



The Raven Queen

Jules Watson

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In this dazzling retelling of one of Ireland's most stirring legends, acclaimed author Jules Watson brings to life the story of Maeve, the raven queen, who is as fierce as she is captivating.

She was born to be a pawn, used to secure her father's royal hold on his land. She was forced to advance his will through marriage—her own desires always thwarted. But free-spirited Maeve will no longer endure the schemes of her latest husband, Conor, the cunning ruler of Ulster. And when her father's death puts her homeland at the mercy of its greedy lords and Conor's forces, Maeve knows she must at last come into her own power to save it.

With secret skill and daring, Maeve proves herself the equal of any warrior on the battlefield. With intelligence and stealth, she learns the strategies—and sacrifices—of ruling a kingdom through treacherous alliances. And to draw on the dangerous magic of her country's oldest gods, Maeve seeks out the wandering druid Ruan, whose unexpected passion and strange connection to the worlds of spirit imperil everything Maeve thought true about herself—and put her at war with both her duty and her fate.

The Raven Queen Details

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From Reader Review The Raven Queen for online ebook

Patrícia says

<http://girlinchaiselongue.blogspot.pt...>

Nascida na Austrália e filha de pais ingleses, Jules Watson há muito que é fascinada por lendas Celtas e não foi difícil convencer o marido, escocês por nascimento, que precisava de viver no meio das brumas e terras altas da Escócia, cercada por magia e mitos senão morreria. Quando não está a escrever novos livros sobre histórias passadas e terras místicas, gosta de se sentar frente à lareira enquanto a chuva cai lá fora ou de ir ao pub local ouvir o marido tocar música típica escocesa.

O seu amor pelos Celtas influenciou não só a escrita como outras decisões da sua vida como a licenciatura em arqueologia, cujos conhecimentos usa para tornar os seus livros mais verosímeis. É, também, licenciada em Relações Públicas e já teve muitos trabalhos diferentes antes de se dedicar escrita, desde escritora freelancer à arqueóloga passando pelo trabalho nas minas e à consultora de relações públicas. Apesar de ter apenas dois livros traduzidos em Portugal, que apesar de independentes se relacionam com o mesmo ciclo mitológico celta, o ciclo de Ulster, a autora tem mais uma trilogia passada na Escócia do tempo da invasão romana, a trilogia Dalriada.

Situada no mesmo espaço de tempo que A Lenda do Cisne, a história da rainha Maeve partilha com esta a mesma beleza, o mesmo encanto e a mesma magia que apenas as lendas místicas são capazes de transmitir. Num tempo longínquo em que os mitos ganham vida, em que os filhos dos deuses caminhavam entre os homens e os druidas e os sidhé ainda tinham algo a dizer sobre o desenrolar da vida, uma mulher vai sobressair de entre a ira e a força bruta dos homens para unir o que a ambição do homem separa, para ser a personificação da Deusa, da Mãe e da Mulher entre o seu povo e o salvar e proteger da loucura trazida pela luxúria, pelo ódio e a inveja. Num relato, onde a astúcia, a coragem e o poder antigo ganham vida, guerreiros batalham pela justiça e pela glória, druidas concedem a vontade das estrelas e amores mortais nascem das brumas.

Com Deirdre, Maeve partilha um homem que lhes trouxe apenas infelicidade, dor e medo mas é aí que acabam as parecenças com a protagonista de A Lenda do Cisne. Usada como juguete nas mãos dos homens, incluindo o próprio pai, depressa aquela que foi rainha três vezes percebe que nunca será mais do que uma moeda de troca destinada a perder tudo o que ama e a ser subjugada à brutalidade, a menos que se insurja e lute por um lugar entre aqueles que tanto a fizeram sofrer. De donzela usada a guerreira lasciva, Maeve é capaz de tudo para não ver o seu povo submetido à vontade de um louco que a magoou mil vezes, mesmo que tenha de matar, mesmo que tenha de desistir dos anseios do seu coração, mesmo que tenha de se tornar a rainha fria e mortal que nunca quis ser. Por baixo da crueldade e astúcia do seu semblante, a Rainha Corvo esconde segredos obscuros, dores demasiado dolorosas, perdas que a marcaram tão fundo quanto o gume de uma espada e um amor que não aceita a ter ser tarde demais.

