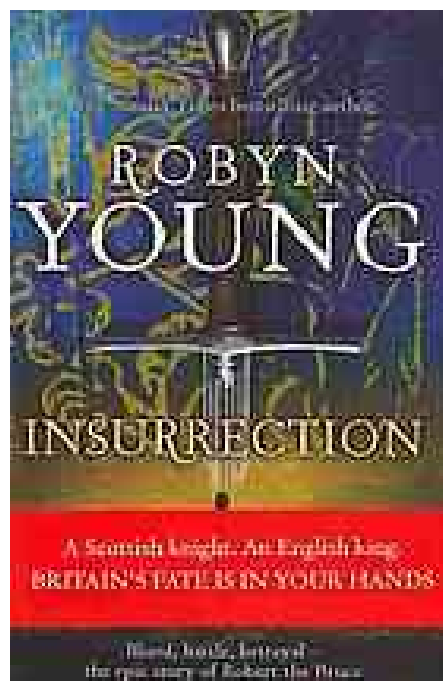




Insurrection

Robyn Young

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Insurrection

Robyn Young

Insurrection Robyn Young

1286 A.D. Scotland is in the grip of the worst winter in living memory. Some say the Day of Judgement has arrived. The King of Scotland rides out from Edinburgh into the stormy night. On the road he is murdered by one of his own men, leaving the succession to the throne wide open. Civil war threatens as the powerful Scottish families jostle for power, not knowing that King Edward I of England has set his own plans for conquest in motion. But all is not destined to go Edward's way. Through the ashes of war, through blood feuds and divided loyalties, a young squire will rise to defy England's greatest king. His name is Robert Bruce. Insurrection is the first in an addictive and action-packed trilogy in the tradition of Conn Iggulden, Bernard Cornwell and Manda Scott.

Insurrection Details

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Author : Robyn Young

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From Reader Review Insurrection for online ebook

Teo says

O s?-mi lipseasc? mult "Rebeliunea". FOARTE MULT!
în a?teptare pentru a doua carte

Beorn says

I'm not sure where to start in dissecting this book so if this all appears a little scattergun, bear with me.

The thing I most felt about Robyn Young after reading the opening book to her other series, the eponymously titled Brethren: An Epic Adventure of the Knights Templar, was that she was undoubtedly a talented author but one too prone to keeping herself on a leash. That said, the promise I saw in Brethren led me to believe, or *hope*, that this book would mark the start of a new series which manifested that great promise.

Sadly, I was mistaken.

The sensation of Brethren was one of where there was such promise of a great read, it was just so restrained that it was underwhelming. However in this instance, while it was still easily readable and pleasant to digest, there was little remarkable about this story.

It feels like half the action is told through the form of flashbacks due to the semi staccato timeline throughout; sometimes there's even flashbacks within flashbacks. There are also instances where key battles - such as the battle of Stirling Bridge - are skipped and the events of which told through hazy recollection.

Of the characters in the book, the majority of the key players such as Robert The Bruce (or Robert Bruce as he's known in the story) and James Stewart are relatively one-dimensional & languid; King Edward is fairly enjoyable though not explored anywhere near enough for such a key protagonist in my opinion. As for the rest, they feel distinctly generic filler roles occasionally having one or two lines of import before disappearing back into the murk of seeming inconsequential.

Overall this is an okay book but distinctly bland and cardboard; flat, average and easily digestible yet without any real longevity.

I'm leaning towards returning to the Brethren trilogy over continuing with this series if I'm honest.

2 out of 5 is admittedly a little harsh, if I could, I'd probably give it more like 2.5/5, or to give it a percentage, around the 60% mark.

Alexszollo says

De multe ori, prefer lectura unui roman istoric scris cu lux de am?nunte urm?ririi unui film. Ador senza?ia pe care o am citind descrierile intrigilor de curte, discursurilor figurilor importante ale vremurilor trecute ?i scenelor de lupt? viscereale.

Sco?ienii m-au fascinat întotdeauna. E ceva în spiritul ?la mândru, neplecat al lor, care se simte pân? ?i-n

gâjâiala aia inconfundabil? a accentului sco?ian, ceva care m? fascineaz?. ?tiam numele lui Robert Bruce interesat fiind de William Wallace, revolu?ionarul sco?ian f?cut celebritate de filmul lui Mel Gibson, „Braveheart”. Îns? povestea lui Bruce îmi era cvasinecunoscut?.

Noroc cu cartea lui Robyn Young, care mi-a f?cut cuno?tin?? cu aceast? figur? legendar? a istoriei Sco?iei într-un roman absolut fascinant.

