



Priestess of Avalon

Marion Zimmer Bradley, Diana L. Paxson

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Long-awaited final volume in the Avalon series by bestselling fantasy author, Marion Zimmer Bradley. As the Merlin of Britannia keeps his vigil atop the Tor of Avalon, Rian, the High Priestess of Avalon, dies giving birth to her fifth child. The girl, named Eilan with her mother's dying breath, takes life. From the stars the Merlin draws forth her prophecy: 'The child that was born at the Turning of Autumn, just as the night gave way to dawn, shall stand at the turning of the Age, the gateway between two worlds.' A prophecy of greatness, but it seems that she is destined to walk a path unlike any trod by a Priestess of Avalon before! Published posthumously, this spellbinding historical romance is the concluding volume in the Avalon series from Marion Zimmer Bradley, the author of the worldwide bestseller, *The Mists of Avalon*, who died in 1999.

Priestess of Avalon Details

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Author : Marion Zimmer Bradley , Diana L. Paxson

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Keso Shengelia says

I love all the Avalon books. "Priestess of Avalon" is another great part of this series, although "Mists of Avalon" remains my favorite. If you like the works of Bradley, you'll like this one in the series.

Jess says

I liked Mists of Avalon when I read it back in the day, but couldn't get even halfway through this. It's like someone's half-assed diary when they are living through momentous things but are too tired to describe them in any manner of compelling detail. It's just so bland and depthless that I can't care about any of it.

Hannah Hakkenberg says

Could it be that while we think we are acting of our own free will, we are actually working to fulfil some greater destiny? Is the world shaped by the whims of individuals or are there greater powers directing us? This is the question "Priestess of Avalon" raises.

Although probably not historically correct — the real Saint Helena was from what is now Turkey — it's a very interesting idea that one headstrong priestess can accidentally help diminish the tradition of goddess worship. The book is a worthy part in the larger series on the disappearance of the Great Mother.

Marion Bradley Zimmer is admittedly not the greatest stylist and uses many repetitive phrases. Another problem is the scope; every few chapters the book skips anywhere from two years to a decade. (We follow Helena from ten-year-old girl in Avalon all the way to her journey to Palestine when she's at least eighty.) This makes it hard to connect with the characters emotionally.

What keeps the book compelling are the (at times painfully) realistic characters and the intellectually stimulating subject of the transition from paganism to Christianity in Europe.

Definitely not the best book in the series, but if you liked the other ones, it's still recommended.

Alisa says

Fluff read that kept my interest throughout. Interesting religious undertones...honor to the Goddess combined with the roots of Christianity.

Margaret says

Begun by Marion Zimmer Bradley and finished by Diana L. Paxton, "Priestess of Avalon" is the story of Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great.

It is historical fantasy. The book swirls with goddesses, priestesses, druids, and faeries.

Though part of a series, it isn't necessary to have read the others. Each one pretty much stands alone. An understanding of the workings of Romano-Celtic Britain will help, but it's not essential. The ladies were/are excellent researchers and their historical components are bang on.

Someone, I suspect Diana, slid the solution to an archaeological mystery gently into the book. I only caught it because I had seen the object in question in a museum in London last week. This is the level of research I meant.

Highly recommended.

Marissa says

This was a very moving book. I found myself empathizing with the life of Eilan/Helena, sharing in her joys as well as grieving for her losses. Very well done. One of the best books I have read in long time.

Nick Sweet says

Marion Zimmer Bradley's Avalon series ranks among one of my all time favorites, and "Priestess of Avalon" stands out as my favorite. Drawing on the real life historical figure of Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, Bradley intricately weaves Helena's origin story into that of Britain and the Isle of Avalon. Helena is a character you will root for from the very beginning, as she makes her way from the Isle of Avalon to Britain to Rome to Jerusalem. Helena here is a woman for the ages. Even if you do not read another of the Avalon series, I would highly encourage people interested in the history of women to read this book. You will not be disappointed.

