



Against All Things Ending

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The *New York Times* bestseller is "a fascinating fantasy" (*Midwest Book Review*).

Thomas Covenant is alive again, restored to his mortal body by Linden Avery's magic-a defiant act of love that has unleashed unimaginable power capable of devastating the Land. The only hope to stop this may lie with the mysterious boy Jeremiah, Linden's adopted son, whose secrets are only beginning to come to light...

Against All Things Ending Details

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From Reader Review Against All Things Ending for online ebook

Terence says

Let's start off with my recommendation anent *Against All Things Ending*: If you have read Stephen R. Donaldson and loathe him (and there are a few) then this book will not cure you of that malady. In fact it will probably solidify your animus against the author. If you've never read Donaldson but have heard of him and are curious, this is still not the book for you. Start with the original *Chronicles*, the *Gap* series or *Mordant's Need*, all of which show off Donaldson's talents at their best. If, like me, you think Donaldson is a brilliant and important writer then you'll have to read this book despite its flaws.

And there are flaws; the greatest of which is length. A hundred, two hundred pages could have been shaved off easily without detracting from the emotional impacts of Linden's and Covenant's dilemmas and actions. The second thing that makes it difficult to persevere in reading is Linden Avery. Other reviews have mentioned how unlikeable she is and it's true. You would have thought that after the end of the *Second Chronicles*, Linden's self-image and self-confidence would be greater but here she's even more selfish, terrified and willfully stupid. In *Fatal Revenant*, Linden tore Covenant's spirit from the Arch of Time and reincarnated him so that he could save the Land while she focused on saving her son, Jeremiah, and in the process woke the Worm of the World's End, precipitating armageddon. In *Against All Things Ending*, Linden's obsession continues to extract a horrible price from everyone around her. Galt, who turns out to be Stave's son, dies defending Jeremiah. Liand dies trying to bring Jeremiah out of his mental fugue. And Elena, the long-suffering daughter of Covenant and Lena, is sacrificed to She Who Must Not Be Named in one of the most shocking and emotionally disturbing scenes in the book. And her other companions suffer nearly as much - *Haruchai*, *Swordmainnir* and *Ramen*.

Covenant, at least, appears to have learned something from his experiences. He can still be frustratingly passive beyond all reason but he exhibits some remorse for his actions and their consequences and takes pains to minimize them.

But....

All that aside, my objections are to the surfeit of details and the feeling that Donaldson is beating me over the head with a large stick not to the story itself. Again the author proves a master at evoking strong emotional reactions to his characters, and pushing them to find the limits of their abilities. And he deals with "big questions" that interest me; e.g., the corruption of power, the use of violence, how the seeds of future despotism are sown by present triumphs, and how – in light of that – can one act at all.

I also think that one of the reasons Linden pisses people off so much is that she's so much like us; she's not the perhaps-initially-doubtful-but-soon-confident heroine we'd like (and expect) to see. Consider, you wake up one day to find yourself in the Land (or some similar situation) and are told that you have the power to destroy or to save the world depending upon the choices you make. Would you confidently stride forward to wield the Staff of Law or your white-gold ring against Fangthane and obliterate all who stood in your way? Wouldn't you be terrified and constantly questioning yourself? Wouldn't you doubt the reality of your situation and do everything you could to pass the responsibility to someone else?

I'll tap my fingers impatiently and grumble about publishing schedules incessantly but I'll look forward to the release of the final volume - *The Last Dark*.

D.P. Prior says

Donaldson's always been a peculiar writer, often reaching for obscure words when a simple one would be better. Sometimes his choices are risible and draw too much attention to his attempts at craft; at other times they are spot on and refreshing.

He's also not shy of flaunting the advice most modern fantasy writers get about pace and starting with action. Pace is decidedly lacking from the first part of the book. I think there were about 143 pages of Linden Avery standing in a glade in Andelain trying to make up her mind what to do next. Imagine an unestablished author sending that to an agent!

There is, however, something magical and engaging about *The Chronicles*. Despite my criticisms, I couldn't stop going back and reading more. Yes, it's rife with fantasy-speak, too much introspection and frustrating pages of circular dialogue; but the themes of futility and despair, with their correlatives of a mystical self-surrender worthy of Jean Pierre de Caussade and enthralling.