Young este o voce r?sun?toare a fic?iunii istorice, despre care auzisem o gr?mad? de lucruri faine înainte s? încep cartea asta, ?i chiar m? bucur s? spun c? mi-a dep??it toate a?tept?rile. Trecutul plin de revolt? al sco?ienilor a prins via?? în mintea mea. Am putut urm?ri parcursul unui erou improbabil, care-?i caut? perpetuu drumul prin lumea marcat? de conflict în care se mi?c?. Leg?turile cu miticul rege Arthur sunt un punct forte al c?r?ii, despre care, îns?, nu dau mai multe detalii, pentru c? vreau s?-l savura?i singuri. Exist? unele voci care spun c? femeile nu pot scrie fic?iune istoric? f?r? un element romantic extrem de puternic. Ei bine, Robyn Young este femeia care d?râm? din temelii acest stereotip. Are femeia asta ni?te descrieri ale scenelor de lupt?, de zici c? se trage direct din mândrii ?i ferocii sco?ieni. Lua?i cartea asta ?i l?sa?i-v? purta?i de ea oricând sim?i?i nevoia s? evada?i într-o lume în care curajul nu e o virtute tâmbi?at?, ci confruntarea cu moartea, disperarea ?i agonia în cele mai pure st?ri. Ve?i avea ocazia s? citi?i povestea unui om care-?i caut? destinul, ?i care e g?sit de acest destin. Dar nu v? spun mai multe, c? v? stric pl?cerea. Am devorat-o în 6 ore, într-o c?l?torie cu trenul. Asta ca s? vede?i cam cât e de captivant?. De ce n-are Goodreads mai multe stele?

Sceadugenga says

Insurrection is the first book in Robyn Young's latest trilogy based on the life of Robert Bruce. I liked the Brethren trilogy so I was looking forward to reading this book as well. Young does not disappoint, spinning a tale of adventure and political intrigue set against the backdrop of King Edward I's Welsh and Scottish campaigns. The book deals with Bruce's childhood and first years of knighthood giving us insight to his various personal relationships that would later shape this enigmatic and troubled man.

I found this book to move at a somewhat slower pace than the previous trilogy, that's not to say it's any less interesting or appealing, however, quite the opposite. Young is a master at weaving lush descriptive tapestries of landscapes bringing the Scottish countryside to life and she draws us in with her description of a banquet or the carnage of a battle's aftermath. The book is written in a style that will appeal to history buffs. The prose is flowing (although fans of Cornwell and Scarrow beware this is not a romping high-octane page-turner and the battle scenes are less gritty and claustrophobic) and cerebral, the reader is drawn into the story like a river voyage - meandering, flowing with a bit of whitewater interspersed here and there, all the while enjoying the ride and the view. The plot does tend to lag now and again during the bits dealing with politics but it never gets to the point of wanting to flip ahead or stop reading. One of the things I like about Young is her ability to insert "prophecies" and "secret societies" into the text without seeming hokey or turning it into the latest conspiracy theory bestseller.

The characters are well developed and believable, you can tell Young has done her research and is passionate about her subject. I always say that one sign of a well-written historical fiction novel is that once finished I'm instantly off in search of more material either to brush up or deepen my knowledge and this book has definitely been the case. I also appreciated the glossary and bibliography in the appendices. On a personal note, I was thankful that the romantic interludes were kept to a minimum in this work, I found it excessive and tedious in Young's prior trilogy. Overall I enjoyed the book and I recommend it to anyone with a passion for well-written HISTORICAL fiction. As I said before this book probably won't appeal though to rabid fans of Cornwell, Scarrow, Severin et al.

Krista Baetiong Tungol says

Engaging and imaginative, this first book in Robyn Young's The Insurrection Trilogy tells the story of Robert Bruce before he became King of Scotland. Young Robert takes center stage here and in the midst of political chaos in Scotland is introduced as brave and ambitious yet fallible: a man torn between loyalty and duty, lured by lust and adventures, and reined in by his conscience and sense of honor.

I'm not quite familiar with his bio (other than he is the real *Brave Heart*), and so it's a little refreshing to know him in this light—too raw and too human. I didn't appreciate Robert wavering with his ideals at first, but the author has let me understand the context of his political struggles with her persuasive storytelling. And while there are also liberties taken by the author that allowed her fictional narration to stream along with some facts in history, i.e. (view spoiler), it added to the flavor of that period and helped reinforce the characterization of Robert the Bruce in my opinion.

The only thing I didn't quite relish is the timeline shift every other chapter or so. There is often a "throwback" moment for some of the characters that drags us off to another distant time, that it gets a bit confusing to follow if you happen to skip dates like I sometimes do. Other than that, I appreciate this glimpse of Robert as a vibrant young man and warrior and am eager to find out how Robyn Young will go on with the rest of his story.