Ronda Tutt says

Another great read

The story of Helena and Constantius was great and I was so glad that they did not die after their first communion like most of the stories in this series and was glad that MZB carried on their life story and the child of prophecy was indeed born. However, I didn't like it when Helena and Constantius life was separated because of the Roman law requiring Constantius to be married to a woman who had status and could be recognized.

The characters in the story were something else. I liked some of them right away (Dierna - Helena's cousin who eventually became Lady of Avalon), hated one immediately (Ganeda - Lady of Avalon), and ended up disliking one in the end (Constantine - son of Helena & Constantius) and really hating and despising Constantine's wife (Fausta) and was so glad she got what she deserved in the end. I fell in love with Helena's

grandson Crispus (Constantine's illegitimate son by Minervina) and was outraged that Constantine had ordered his death because of Fausta's lies.

I didn't like the interference that Dierna played with the lives of Teleri and Carausius. The thinking behind the reasonings for this match just appauled me. Carausius and Dierna should of been together from the beginning and I thought Dierna was stupid from denying her own heart and feelings because of some prophecy.

Note: Priestess of Avalon and Lady of Avalon need to be read together in sections according to the Historical Chronology of the Avalon Books. The following link explains the chronology time line.
<http://www.avalonbooks.net/chronology...>

Jen Six says

After having read Mists and then the Lady of Avalon, I went next to the Firebrand which I didn't particularly find myself liking though it did strengthen my beliefs in the Goddess. But when I started Priestess I thought, okay, here we go, will this make me happy or just frustrated. The beginning was everything that I had loved of Bradley's other novels, teachings on Avalon and the study/discovery of the ancient mysteries of the Goddess. As it split when Eilan left Avalon with her husband, I began to worry, like Firebrand, this would be the turning point. I saw how though she had been cast out of Avalon, the fairie land didn't leave her and she ventured further into the path of rising Christianity, mainly through her son, but eventually found her way back to the Old Ways and in the end to Avalon. Many dislike this book because it isn't as great as Mists of Avalon, but in many ways, you get to see, what is meant at the end of that novel, my favorite part, of how the Goddess still found followers through those who believed in the Virgin Mary, buying realizing as Helena does that deep down the Goddess is in everything. For those of us readers who approached these novels simply because we're pagan, though astounding the author is Christian, I continuously realize that these novels are trying to return the message that though there is many differences in this world, we are all the same, though we believe different, worship different, and kill for those differences. I'd read this novel again.

Jess says

I really loved this book, as I have loved the entire Avalon series. It does not capture the same magic that The Mists of Avalon had, but it still has some elegant themes that were able to transport me back to this world. As with The Forest House and Lady of Avalon, I do not enjoy the politics/historical fiction in the books, I tend to zone out a little when I'm reading it. I love the spiritual and religious aspects of the books though as well as the setting. The ending was really intriguing as Helena is coming to the end of her life and I enjoy reading her journey through that and the insight she gains in her old age. I'm not sure if I will continue reading the rest of the Avalon series though since this is the last book that Bradley wrote before she died and her relative continued writing the series. I suppose if I find myself missing Avalon, I know how to return :)

Anna says

The second prequel of The Mists Of Avalon I've read in the serie so far. Though it can be clearly seen on the writing style that this book was finished by Diana L. Paxson - her writing style is surely poorer and more

simple than Marion's - I still enjoyed Helena's story very much and it was very touching too. It's more of a historical fiction novel that introduces the reader to the life in ancient Rome, and we can also learn more about the Mysteries. I think that all Avalon-lovers should read this one, giving a chance to Diana L. Paxson even if her writing style cannot be compared to the great style of Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Sara Jesus says

As histórias de Marion Bradley tem sempre o poder de fazer-nos mergulhar noutro tempo. Desta vez levou-nos ao tempo de Constâncio e Constantino. Avalon é um lugar real na minha imaginação. Uma terra mágica em que todos os Deuses são permitidos. Helena é uma das últimas sacerdotisas de Avelon, que preserva as tradições pagãs e tanta unir-se aos cristãos.