The plot - when broken down and set apart from all the rambling - is incredible simple: a few show-piece encounters with various nasties. The real story is that unfolding within Linden Avery herself. Over-cooked at times, yes, but compelling nonetheless.

In spite of Linden's descent into despair, this story never quite reaches the emotional intensity of Morn Hyland in *The Gap Series*. There is something distancing the reader from the emotion, and I don't think I'd be the first person to suggest it's the language. Linden may be a doctor, and *Covenant* may be a novelist, but unless the reader is a lexicographer they're unlikely to get drawn into the characters; and even if they were, we all know people don't really talk like this or think like this (particularly when fleeing for their lives before some hideous bane).

What I do like, however, is Donaldson's willingness to go against the increasingly homogenised grain of modern fantasy. He takes a different approach, plums the depths of psychology at the expense of pace, and risks failure. To a large extent, in my reading, he succeeds. His was a world I wanted to keep returning to, and in spite of my observations above, I'm now forced to consider why that is, and whether or not the current trend in fantasy could learn something here.

Andrew says

Me, on previous book: "His stylistic quirks are... well, I can't say they're under control, but they're adequately curbed." You know, I think they *are* under control. Mostly. Donaldson does this thing where he starts a simile, nails one of its feet to the ground, and pushes it over backwards. "His hands made incomplete gestures like truncated supplications." NO THEY ACTUALLY *ARE* TRUNCATED SUPPLICATIONS. It drives me nuts. But then he also puts "may" where I want "might" and *that* drives me nuts, and I know it's just me -- the point is, Donaldson picks his words precisely and with care. He's aiming at effect, and most of the time, he gets me there. Occasionally he comes out with "surquedry" or "that dire fug" and I lose it, but -- fine, I'll say it. The bastard can write. Sometime in the past twenty years, he figured it out or I started paying attention. I won't swear which.

So this is the penultimate Covenant book, and things are really hotting up in the Land. Linden Avery has yanked Covenant back into mortal life, one of those things you're Really Not Supposed To Do (my caps), thus awakening the Worm of World's End (not my caps) and everybody has about a week left to finish their Christmas shopping. Thus, several mad races into and out of places after allies, power sources, and possible solutions.

I oversummarize, of course. We get: a couple of really very tense chase sequences; a couple of really very scary battle scenes; a lot of not-tense but *fraught* what-the-hell-do-we-do-now arguments... and it isn't cheap. By which I mean, this is not the third-hand fantasy gudge of "will he put aside his fear" (hint, the hero always puts aside his fear and finds magic in a giant burst of gosh-I-could-do-it-all-along). This isn't about fear, it's about doubt (and self-doubt) and trust. Linden Avery is a fuckup; she knows it; accidentally setting off Armageddon was a big hint in that direction. She has to keep moving anyway. The loops of second-guessing and fleeing/grabbing responsibility are what fucked-up people do. (They feel right to *me*, anyhow.) She *can* blast out magic in a giant burst of etc, and sometimes does, but she has to figure out what to *do* and what the cost will be. (Answer: usually irreparable.) Covenant isn't a deus ex machina either; he's just a person who has built some place to stand and trust. Their companions are, in various ways, broken and dealing with the same issues. All the plot threads reflect this, in various ways, and this is what good books are supposed to do. So I'm on board.

Smcfee says

The final Thomas Covenant series is improving as it goes. That isn't to say that the first two books weren't good, but Donaldson had to spend time early on setting up all the chess pieces and introducing the context, and now the narrative moves along more briskly. This book, not surprisingly, is about choices and consequences. It opens with Linden confronting the consequences of her actions; the resurrection of Thomas Covenant and the awakening of the Worm. Throughout the book, characters make decisions to act (and in a couple of cases, not to act), and the results are felt. People are profoundly altered, some suffer, some die, like any good SRD book really :).