Paula Lofting says

This is Ms Young's fourth historical novel and second series. Robert the Bruce is the grandson and son of men of the same name, men who have stood in Scotland's spotlight for generations. This story is for him and begins in the spring of his youth. Ms young begins her story by opening it with a prologue; Edward I's victory in Gascony and he has the book, the Prophecies of Merlin which is an embedded theme throughout the book. It then launches into the first chapter 24 years later when the King of Scotland rides out from Edinburgh into the stormy dark. On the road he is murdered by one of his own men, leaving the succession to the throne wide open. The king's death is as a stone thrown into a pool, the ripples spreading far and wide. Civil war threatens as powerful Scottish families jostle for power, not knowing that Edward, King of England has set his own plans in motion. For twenty years, Edward has nurtured a fierce vision of conquest and this vision has sprung from the words of an ancient prophecy - that will change the face of Britain forever. Robert, the young Scottish noble is sent to Edward's court to pay homage and learn the ways of the nobles and is lured into an oath to serve the English king unto death and help him fulfill his desire to be the prophecy's fulfillment. But all is not going to go Edward's way and when Robert finds himself at conflict with himself and his oath, he comes to earn the enmity of the men who once considered him loyal a loyal Knight of the Dragons.

This book takes awhile to get going but when it did it soared. I want to give it 4 and a half stars, mainly because the ending I found, fell flat, and this was a bit of a disappointment. As you can't give half stars, I'm posting it as 5. It's really pleasing to find a book of this calibre. I have read *Brethren* by Robyn Young which was her first novel and I liked it, but this book is something else indeed. Ms young's writing has taken on a new league and her literary style is genius. You can tell she had definitely matured, she wrote *Brethren* when she was only 24 and is now 37 and her maturity shows in her writing. I truly felt in awe of her prose and swept up in this epic re-telling of Robert the Bruce. William Wallace, that other famous Scottish rebel, has a cameo part and I felt glad that he did not overshadow Bruce's story in anyway. Robyn has definitely done her research and I felt that for the most part she remains true to the history of the time and place. The thing I liked about the story was that she added a little 'plot' the Merlin Prophecy and it didn't seem too ridiculous or

obscure. A lot of historical novelists get carried off on a chronological what happened next type feel to a book, with this, I didn't feel that it lacked a theme and that's what made it interesting in my opinion.

The one thing I found that it did lack and this is where it loses that half a star, her character's, especially Robert himself, lacked depth. And I felt that Ms young missed a really good opportunity to show more of his character when she missed out scenes between his wife and himself. We meet Isobel briefly when she gives birth to Bruce's daughter Marjorie. I felt cheated out of some romance which is a place, I feel, characters shine the most. Emotional scenes there were a plenty, but the author did not use these moments to show us the real depth of the man. I felt the characters true natures were kept from us and I would have like to have seem more than one dimensions to them. I like to feel that I know the characters in a book, the main protagonists at least. I felt I hardly knew Robert however, having said that, it did not spoil the story at all. Lastly, the story rose to a crescendo, but then went flat and at the end I was left feeling somewhat flat myself.

On the whole, this book is beautifully written and the sequels promise to be even better. I highly recommend this book for historical fiction lovers. Great stuff!

Ross Hamilton says

I read Robyn Young's first trilogy, about the fall of the Templar Knights with both interest and trepidation. My concern was the story was that it centred around a great secret held by the Templars, a theme I really thought had been done to death. Fortunately the secret was not the hoary one of protecting the line of Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene, but one of uniting the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths. That was more believable.

What I particularly liked about Young's writing was the authentic voice she brought to the work, clearly the product of much research. That research is briefly mentioned in the Author's Note at the end of Insurrection.

I became a little concerned early in reading after seeing the Prophecies of Merlin and the Arthurian story being mentioned. Oh no, I thought. Not another attempt to retell Arthur. But Edward I's interest in the prophecies and certain relics is more a backdrop. The real story is that of bringing Robert the Bruce to life.

Since her debut with Brethren, I believe Robyn Young's story telling has continued to develop, making Insurrection an interesting and entertaining read. But it was the Author's Note that contained the real surprises for me, revealing Edward Longshanks's interest in all things Arthurian, to the point of building his own Round Table. Those facts helped put the use of the Athurian legend into context. To quote the thoughts of Longshanks from the novel:

"Men needed legends – something to aspire to beyond the toil and drudgery of daily life, something golden and glimmering above the grey of worldly existence. It was what set fire in their blood."

Young also provided one of the best, succinct explanations of the role of the author, that I have seen: "a novelist has to create the motivation that lie behind the actions of characters in order to make readers believe."

This is a story of bitter family feuds, civil war, betrayal, insurrection and the struggle for a crown and freedom.

Readers who enjoy a riveting story with believable characters will enjoy Insurrection.

Lisa says

I really thought I'd like this as it read really well, with some great reviews. Unfortunately right from the start I struggled with it. I just couldn't settle into a rhythm and none of the characters stood for me. It's clearly written well enough, just not in a style I resonated with. Not sure about a real book, but in digital there was no "page break" to tell you were somewhere else or some time further down the track, so that didn't help. I felt a little all over the place because of that. I persisted, and as much as I love the era and want to know more, I won't continue the series. This is the second novel for me, the other being *Bretheren*, so I think I will count my losses and move on.