O seu filho, o imperador Constantino foi o responsável pela lei que permitiu a liberdade religiosa. Os cristãos já não foram perseguidos. Mas foi o início do fim do paganismo. E Constantino deixa-se influenciar pela sua mulher, e mata seu filho Crispo. O verdadeiro herdeiro de Avalon.

Não comprehendi se Constâncio amava de facto Helena, ou só a adorava como sacerdotisa. Pois não deixou que ela estivesse ao seu lado quando reinou o império.

Como sempre as personagens femininas destacam-se. Para além de Helena, Lena e Maria são outras personagens importantes para a compreensão do enredo. Cristianismo e paganismo estão unidos. Afinal Deus está em todo o lado. Deus está nas pessoas, dentro de seus corações, na natureza, nos relacionamentos entre seres vivos e humanos.

Juliet-Camille says

The Mists of Avalon has been one of the most influential books of my reading life. Its influenced the way I see myself as a woman, and how I see the world. However, the recent scandals which have come to light about Marion Zimmer Bradley have changed how I see this series as a whole.

This book, particularly, is one of the poorer sequels - it follows Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, who grew up on the isle of Avalon, but was later banished when she switched places with a fellow priestess during the Beltain rights. Which was an action that changed a previous prophecy stating that a child would be born to save the old ways for another thousand years.

Thanks a lot, Helena.

I never connected with Helena as a character, and it both confused and angered me as to why she and her Roman never actually married. Consequently, when the Emperor forced him to marry another woman, I never felt the turmoil because a basic wedding ceremony could have/should have happened at any time. I also didn't connect with Constantine as a character. He read as both nefarious and hermaphroditical, he never felt like a true organic character.

Mel says

I'd give this book three and a half stars. I liked it well enough and it was well written but for me, it lacked some of the magic that made The Mists of Avalon such a fantastic book. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying this book is bad, it is not. It simply didn't enrage and inspire me the same way as Mists did.

Here we follow the live story of Eilan, the daughter of one of the tribe's king's daughter, who is send to Avalon but later will become the mother of Constantine, the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. The book spans more than 70 years, so some passages are only skimmed over, some people only fleetingly mentioned. Constantine remains a distant figure, which I found a bit sad, as so much of the action resolves around him. You could say, this it only understandable as Eilean - his other - doesn't really know her son, who was sent away to be trained at the Emperor's court when he was still a boy.

Maybe I didn't like this book as much as Mists, because so little of the adventure actually takes place in Avalon. Of course this is not the author's fault but still I was left feeling a little disappointed. Talking about reader's expectations and all that.

I enjoyed the debades between the pagan/heathen people in this book and those of the newly emerin Christian faith, some of it was really food for thoughts. And yes, there is a love story but it is not the main plot line.

All in all, I enjoyed this book and I recommend it to all, who like either Histotical novels or fantasy.

Kjirstin says

Truly interesting exploration of the Roman world at the time of Constantine. The main character, a priestess of Avalon, moves into the world of men to be the wife to one emperor and mother of another.

At times the text felt somewhat unwieldy; the pace slowed in the second half of the book and at times I wondered what the point of it all was. However, it was a great look through one person's eyes at the world at that time, and piqued my interest in the Late Roman Empire.

Raquel Alves says

O orgulho, a ambição desmedida, a religião, poder, a cegueira com ouvidos, a derrubar sonhos e pureza. Contemporâneo, se bem interpretado.

Candace Bowles says

Possibly my favorite in the series other than "Mists". I love the character Viviane and this book includes her origin story. I also adore the way these stories all intertwine. It's truly magnificent.

Júlia Mestre says

This was a really cool book!