All the things people love/hate are present; characters who wrestle with their demons, a high prose style that will have you scrambling for your thesaurus, and the existence on a level above the surface narrative of metaphor and metacontent. Often something happens and you may not think much of it, but then you realize that of the half dozen different ways Donaldson could have achieved his plot development he chose one in particular. It's a reason I hesitate to review this at all, after only one reading, since I feel there is a lot I am still missing. But I just wanted to throw something up without spoilers to encourage people that this book will be worth your time.

Only caveat, I wouldn't suggest tackling this prior to having read the first eight books (or at least the previous five). I imagine one could still enjoy it, but most people I think would be confused and would wonder what we all see in it. Apart from that, I highly recommend this book and now must hope nothing bad happens to our author in the next three years so I can see how it will all end.

Magill says

Book 3 of 4 and what changed for me to take this to a 2? I will still read book 4 and so, I suspect, will anyone who reads this review as they are as committed to putting this series to rest as I am.

Firstly, for the first 1/2 it was very hard to get into and every time I set it down it was a couple of days and a sense of duty to pick it up again. The 2nd 1/2? I just wanted to get the torture over with and read as much as I could, but things DID improve towards the end, I have to admit, the last 4 chapters (~100/575 pages) give me hope that things will improve in book #4.

Secondly, I am just so fed up with Linden. I didn't like her in the second trilogy and she was a big reason for my never re-reading that trilogy (and not keeping it in my personal library) even though the Caamora at the Grieve is one of the best scenes ever. And I wasn't too excited about her in this last series but I am now pretty disgusted with the whole thing. I quite grasp that despair and despite drain and destroy. I can understand that self-doubt and fear create indecision and limbo. But GEEZ LOUISE, woman, get a freakin' grip, or better yet get therapy! I simply cannot see how this doctor who was able to make all kinds of decisions and come to some sort of terms with her past is such a pathetic lame duck in the Land. Castigating yourself, considering yourself unworthy or tainted, does not give you a free pass from action. Enough with the self-pity and woe-is-me schtick - just stop that whining! It's not all about you.

And could someone explain to me why Covenant thinks that his leprosy somehow defines him... still? I mean, really. Really? You would think that he would have dealt with some of his issues over the eons, but apparently not.

A depressing book, an annoying book, with a seriously unpalatable main character who has no real redeeming characteristics at this point except she is still alive and far more likable characters are dead.

Cilfa says

I wholeheartedly agree with another reviewer here on GoodReads: Will someone pleaaaaase take the thesaurus away from mr. Donaldson!

I'm good at reading english, even if my active producing of this language is plain horrible. My vocabulary is very large and divers for a non-native speaker. But these books are just impossible to read without a dictionary. Well, let's be grateful he keeps repeating the dictionary words and it is a long book :-)

I listened to this book while working. The audioquality is OK, what I didn't like is that it was another narrator than for the other 8 books. With a totally different accent. Please don't do that! Characters in a book get a lot of their personality from the narrators voiceacting and changing this is disconcerting.

The Good:

This is an intense book. Starts awfully slow (and I mean SLOW) but when it at last gets going, it is one big rollercoaster. Donaldson does it again: He knows how to get us interested in a story in which you sometime are really really really annoyed with the main character.

How many times I'd loved to grab Linden Avery in her collar and shake some sense in her.

He does that too in the earlier books. Tomas Covenant is a real ass in the first one. Detestable. And while he gets better in the next books, he annoys the hell out of me. But this makes the main characters so incredibly realistic/believable.

Just imagine: you are transported from this world to a fantasyworld, with strange beings and people who

insist you are going to save them all. Would you just step up and say, right, let's start cracking?
No. Well I wouldn't. I would doubt and unbelieve ;-) and doubt some more. Myself and everybody else.
In fantasy, this aspect of human psychology is highly underlighted. Real people doubt. Most of them derive their strenght from doubt. Or fail. We all just fail, all the time, on some level. Failure may lead to great things. Because of failure and doubt we strive to be better, but really... we strive to 'not be in charge and be responsible for ending the world'.

Well, the world is ending, in this book. Absolutely. Just not in one big flash (what a short book it would have been). Linden is totally believable, annoying as she is, filled to the brim with crippling doubt and rage and, yes, despair. Whatever she's done, everything leads her to more despair. She strives to be better and just can't. This is very refreshing.