Tanto rainha guerreira renascida das lendas como mulher e mãe mortal, Maeve vai comandar toda esta narrativa com a mesma presença com que comanda os seus exércitos e nela teremos um vislumbre de todas as mulheres pois ela é a Mãe e a Deusa, ela personifica a feminilidade e a fertilidade em toda a sua força e garra. Nesta personagem, Jules consegue incorporar tudo o que significava ser mulher nesta época, desde o papel quase raro de mulher de armas ao de amante e mãe. Tanto doce como fria, tanto lasciva como controlada, Maeve é tudo isso, é tudo o que significa ser mulher.

Numa narrativa brilhante, onde mitos celtas, história e ficção se misturam com primor, a escrita de Jules é poderosa, evocativa de antiguidade, de sangue e misticismo. É de uma forma apaixonante que a autora dá vida a heróis de espadas, druidas, reis e rainhas, dando às suas personagens tanto divindade como humanidade, umas vezes tão perto de nós e outras tão inalcançáveis. Cheios de honra, lealdade e vontades próprias, cada um segue o caminho que acha mais correcto e cada um vai lutar até ao último suspiro por

aquilo em que acredita. No decorrer desta leitura, muitas são as emoções que nos assaltam, desde à raiva ao medo, do orgulho à admiração, enquanto o desenrolar da vida típica de um povo nos é mostrado nestas páginas. Pormenores das crenças e religião celtas, da vida diária e da guerra, enriquecem este relato que dá vida a um dos mitos mais conhecidos deste povo, permitindo que vejamos para lá dos heróis que foram enaltecidos como escolhidos dos deuses. Entre batalhas sangrentas que evocam a coragem de tempos passados, uniões místicas cheias de profundidade e as demonstrações de poder dos reis, A Rainha Corvo é um hino à cultura mas principalmente, à essência do povo celta.

Forte em momentos marcantes e recheado de misticismo, este livro tem o dom de nos transportar para lá do passado e fazer-nos sentir o cheiro do mar misturado com os dos campos, faz-nos ver céus tão azuis como tumultuosos e ouvir os cânticos tanto de guerra como de amor que uma vez ressoaram pelas planícies de outros tempos. Uma obra digna da história que conta, A Rainha Corvo deve ser lido pelos que adoram lendas, pelos que se fascinam pelos Celtas e admiram aqueles que pelas mãos criaram o berço do nosso mundo.

Kristen says

Upon discovering just how great Celtic mythology is, oh, about a decade ago, I've firmly believed that it should be taught in schools. One semester in eighth grade English focused completely on the Greek myths. And yes, those are all well and good, but they never called to my heart like the Celts. (Of course, my ancestry might have something to do with that, being English and Irish)

I knew the basic stories of Maeve and Deirdre previously (between my own research and through The Swan Maiden), but never anything so detailed. I think I liked this one better than the one about Deirdre. It's good to have such a strong female character. And while never having had to fight in battle, which is a good thing (I've been called a tree-hugging hippy on more than one occasion; somehow they felt it was an insult? Pfft!), I can easily understand having to 'hide' the more sensitive parts of your heart. I struggled at first, when starting this, but over the past two days, over two hundred pages were 'consumed'. :)

Kat Hooper says

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT [Fantasy Literature](#).

Jules Watson's *The Raven Queen* is a historical fantasy based on the ancient Irish legends about Queen Maeve. Red-haired and fiery-tempered, since childhood Maeve has resented being used by her father, King of Connacht, as a political tool. He has sent her as a peace-bride to acquire alliances with various neighboring warlords, but Maeve doesn't tend to actually foster peace anywhere she goes. In fact, she has just returned home to her dying father after running away from her third husband, the powerful King Conor — an action that will surely bring Conor's wrath against Connacht at a time when they do not have a strong leader. As expected, when her father dies, Maeve, her brother, and other relatives begin vying for the throne of Connacht as they simultaneously brace for an invasion by King Conor.