John says

I am a relative newcomer to the historical fiction genre. For a long time, I was rightfully nervous to jam together my love of storytelling with my first true love of history. Steve Berry's *Templar Legacy* was first to charm me to the magic that results in lightly weaving (and later caveating) make-believe to historical fact. And since reading it, I have been on a bender of such books. This bender, I believe, reached a crescendo with Robyn Young's *Insurrection*.

The Ancient and Medieval Historical Fiction book club recommended *Insurrection* as one of its June 2013's picks. I am so glad it did. I finished the epic last night and its intricate depth of character, command of vocabulary, and description of feeling and place has left me speechless. The research, writing, and editing the author must have done just to lay the groundwork of the story strikes me almost as legendary as what the story's main character, Robert Bruce, underwent in the first part of what will be three novels. I am admittedly an easy grader, but *Insurrection* got a rare five stars from me.

Starting with Robert as a boy in-training to ride a horse (the author reportedly did the same training to obtain Robert's perspective on the saddle), the story progresses through the major events of the early Scottish Wars of Independence fought between the disbanded Scots and (rightfully humanized-not-like-in-the-movie-*Braveheart*) King Edward.

About half-way through the book, we find Robert a widower with infant daughter Margorie. The scene Young portrays underscores how precarious the whore of History actually can be: The much preoccupied Earl Robert is traveling to Carrick to try to reclaim the loyalty of his vassals. Robert had just "switched sides" (and oaths) between England and Scotland, and lost most of his title and prestige in England, along with the loss of the trust of his peers in Scotland compliments of his prior actions. On the journey to Carrick, Baby Margorie is strapped in a roughshod crate on a listless horse. Who could contemplate at the time that from this diminutively treated baby girl could ever be seeded the Royal House of Stuart, whose kings reigned over the melding embryo of the Anglosphere, which arguably serves as one of the most important forces that has shaped today's world.

Some reviews for *Insurrection* take issue that passive readers will find it slow or confusing. Titles like *Earl of this* and *Duke of that* are admittedly bandied-about. But I found that Young consistently put real person names with titles in the same paragraph to assist the reader in what is going on and who is who. Other reviews have detested the time *Insurrection* spends on the witch Affraig or Merlin. Even though I have little patience for fairy tales, and was circumspect when they first occurred, I found Young tightly leveraged these more fanciful elements in ways that did not damage historical facts. Instead, Affraig, Edward's infatuation

with Merlin, and other “tall tales” that were interspersed in the novel served to motivate me to find out more about the history of Scotland during this time.

Insurrection does require active contemplation and attention while reading. Yet its vastness should add to its rating and not detract from it. The story made me want to know more about Robert Bruce, his life and mysterious times, as well as the Scottish Wars of Independence. If you want a book that makes one stay up late searching the Internets about long ago battles and the weird course of our Western history, Insurrection is a book for you.

Helen says

Insurrection is the first in a trilogy telling the story of Robert the Bruce, who was King of Scotland in the 14th century. The second book, *Renegade* is available now and the third, *Kingdom*, will be out this summer. In this first novel, beginning in 1286, we meet Robert as a young boy in a Scotland torn apart by the sudden and unexpected death of King Alexander III. The King has died without a male heir, leaving the succession to the throne undecided. The Bruces believe they have a strong claim, but they face competition from their enemies, John Balliol and the Comyns.

In England, meanwhile, King Edward I is forming his own plans for Scotland. Beginning a search for four ancient relics that will enable Merlin’s Last Prophecy to be fulfilled, Edward enlists the help of a group of young noblemen known as the Knights of the Dragon. When Robert, sent to England to restore his family’s reputation, is approached by the Knights, he must decide exactly where his loyalties and ambitions lie.

Insurrection is exactly the sort of historical fiction I love. As someone who reads a lot of historical novels I often find that they either focus too much on romance and court intrigue or are too action-packed with one long battle scene after another. I had neither problem with this book; I found it to be a fascinating, atmospheric tale of kings and knights, witches and soldiers, treachery, murder and war. The descriptive writing is wonderful and the battles (yes, there are a few) are well written and easy to follow. I admit that my heart sank when I discovered this was yet another book with an ‘ancient prophecy’ storyline, but I needn’t have worried because it is only one small part of the plot and I thought it actually felt quite plausible as it’s true that Edward I really did have a fascination with Arthurian legend.

Robert the Bruce is a name I’ve always been intrigued by without really knowing much about him. I have a memory from years ago of going out with my parents one Sunday afternoon on what my dad always called ‘an aimless drive’ and ending up in Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland where we noticed a sign pointing to ‘Robert the Bruce’s Cave’ – the cave where Robert supposedly went into hiding from Edward I in 1306 and was famously inspired by a spider weaving its web. Not one of the most exciting places I’ve ever visited (there wasn’t even a spider in sight when we went to look inside the cave), but it has stayed in my mind all these years later!

Because I knew so little about Robert and this period of history, I felt that I was really learning a lot from *Insurrection*. Everything felt accurate and thoroughly researched and although I had to concentrate to keep track of the complex politics and relationships between the characters, I was never bored. At the end of the book there’s a character list, glossary of medieval terms and a chart showing the order of succession to the Scottish throne, all of which I found useful.