I love the character of Covenant, what he's become. Reading his parts is a joy. I missed him :-)

The adage "Joy is in the eyes of the beholder" is absolutely true. This book is ruthless on its characters. I've secretly and silently cursed the heavens blue after reading some parts of the book. I've cried and laughed. Stephen Donaldson hasn't lost his touch of creating wonderfull enthralling worlds that take youre breath away. He introduces new vista's he's never visited before.

When the book gets going, I really loved it.

The Bad.

Now that's the thing. When the book gets going. It doesn't for at least one third of the (very large) book. Said third is sloooooooooow. Boring boring boring and slow. Some parts of it are necessary for background on later developments, some are good for character building and Lindens slow spiral into despair and rage. But most of it is unnecessary wordiness. Not A Good Thing.

Later in the book there's another "gosh let's have endless slow discussions and do nothing" part. This is what made me give this book a 3 star instead of 4. The actionparts really deserve a 4,5 star, but not the book as a whole.

BTW: I loved having to use a dictionary, whatever I said in the start of this review. It's refreshing ;-)
Donaldson has gone far from his crude use of language in his Gap and less so in his Mordant books.

Skip Maloney says

I sometimes wonder, have always wondered, why, in the middle of reading a book by Stephen R. Donaldson, that I am continuing to read. Especially with his 30+-year-old saga about Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever. This is the 9th of what is purported to be 10 novels in the series, and from the start, back in the 70s, I've been struck by how dark they are; how, at each step along the way, Covenant, and you, as a reader, are beset with tragedies, large and small and a pervading sense of despair that anything will turn out OK. Yet on I read, page after page, book after book. Took him almost three years to get this out after the second book in these Final Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, and the "what's happened so far" section is about as long as any of the chapters.

I think what strikes the 'keep reading' chord in me is the texture of the world Donaldson creates; its totality. I forget things that have occurred almost on a page by page basis, but Donaldson will throw in a parenthetical phrase recalling an event or words spoken in the very first book, 30 years ago. The on-going story is remarkably connected, as if Donaldson knew from day one where it was going, even if we, as readers, are never quite sure, and keep reading, as a result.

Not recommended for everyone; not suitable to all tastes in literature, but short of death, nothing would ever

stop me from picking up this series finale and heading back out to The Land to find out what's happening.

Miguelito says

This book was an excruciatingly painful read and I'm a huge fan of the Chronicles of Thomas Covenant and a big fan of the Second Chronicles of Thomas Covenant. I flipped through the last 100 pages of Against All Things Ending because I couldn't take it anymore (and I'm a very patient reader).

If the fact that nothing happens in the first 100 pages of this book doesn't tell you to stay away from it, then nothing will. Seriously, they stand around in Andelain and talk for 100 pages.

Some of the most appealing parts of the prior series were the flawed and sympathetic characters, whose actions of self-sacrifice for the Land or for Thomas Covenant came out of love for the Land, whether those actions succeeded or failed (and so often failed, which helped with the sense of despair Donaldson was creating).

Now we're left with flawed characters who don't show it through their actions, but by simple repeating of how pathetic they feel, ad nauseam, from their POV (and that POV is almost entirely Linden Avery).

I was hesitant to pick up this book after the reading the second book of the Final Chronicles of Thomas Covenant. Now I'm sorry I did. I also know I won't be picking up the fourth and final book in the Final Chronicles. I don't think anything can save this train wreck.

Paul Martin says

Someone take the damned thesaurus away from Donaldson.

As much as I love his work, I hate to say it but I think he's peaked. Actually, I think he peaked with his Gap series. This new "Final Chronicles of Thomas Covenant" brings all the things I loved about the first two chronicles, but in a way that implies he was forced to write it.

I started reading "Lord Foul's Bane" when I was in 7th grade - pretty heady fare for someone of that age. The main character that the entire series is based on commits rape in the first 100 pages, and my first instinct was, "This is the *hero* of the series?!" Donaldson introduced me to the concept of an anti-hero and to the fact that the protagonist doesn't necessarily have to be a "good guy". For that alone, he's earned a spot on the "I'll give anything he writes a chance" shelf. But I'd be lying if I said I was sad that there's only one more book left in this series.