Despite her admirable independence and courage, Maeve is not a likable heroine. You might argue that, based on the legends, she is not meant to be, but even a villainess can be a great heroine if the author can persuade the reader to believe it (and I've been persuaded many times). But there was no reason to sympathize with Maeve. For most of the story she was whiny, petulant, impulsive, mean, and bitter. She complains that her father used her body to make alliances, but then she offers her body when she needs an alliance. She hates men and marriage, but she uses men and marriage to get the power she wants for herself. And why does she want this power? She tells us she wants her people to be free, but it's hard to believe that when we see her behave so selfishly and ruthlessly. I thought she'd make a terrible queen and likely a worse ruler than at least one of the alternatives would, so I couldn't root for her, which kind of ruined most of the plot for me. Maeve became more likable by the end of the book, but by that time it was too late for me to start cheering for Maeve.

The Raven Queen might have gotten away with such an unpleasant heroine if its style had made up for it. Unfortunately, this was not the case — there was little beauty in it. Short choppy sentences and paragraphs became irritatingly rhythmic, and word usage that was slightly “off” jarred me out of the story occasionally. As just one example, I found the constant use of the word “rutting” to be ugly and coarse (e.g. “She had gone too long without the release of rutting...”). Sounds like animals, not people. A bit more attention by the editor could have easily fixed this small but insidious problem.

Readers who don't mind an unlikable heroine (who does get better by the end of the book) and can overlook some editorial negligence will enjoy *The Raven Queen* more than I did. The story is fast-paced and includes some lively characters and plenty of action. Readers might also like to know that Jules Watson's novel *The Swan Maiden* is a companion story — it tells that tale of Deirdre and Naisi.

Jenny Q says

I really enjoyed this reimagining of an Irish legend and I absolutely loved Maeve. Maeve is such a fully fleshed-out heroine. She is fierce, intelligent, and unpredictable--struggling, grasping, fighting, desperate to protect her people, to prove herself and to earn true independence. Yet underneath her tough facade, she's extremely vulnerable. All her life she's been used and abused by men. She's frightened. She's full of self-doubt. Yet she's surprisingly sensitive and maternal. But she's surrounded by men to whom she dare not show any of these "weaknesses", men she wants to rule. She is continually challenged, and it's exhausting just to read about, so it's no wonder Maeve's health suffers as the stakes for her queenship grow higher. She finds unexpected solace in the company of Ruan, a mystical wanderer who, though he's blind, sees her as no one else has. But Maeve's rabid determination to become queen threatens to cost her everything, and when she finally comes to realize what is truly important to her, and what truly sets her free, will it be too late?

The Raven Queen is a mix of fantasy, history and romance, and it's brought to life in vivid Celtic detail. I love Ms. Watson's descriptive writing style, and the way she weaves the beauty of the natural world and the magic of the Source into the narrative and into the characters themselves. She has the marvelous ability to put the reader in the moment and make the reader feel that subtle magic, and it really helps lend some balance and peaceful moments to an intense, often violent story. Here's one of my favorite examples:

For a time all was still, until a full moon broke over the hills. The lake-water flared into life. The reeds were tipped with silver, dipping and whispering. The streams and pools ignited into sheets of brightness. What had been clear in the day and empty in the dark now became something blurred. Gray. Silver. Indistinct. An in-between place.

See what I mean? Those moments of tranquility are a welcome diversion. There are many characters and several related storylines running simultaneously, and Maeve's precarious position is in a constant state of flux with one obstacle after another presenting itself, but the evolution of the story arc and the pacing are perfect throughout, and it all comes together flawlessly as the story reaches its conclusion.