Of course, this is a work of fiction rather than non-fiction so there are times when the author doesn’t stick exactly to the known facts. For example, the deaths of Alexander III and his granddaughter Margaret, Maid of Norway may have had more innocent causes than those described in the book. The Knights of the Dragon

is also a fictional order, although the men who belong to it really existed. Robyn Young explains some of her choices in her author's note so that we can see where she has used her imagination to fill in some gaps and provide motivations for the actions of her characters.

I know this book will not suit all tastes in historical fiction (some readers might dislike the inclusion of prophecies and witchcraft or will be disappointed by the lack of significant female characters and the fact that Robert himself is not always easy to like) but I absolutely loved it. I'm looking forward to reading *Renegade* and *Kingdom* and also exploring Robyn Young's earlier trilogy on the Knights Templar.

Ashlyn says

I felt no real attachment to any of the characters, but it was still sufficiently interesting that I will read the next novel.

S.J.A. Turney says

Insurrection immediately took me by surprise. All I really knew of it was that it was a story of Robert Bruce. Now like most of you (I suspect) my knowledge of this great historic figure is fairly limited to the fact that he was King of Scotland, that he won at Bannockburn in 1314, and some guff about sitting in a cave and watching a spider spin a web - oh and Braveheart. Actually, that's not quite true. Being a Yorkshireman, I also knew that Bruce was actually of the DeBrus family that came from Guisborough near my home and were originally about as Scottish as Kaiser Wilhelm II. But you get my point. My knowledge was sketchy and mostly revolved around his kingship.

And so it intrigued me to discover that Insurrection is a story that begins with Robert as a teenager, freshly returned from fosterage in Ireland to his family's lands in Scotland. In fact, the story begins more with a little background to Edward I of England and the events leading to the death of King Alexander of Scotland. But I'm confusing the issue there.

Insurrection tells the story of Robert from his youth in a safe, stable Scotland, through the period of disaster following the death of Alexander, and through the wars and feuds with the Comyn and Balliol families that lead to Robert siding with the hated English during the first wave of troubles.

I won't tell the story beyond that. If you want spoilers, read the book. What I will do is tell you why you should do that.

As with Robyn's Brethren trilogy, she has not simply told the history, but interwoven a creative new story within the web of the historical fact, turning this from a straight history book to a fresh and much more personal novel.

Among the threads of Edward and Robert's story are echoes of the Arthurian legends which, while not central to the tale, are important enough to the characters to inform their actions. This additional facet not only helps to deepen the story and flesh out the characters, but also helps to fill in some of the historical gaps in the reasons for their actions.

To me, the greatest strength of the novel is the fairness levelled at the various sides. There is a great tendency when talking of William Wallace, Robert Bruce and Edward - the Hammer of the Scots - to paint the Scots

as heroic, hard-done-by highlanders in kilts and woad (thank you Mel Gibson) and the English as stony-faced robots seeking only pleasure in the destruction of the Scottish way of life. Not so Robyn's treatment.

Robyn has recognised immediately that the nobles on both sides of this war were almost all of Norman descent and were far more similar than they were different. The Scottish lords are fractious and argumentative, half of them supporting the English over their own people, many of them hating each other more than the English. Robert Bruce is, of course, no exception. In fact there are times when the reader despairs over Robert's actions - a sign that the character has a truly real feel. There are no clear-cut good guys and bad guys in the story.

Insurrection is not a short book - be prepared for a sizeable read but, given that, the story races by at such pace that it seems much shorter. An exciting and involving story, very well written, the book should find a place on your shelves. Read it and finally push the Hollywood glam of Braveheart out of your mind.

Martin Lake says

This is the first of Robyn Young's books I have read but it won't be the last. It is historical fiction of the highest order.

I must confess to not knowing much about Robert the Bruce. This novel tells the story of a complex man caught in a maelstrom of events which shaped his life and, eventually, that of two kingdoms.

Robyn Young is a fine writer who weaves plot and character in a subtle and satisfying manner.

Bruce is forged by history and then goes on to forge it. The young Bruce is confronted with conflicts of loyalty and ambition which others may not have considered conflicts at all. The fact that he did consider them so, and the decisions he makes regarding them, stem from his own complex character. They also contribute to his development both as a man and a leader.

There is much good writing in the book. Here is one acutely observed description I can't resist quoting. 'The weapon was sticky with blood, the smell of it like old pennies held too long in the hand.' Young is adept at using senses to evoke an era which was both fresher and more squalid than today.

The novel darts back and forth in time which I don't much care for and which I don't think adds much to plot or narrative. I liked the idea that Edward used the prophecies of Merlin as a motive for his brutal invasions of Wales and Scotland. However, I imagine that he would have used the prophecies as a cloak for his naked ambition. Except that maybe Edward knew deep down that the best way to delude others is to delude oneself first.