None of the characters feel like real people anymore. They seem to exist only to further the plot and are (to me, anyway) are written in such a way that I can't relate to them at all.

And for this final series, he's introduced not one, but TWO new races that have supposedly been around since the beginning of time, and just conveniently never mentioned. Feels too much like a deus ex machina or a retcon.

Either way, if you're a fan of Donaldson's work in general, or the Thomas Covenant series specifically, give this series a read, if only to get closure on the entire story.

Ryk Stanton says

Man, I cannot tell you how little I care about this book. I mean, I want to read it – I need to read it. This is book nine of a series that my dad and I started reading when I was a teenager, so I feel a great personal need to read all the books of the series. But it's too much. Too many characters, too many things going on, too much stuff ... and not in an epic, feel-good kind of way where I'm waiting for everything to come together in the end but in a wait-what-who's-that-what's-going-on-now-? way.

I remember loving the first three books when I was a kid. I very specifically remember riding the lawnmower and reading the second book in the series at the same time that I had to mow the lawn. These were the first books that I realized had a smell to them, had a feeling to them. Only real book readers will know what I'm talking about.

Looking back now, I realize that some of the names are pretty silly. The main antagonist's name is Lord Foul, the Despiser. Now in this book there is a character suddenly shows up that shows that Donaldson did not read the Harry Potter books: he calls her She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Really Stephen R Donaldson? Really?

And seriously, I just don't care. I want everybody to go read the first three books so we can talk about them. I'd love for some of you to read the second three books; they're worth reading. I can't recommend these last four books. Well, the first book was okay. The second book was tolerable. This book is ... ugh ... 32 hours of wasted time listening. And of course I'm going to get the next one – the last one – and I hope (against hope) that I don't feel cheated by this whole experience. I have a feeling I'm going to be disappointed, but I'll give it a chance.

One other note, and this deals with the narrator: Scott Brick narrated the first and second books, but there is a different narrator for this one. I don't know his name, but he's given Scottish accents to the giants and he cannot pronounce "covenant" correctly (Covenant being the last name of one of the main characters, so he says it often): he says kah-vin-int when it should be kuh-vin-int, and it made me cringe every time. I don't particularly like Scott Brick, but this guy made me miss him

Travis O. says

This is the penultimate book in the decade-spanning Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, Unbeliever, which is considered by a good many to be among the greatest fantasies ever written. The titular character, as you may know, is a bestselling-novelist, a divorcee, and a leper. And he's not on Earth anymore. But that's all books past. Given that this is book 9, you should know what you're getting in for with Donaldson's writing.

Since the first Chronicles, Donaldson has been working towards a great and more universal destruction of the Land (the faery world setting of the novel). In the Last Chronicles, which is comprised of The Runes of the Earth, Fatal Revenant, and the newest book, Against All Things Ending, Donaldson forwards his catastrophic mission, pitting the ever-swelling company of Linden Avery against an ever-swelling roll of

malevolent forces that don't seem to care that the Earth is Ending.

So the good guys are against all things ending. Right.

The story begins right where the last one left out. Literally. And then, unfortunately, tarries there for over a hundred pages as the characters just talk, but cover little ground. It's an unfortunate characteristic of the later books that almost everyone is cagey, over-strained, and miserable (except Liand, and Anele, both of whom have almost no idea about what is going on). They talk too much, and complain about how the world is ending, but they seem awful slow to actually act.

That complaint aside, and I caution that it is a constant complaint through almost two thirds of the books, Donaldson works his magic of construction fantasy spaces unlike anything you've ever read. This is where he is genius; the fabrication of utterly unreal spaces that bend and enrapture you. You'll finally understand what the Giants mean when they say "The Joy is in the ears that hear." Or, in this case, they eyes that read. Throughout the book, Donaldson's host journey to incredible settings and vistas that, frankly, I haven't found anywhere else in the fantasy genre. That is a huge point in the book's favor, given the bloated, self-pitying conversation that pervades much of it. I would say, frankly, that it's a decent counterbalance.