When I'm reading, I love to escape into a different world and I like a good romance, but I also like to walk away feeling like I've learned something. Ms. Watson provides an interesting and detailed author's note describing the role Maeve has played in Irish myth and how she navigated the different versions of the legends to create her own tribute to Maeve. As a fan of fantasy and historical fiction, I thought it was great!

sabrina says

I really wanted to get into this one, but I just couldn't. It was so long and drawn out, I didn't connect to or care about any of the characters, and it was boring.

Marilyn Carvin says

Loved the wild action, character development, and "spiritual" elements.(She has a label for that last one on her web site-- escapes me at the moment). At one point I had to put it down and just bawl! And it wasn't even a grief point -- it was a simple statement, but said so much! Will definitely read more of her work! Recommend getting a real book instead of the digital. Was worried about so many characters , Gaelic, etc., but she lists everything in the beginning, which I copied on paper (am somewhat "challenged" re my Kindle) and was glad I did. If I had read her other books I probably would have "caught on" sooner and given it aa 5 star, but it took me a bit to figure out what was going on with so many locations and characters.

Wisteria Leigh says

Jules Watson offers an energetic epic centered around Irish mythology and the legend of Maeve, the raven queen. I must confess, this is the first I have heard of this story but druids and Celtic lore will seize me every time. Watson is a skillful storyteller and I was lured into the land of Erin right away. There is a huge cast of characters and fortunately the author includes a pronunciation guide and key to who's who. I always find it difficult to move through a story when there are names I can't pronounce or need a reminder of their relationships and associations. This did cause a labored beginning to the story, somewhat like I feel when reading books by Terri Brooks. Without faulting the author, this just is what it is and makes for difficult reading at first. [return]Once you get over the initial stumbling over ancient unfamiliar names, this story takes off. [return]Maeve is fearless and fiery, bold and beautiful all at the same time. A woman all men love, yet fear at the same time. The power and strength of Maeve as she tries to prove her worth in a world surrounded by men is universally recognizable and all women can relate to this character at some point. Watson forms her image of Maeve from legends of record, that describe her as a callous, sexually intoxicating warrior and queen with a bit of goddess too. In *The Raven Queen*, Maeve has obvious flaws and makes mistakes that keep her real and identifiable but understandable as she is so often objectified. Ruan, the blind druid is the only male with the sensitivity and sight to reach her true soul. It is this part of the story I find so mystically appealing. I felt the middle of the story was somewhat tiresome heavy with battle images especially the one on one battle challenges with Cuchulainn, the King of the Ulaid's protector. Although the

ultimate challenge between best friends Ferdia and Cuchulainn was woeful and provided a pitifully sobbing repose, an outstanding scene. I had a hard time identifying with the sacrifice in the name of honor that this fight profiled, even though it is a common theme in Celtic myth and history in general.[return]If you are a fan of Celtic Mythology you will want to read The Raven Queen.

Rita says

A Rainha Corvo conta-nos a história da grande rainha celta Maeve que, neste livro, se inicia com os primeiros acontecimentos de A Lenda do Cisne. Durante grande parte do livro observamos um entrecostar de eventos ocorridos em A Lenda do Cisne e no presente livro, A Rainha Corvo. O que à primeira vista podia parecer um recontar da mesma história, não o é de todo, é antes o contar de uma outra lenda passada na mesma época, que complementa ou é complementada pela outra.

Maeve sempre foi uma mulher forte, forçada a subjugar-se num mundo de homens e a seguir os interesses do pai através dos casamentos indesejados que este lhe arranjava. Teve de suportar muito, desde homens que abominava, actos de violência e mesmo a dolorosa perda dos filhos. No entanto Maeve possui um espírito selvagem e atinge o seu ponto de rotura: não está mais disposta a ser usada como um objecto para atingir um fim e muito menos se esse fim prejudicar o seu povo. Não tolerará as maquinações do seu novo marido, o rei Conor de Ulaid, que se torna o seu grande ódio de estimação e faz com que se transforme numa grande guerreira, capaz de tudo para defender o seu povo, inclusive pôr de parte o desejo por amor e carinho que nunca teve.