There are some excellent supporting characters in this novel and I look forward to reading more about them as much as about Bruce himself.

I would have loved to give this book 4.5 stars but will have to content myself with 4 stars instead.

I have quoted from Robyn Young as the title of this piece because I believe it sums up the novel so exactly.

I look forward to reading the sequel which is out in August 2012.

Marina says

The first one in a trilogy, this is the beginning of the story of Robert Bruce, the man who would unite Scotland against the English invaders and take the throne.

"Insurrection" tells the story of Robert's youth, from his days as 11 years old boy, training to become a knight, to his time in King Edward's court, where he befriends a group of young men known as The Knights of the Dragon, to the choice he makes to break with his English friends and patrons, to go against his father and take part in the rebellion led by a young warrior, a son of a knight, named William Wallace. This is also the story of Edward, exiled in his youth, he returns to England to become a king, but his ambitions are far greater - following the prophecies of Merlin, translated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, he wishes to unite all the British kingdoms under one king - himself. To do that, he needs 4 relics, belonging to Brutus, the founder of Britain - the staff of St. Malachy from Ireland, the Stone of Destiny from Scotland, the Crown of Artur from Wales and the Sword of Mercy from England.

This is a brilliant book, very well written, with a well defined plot and a sense of time and place, telling the age-old story of growing up and making one's own path in the world.

Marita says

I know next to nothing about Scots history. This novel, the first of a trilogy, was an excellent introduction. It is beautifully written with wonderfully vivid descriptions of sights, smells and sounds which draw one into a different time and space. I love the qualification of colours in the book: spice-brown hair, ruby-red glass, plum-dark wine, wine-red sleeves, etc. It is very atmospheric, and Robyn Young adds an element of mystery to some of the deaths by suggesting foul play. This sense of mystery is augmented by Arthurian legend, prophecies, curses and an old crone weaving the future. The author however does not indulge in these fantasies, but uses them just enough to be interesting. There are adventures and several skillfully told battles, but if you require some romance you may be disappointed.

Paula says

I've never read one of Young's books previously and now I'm wondering why. Full of historical detail (I'm a McLean, we supported the Bruce so interesting twists to family legends) and action.

Terri says

Lightning strikes twice!

There was a book I read this year, not Insurrection, a different one. The first lines of the review for that book went something like this "these are the kinds of historical fiction books that I dream of finding". And I meant it even though I gave that other book 4 stars and found it a little flawed.

It is hard for me to explain how I can rave about a book and give it 4 stars instead of 5. Perhaps it is this...The historical fiction books I dream of finding appeal more to my taste in writing skill and scene description and have less to do with action and entertainment factors. To me, high excitement and human drama is not everything.

Other authors have thrilled me with that near perfect or perfect combination, but they don't always come in abundance.

I did not think then when I found the earlier book, that a few short months later I would find another book of my dreams only this time it would be a 5 star read for me and I would be telling others that it is "my perfect book".

As an avid reader, perfect books are as rare for me as lightning striking twice in the one place. In this case, the second bolt of lightning came with Robyn Young's *Insurrection*. The first book in her *Insurrection* trilogy. An epic read. Grandiose, thrilling, addictive. Like all classy epics should be.

I have seen Young's books around over the years. Picked up *Brethren* (the first in her *Brethren* Trilogy and her first novel) once in a bookstore and put it down again and never revisited the author again. I do not know why I overlooked her for so long, but I have found her now and I plan on reading every historical fiction she produces. I am hooked to her wonderful style and have not felt this way about an author of an historical fiction series since discovering C.J. Sansom's wonderful *Matthew Shardlake* Series. His books I treasure for the same reasons that I now treasure *Insurrection*.

Like Sansom's books, *Insurrection* is layer upon layer of atmosphere. A descriptive depth that I always respond to with great admiration because it is not easy to do well. For many authors it can become waffle or can be classed as dragging on, but *Insurrection* was not one of those to me. Maybe it is for others? Who knows. But for my taste it was exquisitely worked detail and I will eat that style up all day and night.

This is a book of espionage, political intrigue, betrayal, conniving, vendettas, grudges, rivalry and clandestine meetings in dark wooded Glens. Do not expect a book built around battles and action because you won't get it. This book is built around the stunning land of Scotland and the people of power who helped to tear it apart and put it back together, only to tear it apart again. It is not a story of romance, passion and intimate relationships. It is a story of the secret schemes and dreams of the men who found themselves caught up in the dawn and early days of the Wars of Scottish Independence.

There are two techniques that the author used that I must applaud. One is the way she wrote battles. They are some of the most stylishly graphic battle scenes I have ever read. Magnificently written battle overviews that put you sometimes at the end of the battle first, where the dead lay strewn two deep across the field or sinking in the sucking mud of the burn, the rivers full of bodies, the air rank with the stink of war. You are shown what man can do to each other in battle and in hand to hand combat, before they have even done it on the page. I thought this was brilliant.