But the balance is thrown off by the very introversion that made the first Chronicles endearing; the character's sense of self (especially Linden Avery's) is so god-damned important that it eclipses everything else. Again, and again and again you'll find her repeating the same broken mantras about how hurt she is, or indecisive, or about how the things that are happening are unbelievable. It gets tiring, especially since we're not entirely sure why Covenant doesn't have his ring, and why he isn't acting. The paradoxical lock-in of the Humbled and other characters, excluding the Swordmainnir, is maddening at times, and at other times entirely unbelievable.

Covenant's presence in the book may be its saving grace. Given the nature of the series, he hasn't been entirely present for the last few books, but now that he's back, it's a waiting game as he is restored to himself slowly, becoming more interesting all the time. He is what makes the last half of the novel into the delight that it is--that part, apart from the others, is worthy of rereading. It's incredible, tense, and well written.

I wish I could say the same about the preceding three hundred pages.

But those environments are damn cool.

Against All Things Ending, which is the penultimate novel in the series I hold most dearly, is unfortunately a one-shot novel. Read through it on your way to The Last Dark, which may be an infuriating read when it finally releases. After the powerhouse that was Fatal Revenant, this book seems stretched, pulled beyond its limits of entertainment. If the last third wasn't so good, I would have a hard time recommending it to anyone. But I will and do recommend it to fans of the series, not only as a waypoint to the final book, but also for the settings, and for the corporeal outrage that is Thomas Covenant, who really is the Land's last hope.

Linden Avery is still too damn indecisive.

Tobin Elliott says

This is the review I've been dreading and anticipating, all at the same time.

If a book could be scored in the negatives, this would be that book. It's a horrible, fetid thing that just sits there.

For the first quarter of the book, the characters simply talk. Yes. Just. Bloody. Talk. They've reached Andelain. And now they must move on. But first, Donaldson must run every single character through his or her dialogue paces. Everyone must be heard. Everyone must blather, whine, complain, bitch and generally restate everything that's already been stated.

I mentioned that the first book in this (thankfully) final series should be subtitled *Arrogance*. The second book would be *Apprehension*. But this, the penultimate volume in this series, easily earns the subtitle *Agony*, some for the agonizing slowness of the book's pace. Some for the way each characters agonize over every simple decision. Some for the way each character has a question in their mind, a deep and abiding question that desperately needs an answer, but not one of them ever asks it directly, choosing instead to ask some oblique, barely connected question instead, then agonize over the fact that they didn't get the answer they wanted.

I swear Stephen Donaldson's Giant name must be something like Heavingwords Steamingpile or Shoveling Obscurewords or something like that.

Seriously. Imagine this.

Linden looked down at her boot. From the look on Covenant's mein, and with her healthsense, she saw he was aware. "Hell and Blood, Linden! Your boot! It's become...unfettered." Stave was at her side in a moment.

"Linden Avery," he said, his mein a rock. "You are the chosen. You must use the Staff of Law to correct this undoing. We cannot condone this abeyance."

Liand, the one and only Stonedowner, said, "Stave, you are Haruchai. YOu know this would be foolhardy. It must be corrected with the Wild Magic of the ring. She is the Ringthane."

Mahrthir stumbled to the ever-swelling group. "I am Mahrthir, Manethrall of the Ramen. We must call the Ranyhyn. It is only through their guidance that we shall overcome this most diabolical of hurdles."

Clyme said, "Mahrthir, you are Ramen. All your solutions cater to the horses from the Plains of Ra. This surely is a trick by the Despiser. Using the Staff will awaken She Who Must Not Be Named."

"That's Voldemort's sister," Galt added helpfully.

"I thank you all," Linden started, "but..."

Rime Coldspray interjected. "Galt and Clyme, you are the Humbled. I believe we have many giantish tales we can tell. Surely sometime in the next few months of the listening, we shall have an answer."

"Guys," Linden said. "Really, I..."

"Rime Coldspray, Ironfist and Swordmainnir, your words are anodyne to this conundrum, still, I don't believe..."

Linden stood up. "It's okay."

Stave said, "Linden? What dark sorcery is this?"

