legends.

Tyler: I understand that another of your influences comes from role-playing games. Which games in particular influenced you, and what about those games do you find appealing?

Jayel: I have been playing role-play games since Dungeons & Dragons was a paper and pencil game in the 1970s. Games such as the Elder Scrolls series, Neverwinter Nights, and World of Warcraft have provided the most recent delight and inspiration

Role-playing frees the mind to explore imaginary places and personas, while challenging the player to work within the structure created by the game developer. Games also provide me with the necessary 'brain breaks' I need to relax and regroup between my hours of writing.

Tyler: The Reader Views' review of "Dragon Queen" was written by a thirteen-year old. Do you feel there is a specific age group that will enjoy your books?

Jayel: Thirteen is the youngest reader to review one of the Ancient Mirrors Tales. The majority of readers are high school aged and older. Books in the series are generally offered on both the young adult and adult fantasy shelves in bookstores and libraries.

My goal is to leave readers of any age with a smile, a sense of connection and satisfaction. I would like them to walk away with a desire to return to the Ancient Mirrors universe, just as they would an enjoyable vacation spot.

Tyler: Have you received different kinds of responses from readers of different age groups?

Jayel: Yes, particularly with "Dragon Queen". As the first book of the series it contains a heavy dose of world building, and I have discovered that the older readers seem to appreciate that aspect of fantasy more than the younger readers. The younger readers seem to prefer the fast paced questing and parent/child conflict contained in "The Wrekening".

Tyler: Where do you get the ideas for your characters and your mythical world?

Jayel: Fantasy is an escapist genre; it allows me to create a multitude of worlds, meet new races and creatures, and consider all the possibilities that never were, but might have been.

Characters often appear out of nowhere and are auditioned in my mind. Those that persevere end up with a page in one of my long hand journals, and it is there that character and creature lives unfold. Eventually they either flesh out and begin a journey or wither and fade.

Research is the kindling that starts a story's fire. I tend to use whatever research method best facilitates the information gathering process: internet, books, personal interviews, or a phone call to a museum curator.

Both historical occurrences and the mythos provide the platform for my work. I might begin with the mythos, then research historical events for a plausible plotline, or begin with an historical event that triggers a new idea. Generally they go hand in hand, though I will be the first to admit that I twist and tangle the actual history until it is quite unrecognizable. For example: The coronation scene in *Dragon Queen* is based on that of Queen Elizabeth II, and the wedding in the upcoming *Damselflies* is modeled after historical hand-fasting and the ceremony of the cup.

Tyler: That's really interesting, Jayel. I love the idea that your characters have to audition for a role in your book. Do you ever have characters who "audition" for one book but don't fit it, so you save them for another? Do you find it's true that characters have minds of their own and will do what they want, whether or not it's what you want them to do?

Jayel: The new series I am working on is a result of one of those characters who just didn't belong. He appeared in the middle of an Ancient Mirrors writing day and simply kept reappearing until I took the time to give him a journal. Over the next few weeks he inspired a six book series outline. I have learned never to turn away the stray visitors the muse sends.

Indeed, characters can run away with the story. I have had days when the constant wrestling with a character has been exhausting. Sometimes a character just seems to know best and giving them a free rein results in a fine sub-plot and other times it ends with hours of rewriting.

Tyler: What do you think are the difficulties or special circumstances faced by a writer of fantasy literature compared to a writer of realism?

Jayel: I think the difficulty for fantasy writers relates to the presentation of plausibility.

In realistic fiction the author provides plausibility based on accurate, honest observation and intuition, while recounting something that didn't actually happen but still lies within the reader's known world.

Fantasy maintains plausibility within the story's world through what Tolkien called "secondary creation." The fantasy's plausibility may be totally disparate with the real world, but must be complete and self-consistent as it relates to the writer created realm.

Tyler: I understand. I know a writer has to suspend his disbelief when reading fantasy, but sometimes I find my suspension of disbelief refuses to stretch too far, especially with some fantasy and horror films. Do you enjoy fantasy films as well and have any of them been an influence on your writing?

Jayel: Oh, you caught me. I am a big special effects and graphics fan, so fantasy and science fiction films are high on my list of 'Wow!' material. I am fascinated by what filmmakers can create with today's technology, but I must admit it is the visual that I focus on, not the story. For the story, I much prefer a book or the interaction provided by a well developed role-play game.

I think we all have those limits on our suspension of disbelief and some authors and filmmakers do fracture the boundary.

Tyler: Jayel, I understand you've written another Ancient Mirrors novel. Would you like to share with our readers what to expect in your next work?

Jayel: In the second story of the Ancient Mirrors series, readers will meet and travel with Cwen of Aaradan, the niece of the Dragon Queen, as she quests for the great Wreken Wyrms that will save the seven kingdoms of AEdracmorae. "The Wrekening: An Ancient Mirrors Tale" is high adventure in a quest driven fantasy.

Tyler: I'm sure readers will be looking forward to your next book as well, and I know we'll be talking to you again soon about "The Wrekening" so our readers can look forward to that interview as well.

Thank you, Jayel, for joining us today. How can readers find out more information about your books and where to purchase them?

Jayel: Thank you, Tyler.

The books in the Ancient Mirrors series are available wherever books are sold. Just ask at a local bookstore or order from any online bookseller. For additional information and author signed copies, or to contact my publicist visit the Ancient Mirrors website at www.ancientmirrors.com.