The other technique I liked was to give the reader snapshots of some strangers' lives, deaths, survival. Characters who are nobody in the story and pop up to give you a glimpse inside the minor player. They are given names, friends, personalities. They could be thirsty, frightened, unamoured Scottish footmen, bracing their spears as a line of mounted and armoured knights charge, only to then see a wall of Welsh archers form up behind them. Or the soldiers on watch at a remote keep that is overrun by enemy under the cover of darkness. I loved these moments in time. These vignettes of the common man or woman as they react and respond to territorial skirmishes that they had no choice in.

I simply can not wait to read the next book in this series, *Renegade*, and I have everything crossed that lightning will strike a third time.

Note - I did an Author Interview with Robyn Young on my Blog in late May 2013. To read the interview please go here; <http://ancientandmedievalmayhem.blogs...>

Nate says

Ugh, I don't know what happened with this one. All of the stuff I like seemed to be in store for me; I love British middle ages stuff and this always seemed like a compelling period in time. Still, I just found myself making painfully slow progress with this book and after about three hundred pages I gave up. The author can certainly write and is great at conjuring vivid images. She also clearly knows the people and events of this period pretty thoroughly. I guess my main problem was that none of the characters really stood out for me, after so many pages I just couldn't find the will to keep reading and find out what happens to them. Not helping matters was the "ancient relic hunt/prophecy" storyline the book seemed to be heading towards. I just was not in the mood for that, although I generally can enjoy that kind of stuff. It's weird, because I went kind of back and forth initially between enjoying the story and experiencing these periods where I just reading the words and not really ingesting them. Unfortunately however, these periods became more frequent and I just stalled out. I really have to stress that although I didn't finish this book I wouldn't try to turn anyone away from it, the author unarguably knows her stuff and can write very well; I just somehow didn't mesh with this one.

Sanne says

Insurrection is the romping start of the epic life story of Robert the Bruce. The story is high pace and told with passion and eye for detail. I was immediately drawn into this retelling of the eventful life of the Bruce, after it won my heart in the prologue. I'm such a sap for medieval knighthood and here was a wonderful scene of a 13th century tournament to start me off. The rest of the book did not disappoint either. Full of political intrigue, military campaigns and wonderful battle scenes alternated with tales of magic, Arthurian myth and a mysterious knightly order... I especially like Young's inclusion of (parts of) the Arthurian myth. I thought it added an extra dimension to the story.

Young is a master in writing about the complex political and military events of late medieval Britain. She manages to capture it all, clearly, making it easy to grasp even for those not familiar with this period of history, without simplifying the events beyond recognition. The action scenes were very well written and I found myself on the edge of my seat when reading them. Yet other parts of the story felt underdeveloped. I was disappointed with the glossing over of (view spoiler).

Another aspect of the story that could have been developed better was the character of Robert in the first half of the novel. There's a lot happening to Robert in his youth, and the people around him steer him in certain directions. Yet I had no idea what Robert wanted. I missed a sense of urgency in him, or an inner drive that made him do what he did in the first half of the novel. That's the reason that in the first half of the novel, I liked king Edward a whole lot more. He had a clear goal and drive to get what he wanted. In the second half, Robert is presented a dilemma: (view spoiler) I thought that dilemma was worked out nicely, with a good built-up and dramatic resolution. I felt the story pick up pace, and the character of Robert became more interesting as he was forced to start making choices himself.

THE WRITING

I like Young's style. She's very descriptive, at times flowery, with loads of detail of medieval life. However, there were instances where it didn't work as at times her descriptions get away from her. For example: "He could see ladders being carried by lines of men and the weapons in their raised fists weren't swords or spears,

but axes, hammers and picks, as if they were a mad horde of labourers rushing in to start a day's work." (p. 243)

The image conjured up by that description is quite funny, but probably not the feeling she was going for when describing the enemy storming the castle.

Futhermore, forgetting at times that descriptions are used to evoke images, and are not to be used for description's sake only, some descriptors are turned into empty phrases by their repeated use. All medieval halls are "cavernous" and oodles of things are "garish in the sunlight". Red wine is "scarlet", "ruby-red" or (my favorite) "plum-dark". Why can't red wine be just red?

Though most of the time, her writing evokes the period very well, and is able to grip the reader. I spend a few nights staying up late, unable to put the book down before going to sleep. I'm on the look out for the other books in this series, and might check out her Templar series as well.

Kost As says

Insurrection απ? Robyn Young!

Μ?λιστα! Να ξεκιν?σω λ?γοντας ?τι μ?χρι το 1/3 του βιβλ?ου δεν ?ξερα τι σημα?νει η λ?ξη "Insurrection". Ακ?μα και τ?ρα ?χω μια συγκεχυμ?νη ?ννοια στο μυαλ? μου. Αυτ? παθα?νεις ?ταν διαβ?ζεις βιβλ?α στα αγγλικ? και ?χεις αγγλοαγγλικ? λεξικ?. Μ?νο το τσ?ι και η πουτ?γκα μου ?λειπε.