Linden ate some aliantha berries, their vivacious boon soothing her soul. "It was easy. I retied my laces."

"Surely not!" Covenant said. "Hellfire and damnation, Linden! You tied your own shoelace? DON'T TOUCH ME!"

And so on...

Yes, that's a joke, but seriously, it seems to get down to that level at times in this book.

In fact, there was a point about halfway through or so where I actually laughed out loud at the line that went something like, "These were people of action, unused to standing in one place for long." Seriously, almost snorted my coffee. The first half of the book is in two locations and they really don't move.

Seriously, Shoveling Obscurewords could have packed this story nicely into about 200 pages and spread it between the second and last books and not forced this torturous piece of crap on us.

I'd fully intended to read the four books back to back, but this one killed me. I'm reading a couple of other books before I dive back in one last time to the world of Thomas Covenant.

What a monstrous pile of shit.

Jeff says

What an awful awful awful awful book. I read it because it's the latest in a series that should have ended after the second trilogy - we are way past the point of diminishing returns here. Mr. Donaldson has always favored deeply flawed characters who choose to wallow in self-loathing even if it takes every bit of strength and determination they can muster, but this time he has gone far too far. Linden Avery has become a pathetic joke; no one could possibly hate themselves as much as she does (she's become a cutter no less!) and still have the will to draw breath. Sad sad sad. In the first trilogy, and to a lesser degree the second, Mr. Donaldson gave us a fascinating world filled with totally intriguing supporting characters (who've earned this book its one lonely star), though the main characters of Covenant and Avery are merely tolerable. Now he is in the process of gratuitously destroying that world and making the main characters utterly intolerable. And he's painfully drawing that out in a pointless tetralogy - like stabbing the helpless reader to death with a dull pushpin...ouch...ow...ouch...please...stop...please.....

Benjamin Chambers says

Make no mistake: among all the Thomas Covenant books (of which this is the 9th, and one more to come ~2013), this is the most difficult to read. Not for the prose or style (which has been called, by various people, "Epic," "Operatic," and "too d***ed wordy,") nor for the vocabulary (even the most astute readers tend to keep their dictionaries handy when reading a Donaldson tome), but for the sheer emotional impact it will

have on you.

The book is perfectly named. The ancient enemy of the Land, Lord Foul the Despiser, waged a physical war in the first Chronicles. In the Second chronicles, nature itself was mercilessly perverted in the form of the Sunbane, which destroyed the natural order of the seasons. In the Final Chronicles, the nature of time and space themselves are under attack, as Lord Foul attempts to end his eternal imprisonment by destroying reality itself.

In a fight to save the very fact of reality and existence, Thomas Covenant, Linden Avery, and their companions are forced to make extreme sacrifices. You will be horrified by the cost of fighting despair; but you will also exult in the victories gained.

With this addition, the Final Chronicles have finally surpassed the previous series, and rival Donaldson's GAP Cycle as his magnum opus. Now, all that's left is the final chapter ("The Last Dark," due out in 2013) and it will be complete.

Rob Hermanowski says

I re-read this, the third book of "The Last Chronicle of Thomas Covenant", and the ninth Covenant book overall, in anticipation of the tenth, and final Covenant book, "The Last Dark", to be released in October, 2013. This is the unabridged audio version, read by Tim Gerard Reynolds (not Scott Brick, Donaldson's usual narrator).

Having read all the previous books in this series over the last year or so, I am struck by how incredibly precise and wonderfully detailed Donaldson has been throughout. Events and seemingly minor characters in the first books reemerge in fascinating ways throughout the long saga, up to and including this penultimate book. This is complex, detailed and amazing epic fantasy. Should book 10 hold up to the promises of the earlier volumes, this series will likely eclipse Tolkien as my favorite work of high fantasy fiction.

A word on the narrator - Reynolds is a talented storyteller, but it is rather unfair to compare him to Scott Brick, narrator of five earlier books. Brick has created the definitive, though incomplete, Chronicles of Thomas Covenant on audio - hopefully he will get the opportunity to complete the entire series one day.

Now, just waiting for October, 2013 to arrive...