Como em qualquer boa história do género o sobrenatural e o divino marcam bem a sua presença, neste caso através dos antigos deuses pagãos e dos sídhe. Envolvem-nos e conquistam-nos com os seus mistérios, bênçãos e maldições e trazem um ar místico a toda a narrativa, intrigando e por vezes iluminando as nossas mentes e a dos próprios personagens em determinadas questões. Neste campo de misticismo entram também os sábios druidas, adquirindo Ruán um papel extremamente importante para o futuro de Erin pelo simples facto de cruzar do seu caminho com o de Maeve.

Ruán e Maeve são personagens muito bem conseguidas que para além de possuírem grandes qualidades, possuem também as suas fraquezas e defeitos, o que os torna bastante reais para o leitor, pois tanto somos capazes de aplaudir os seus feitos, como de repudiar certos pensamentos e atitudes. Isto não é só verdade para os protagonistas, como também o é para muitas personagens secundárias que enriquecem sobremaneira toda a narrativa, como o grande herói Cúchulainn e alguns dos seus companheiros do Redbranch, por exemplo.

Neste livro a autora conseguiu manter um ritmo mais equilibrado, sem grandes altos e baixos e momentos muito parados, o que o diferencia bem de A Lenda do Cisne, conferindo-lhe mais pontos positivos em relação a este.

Todos os momentos da obra são ricamente descritos, sendo de salientar as belíssimas movimentações cintilantes da Fonte e as emocionantes batalhas que são relatadas de forma vívida e com pormenor, chegando por vezes ao ponto de nos deixar com o coração nas mãos na expectativa do que pode vir a acontecer.

A Rainha Corvo é uma história bela e cativante, que enaltece a honra, a coragem e o sacrifício e traz um fim bastante adequado a toda esta trama baseada nas lendas irlandesas do Ciclo de Ulster.

Star says

Ms. Watson's *The Raven Queen* is a wonderfully unique reimagining of the life of Maeve of Connacht, the daughter and wife of kings. Intersecting with the story of Deirdre of the Sorrows (see Ms. Watson's book, *The Swan Maiden*), Maeve of Connacht has escaped from her third husband, Conor Mac Nessa. Now he's thrown off kilter as his wife (Maeve) and future wife (Deirdre) have both left him. Maeve goes back to Connacht in time to be with her father on his deathbed. She knows she has the skills to be a great ruler and "mother" to her people and land and she proves it in combat with her brother where she uses the tricks she's kept up her sleeve for years. Through determination (and some luck), she's crowned as queen. But she also has many secrets – some that may come back to haunt her through the struggles that lay ahead for her people.

I enjoyed Maeve's story – she is a complex and unusual woman, someone who is out of place in her time, yet encompasses the whole spirit of her people. The detail and beauty of Celtic spirituality is breathtaking – I found the descriptions of the sidhe and those touched by the gods to be fascinating. Maeve's strength, yet vulnerability, shows that she has what it takes to be the Queen of Connacht. She must overcome her own past as a man's property and forge a new path for herself and her people. For anyone interested in and drawn to timeless Irish legend, this is the book for you! Open the cover and get lost in Maeve's world!

Tempo de Ler says

Comparativamente ao primeiro livro, «A Rainha Corvo» apresenta-se mais dinâmico, mais seguro e mais forte na escrita. Oferece-nos também uma melhor caracterização da sociedade do século I a.C. (Idade do Bronze); a inclusão das suas crenças e traduções acaba por enriquecer bastante o livro. Infelizmente não tínhamos podido desfrutar deste factor em «A Lenda do Cisne», já que Deirdre era naturalmente muito solitária e a sua fuga ao rei exigia que se refugiasse longe de todos.