Το Insurrection, λοιπ?, ε?ναι το πρ?το βιβλ?ο της ομ?νυμης τριλογ?ας της Robyn Young (ναι, ε?ναι θηλυκο? γ?νους η συγγραφ?ας), το οπο?ο πραγματε?εται την ιστορ?α του Robert the Bruce (του βου ? κ?τι τ?τοιο νομ?ζω. Βλ?πεις, ?ταν της μ?δας τ?τε να δ?νουν οι ευγενε? στους πρωτοτ?τοκους γιους τους το ?διο ?νομα με των ιδ?ων. Τ?ρα, ?ποτε συμβε?, ε?ναι απλ? αστε?ο. Και καθ?λου ευγεν?ς. Π?με παρακ?τω!), την ιστορ?α του Robert the Bruce, λοιπ?. Του γνωστο?, τ?λος π?ντων. ?σοι ?χουν ακο?σει το Tunes Of War των Grave Digger, θα τον ξ?ρουν.

Το βιβλ?ο ξεκιν? απ? την παιδικ? ηλικια του Robert και σιγ? σιγ? φθ?νει στις πρ?τες του περιπ?τειες, οι οπο?ες θα πα?ξουν καθοριστικ? ρ?λο στην ?νδρωσ? του. Μ?χες, ?ντριγκα, προδοσ?α στην προδοσ?α, ζητ?ματα τιμ?ς, φεουδαρχισμ?ς ε?ναι μερικ?ς απ? τις ?ννοιες που κυριαρχο?ν στο βιβλ?ο. Η συγγραφ?ας καταφ?ρνει με επιτυχ?α να μας εντ?ξει στην εποχ? της Ευρ?πης του 13ου αι?να, ?που ο Μεσα?ωνας ε?ναι στα πιο σκοτειν? του σημει?α.

Στα θετικ? του βιβλ?ου συγκαταλ?γεται σ?γουρα η ατμ?σφαιρα, ο ρομαντισμ?ς που αποπν?ει, καθ?ς και η συνεχ?μενη α?σθηση ανασφ?λειας. Οι ?ρωες ζουν σε ?ναν κ?σμο μ?νιμα σε π?λεμο, ακ?μη και καθημεριν?. Επιπλ?ον, η συγγραφ?ας επιτυγχ?νει να σκιαγραφ?σει τους χαρακτ?ρες, χωρ?ς, ?μως, να το κ?νει φανερ?. Εν? ε?χα προχωρ?σει αρκετ? το βιβλ?ο, ξαφνικ? συνειδητοπο?ησα ?τι δεν ?χω διαβ?σει περιγραφ? του ?ρω? μας, σε ?,τι αφορ? τον εσωτερικ? του κ?σμο και το χαρακτ?ρα του, ?πως επ?σης το ?διο συν?βαινε και για τα μ?λη της οικογενε?ας και των φ?λων του, οι οπο?οι ε?ναι δευτερε?οντες χαρακτ?ρες του βιβλ?ου. Παρ?λα αυτ?, ?νιωθα ?τι ?ξερα το Robert μ?νο και μ?νο μ?σα απ? τις πρ?ξεις του, τις σκ?ψεις του και τους δισταγμο?ς του.

?να αρνητικ? εντ?πισα! ?να! Πολλ?ς φορ?ς η κ. Young ξεκιν?σε το ν?ο κεφ?λαιο χωρ?ς να μας πληροφορ?σει ?τι ?χουμε αλλ?ξει εποχ?!. Μπορε? να ε?χαν περ?σει ακ?μα και ?να ? δ?ο χρ?νια και ξεκιν?σε το κεφ?λαιο σα να μας περι?γραφε απλ? τα γεγον?τα της επ?μενης μ?ρας! Καλ? ε?ναι να το κ?νεις μια ? δ?ο φορ?ς, γιατ? σε πι?νει απροετο?μαστο, αλλ? απ? ?να σημε?ο και μετ? κουρ?ζει!

Το συνιστ? ανεπιφ?λακτα σε ?σους θ?λουν να βουτ?ξουν στην ?ντριγκα του Μεσα?ωνα και σε ?λους τους φ?λους των ιστορικ?ν μυθιστορημ?των. Το βιβλ?ο ?χει αρκετ? δρ?ση, ?χι ιδια?τερα πολλ?ς μ?χες, αρκετ?ς, ?μως, αλλ? το μ?γεθ?ς του ε?ναι σχετικ? μεγ?λο, κ?τι το οπο?ο μπορε? να κουρ?σει. Προσωπικ?, ?ταν ?φτασα στην τελευτα?α σελ?δα, ?μουν ?τοιμος να συνεχ?σω με το επ?μενο της σειρ?ς, αλλ? ε?πα να κ?νω πρ?τα ?να διαλειμματ?κι...

Υ.Γ.: Π?ση μπ?χλα, ρε παιδ? μου, το Μεσα?ωνα!!!! Π?ση!!!