I was expecting it to be just a lot of fiction but actually it wasn't. Of course there were various fictional characters and events. But the majority of the book were things that actually happened in the Roman Empire circa 300 AC. Everybody knows that Constantino was the first christian emperor. But this book delves into this period in history and actually shows what happened and why. And since it's written from the perspective of Eilan/Helena, Constantino's mother, you get to see what happened before his ascend to power and its consequences. There's also the dilemma between paganism and christianity, the persecution of christians and why he ultimately chose to unite the empire with christianity instead of paganism. And there's a lot of interesting things I've never heard before. Like Constantino killed his own son?! Say what?

Besides all of the interesting history aspect, there's obviously the Avalon fiction part which is fun in itself. So yeah, I learned a lot from reading it and it was very interesting. Yay ?

Suzanne Singman says

I love Avalon and Marion and Diana. This is a great combination. Like Wonder woman, there was not enough time spent on the island itself and too much time out in the world. Diana is a meticulous researcher and sometimes i got confused by all the Roman cities and places and there were no maps included and i would have liked that. But I did like the story itself. The priestess understands the new religion and that there are multiple faces of divinity but it masks one force underlying. That as humans we need to have many ways to understand source energy and different religions give us different ways to translate that energy so that it makes sense to us. It was fun to get lost in this book and give myself up to the story. Thank you Diana.

Shannon Winward says

Recently I read "Priestess of Avalon" by Marion Zimmer Bradley and Diane Paxton. I picked it up somewhere months ago in a bargain book stack, and from a purely critical standpoint that's pretty much all it's worth. While "The Mists of Avalon" still stands out as one of my all-time favorites (I've actually read the thing twice, which is rare for me), the sequels and prequels to that book are generally thin on plot and character and just leave a lot to be desired.

But I loved the book anyway. Given the setting and themes, (ancient Britain, priestesses of the goddess, magic love and mayhem), how could I not? But beyond even that, there was something in the narration of this book that really struck a chord.

It is apparently one of (if not the) last of MZB's projects - she died shortly thereafter - and this is evident in the voice of Elena, the heroine of "Priestess" as she looks over her life as lover, mother, and woman. She talks about how we are reflections of Her in all our guises, and how yet there really is no Her, only us, only each other... she talks about the connection we have to our children, through our bodies and our souls, and how yet they are perfect strangers to us with no obligation... there were passages that brought me to tears. I don't know if MZB's philosophy was voiced this strongly in the other books, or if I am only picking up on it because of where I am in my life.

Either way, I re-discovered something else that I love about the "Avalon" books, which is the way they help

me reconnect to my pathway. The books are fantasy, of course, but they are written by pagan scholars in such a way that they truly resonate with real spiritual practice and belief. Yet they are not meant to proselytize some neo-wiccan fluff - in fact, the underlying message is that the Divine is beyond religion, that no matter what we call it we are worshiping the same source... though how much comfort it gives us to call out to Mother, and in so doing do honor to ourselves?

I also realized something kind of cool: in each of the books, there are moments where characters meet where one or both seems to recognize the other, or someone has flashes, visions, suggesting that they have known each other in lives past. I always assumed this was done just to enhance the mythos, but, supposedly there is a deliberate connection among the characters throughout the various books... in other words, the sister of the heroine in one book is the reincarnated mother of the heroine in another... going all the way back to a Pre-Avalon book written by MZB in the 80's called "The Fall of Atlantis".

This is the same kind of self-referential schtick that I admired so much in Steven King (i.e references to other books embedded in the stories. In one of the Bachman books, a characters even joked about things seeming like a "Steven King novel". Gotta love that.) All of this has inspired me to re-read the Avalon series more closely, this time in historical order (as opposed to order of publication).

So I special-ordered a copy of "Fall of Atlantis" and I'm about half-way through.

The most striking thing is the difference in the writing. You can tell it was written early in her career, as it is riddled with craft issues. It's so over-written that I almost put it down, but I didn't. And now it's grown on me. The cosmos and culture depicted is vastly different, but it's intriguing to imagine how MZB intended this as a bridge to the world of the Druids. It'll be interesting to see how the story plays out. You know the end (Atlantis sinks), but then what?

(7/08)