De início receei que a autora se perdesse com repetições dos acontecimentos do primeiro livro, já que as duas histórias acabam por se tocar, mas uma vez que estes foram colocados sob outro ponto de vista, Jules acabou por engrossar a narrativa positivamente, apelando à nossa familiaridade com os elementos do livro anterior.

Recheado de personalidades fortes, «A Rainha Corvo» traz-nos como protagonistas Maeve e Ruán...

Real ou mito, Maeve é bem mais madura do que Deirdre alguma vez foi e menos hesitante. Uma mulher que luta pelo seu povo, pela sua terra e por si própria. Traumatizada pela vida e incompreendida por quase todos, Maeve nem sempre transparece como coerente e o espírito guerreiro acaba por lhe moldar demasiado a personalidade, tornando-a por vezes numa personagem aborrecida de seguir.

Ruán, tem um desenvolvimento muito intrigante na trama e é responsável pela maior parte da componente sobrenatural presente no livro - ainda que cego, Ruán vê muito mais nesta mulher do que todos os outros que a rodeiam. Contudo, lamentavelmente, o sobrenatural é abordado de forma pouco distinta, caindo numa complexidade nem sempre perceptível.

No geral, «A Rainha Corvo» é uma leitura interessante mas cansativa, com partes em que a narrativa se arrasta, sem fundamento aparente, e com desenvolvimento recorrente dos mesmos temas. A história de Maeve é bem mais interessante e mais sólida do que foi a de Deirdre; tal como os protagonistas deste segundo livro e a própria escrita da autora são mais elaborados...Nenhum dos livros é, ainda assim, tudo aquilo que poderia ser, dado o potencial formidável destas duas lendas irlandesas.

{Blog} <http://tempodler.blogspot.pt/2012/09/...>

Bethany says

Wow...Total marathon read to FINALLY finish this book that I've had for ages. Sad to say, I've got a digital and hard copy and it still took me forever to read it.

It took so long to read because, partially, the story was just not gripping me as it should. It's well-written, it's interesting, has a bit of "magic" in it (more mystical, I suppose), and it's a romance story all based on an old Irish myth so, in theory, it should have gripped me. I just wasn't and I don't know why.

I enjoyed the complexities of the characters. Maeve was an interesting character as she's been this pawn for most of her life and suddenly has taken her life into her own hands when her father dies. Bloodshed, war, manipulation, etc are just some of the things she has to overcome and do to take her life into her own hands. Ruan is an interesting juxtaposition to her. Where Maeve is intense and life-in-her-hands, Ruan is as calm and trying to leave the world of its issues alone. I enjoyed the intrigue and political maneuvering Maeve had to conduct and I even enjoyed the romance (be warned this does have some sex scenes in it), but it just didn't grip me. Hence, the 4 instead of 5 stars (could possibly be a 3 for me, but I feel like I'm cheating it by giving it a 3 since it is a good book even with my lack of interest). I do think the end was tidied up a little to well, but tying up all those ends in significant detail would be kind of boring after everything else that had gone on.

At any rate, based on this, I doubt I'll read any of Watson's other books. I'm just left with an "Eh" feeling about the book. It's not horrible, I want to love it, and I'm sure there are plenty of people who do/would love it, but apparently it just missed something small for me to really love it. I don't feel like I wasted hours of my life reading it, though. So, yes, I'm a little confused as to why I didn't enjoy this book more.

nat. (semi-hiatus) says

2.5 • although I liked it, it felt unnecessarily long, so long in fact, that at one point I kept yelling at the book to just bloody end lol.

I did love the amazing landscape descriptions. the writing and romance were decent. there was some magic and the overall plot was intriguing enough to continued reading but there were certainly a lot of boring parts :/

Lara McKusky says

The Raven Queen is a historical fantasy based on a Celtic legend.

Always a fan of strong female characters—this one is a warrior queen—I also have a bit of an obsession with all things United Kingdom, love historical fiction, can't get enough magical adventure....well, let's just say this book has almost everything I have ever liked about reading!

From a reader's perspective, this book is like swimming in very deep waters, sinking further and further under until you think you aren't going to make it and then you come up for a big draw of air. And then you tread water for a bit, gaining your strength and before you think you're ready, you're swimming again. And the end of the story is you, washing up on the shore, drained, exhausted, and completely happy.

This story was absorbing and putting it down was like coming back to yourself. The story wove in magic (or the Source) quite seamlessly, making it seem a part of the characters and of the storyline as well. Many stories that include magic often write it like a prop that characters manipulate. Jules Watson makes the Source almost another character, something the characters relate to and with throughout the story. However, ultimately, this is a love story, not only between two people, but between Maeve and herself.

From a writerly perspective, I am in awe. Ms. Watson's complex layering of character development, relationships and plot drive is nearly flawless. The pace is relentless, character driven and logical. I learned a lot while reading this story and I anticipate reading it again for those very reasons!

I would say my only negatives are that some of the fighting at the end drags on a bit; after the break-neck pace, it had me skimming and chomping at the bit to get back to Maeve! And I was quite surprised that this is classified as a YA, but the sex scenes were a little racy for YA, if you ask me; I wouldn't want my child younger than 16 reading this!

Other than that, I highly recommend The Raven Queen, by Jules Watson.

Blodeuedd Finland says

Some books have that, omg there was magic in the past! feeling, and some do not.

Here the author had Iron Age Irish people living in a world where Gods and Goddesses were heard. Were the Sidhe were around. Where there was magic. But, I did not believe in it. It was historical fantasy, fun to read, but not real.

It's the story of Queen Maeve, who went down in history as a maneater, but then history changes when men write it, Christian men. She was married to kings and princes. She loved her country, and she wanted to fight for it. I did like her strength.

The story of Deidre is told in the background too, but she has her own depressing book.

I could actually have done without the real magic, the weird druid guy who spoke with the Sidhe. I am sure people will love that, but as I did not have that omg magic used to be real feeling, it just fell short for me.

And I did know the legends, so I knew what would happen. Still it was interesting to see how she changed things. Though I do confess that I did not understand the ending at all.

Good. But could have been amazing...

Laura says

Have I not bid you tell of that great queen
Who has been buried some two thousand years?
- "The Old Age of Queen Maeve" by William Yeats

The Raven Queen written by Jules Watson weaves an absorbing tale around the retelling of the legendary Irish queen, Maeve, in which she brings to life a world filled with brutality, loyalty, love and magic. At first I felt a little apprehensive as I had to dig back to my archaeological study days, trying to recreate the Celtic world and legend in my imagination, I couldn't seem to "slip between the veil" as I normally can in the first chapter of such a book, my persistence and love for Irish mythology paid off, as this was undoubtedly one of the best Irish mythological books I have ever read, plunging the reader into a world reminiscent of Beowulf.

After the death of her father, the King, and spurred by her passion and dedication to her people, Maeve vows to bring peace to the lands of Connacht, extinguishing the flames of tyranny that burn in heart of King Coner of the Ulaid, fuelled by his thirst for power, wealth, bloodlust and women, King Coner is forever the thorn in Maeve's side. It is through Maeve's awakening of herself, fuelled by the mutual love for the druid Ruan, that she learns to use her light to advantage and bring about her destiny, ensuring the safety of her people, the lands of Erin and her freedom.

The Raven Queen is led by a strong female character and one most readers will be able to relate to (on some level) as well as being supported by many other likeable characters. The brutality of war set aside, the realisation of the depravity and seemingly desolate world during this period of history is paramount, particularly if you were born a woman, but nonetheless, a world filled with magic, and hope.

This book brought to light the magical intrigue of the Irish world including their superstitious, pagan beliefs and was well researched. It has only renewed my love for Irish mythology and left me daydreaming sitting here at work thinking about it. I will definitely be ordering more books written by Jules Watson to immerse myself in her Celtic world, I can't thank Anna enough for hassling me to read this novel!
